

# Ament House

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Location: 201 Turnberry Street, Brussels, Ontario  
Year built: c. 1890

AMENT HOUSE IS A THREE-BAY Italianate style house with a projecting centre bay. It has a hip roof, round-arched windows with segmental arches, and a wide decorative cornice and paired brackets. The verandah is the out-standing feature of the house with its detailed woodwork — turned posts, brackets, the tooth-edged circles and fretwork or cutouts. The red brick is accented at the corners and around the windows by buff-coloured brick.

Philip Ament bought 25 acres of mill property, and the house, in 1893 from the Smith brothers. Before this, he and his brother, John, operated a sawmill north of where the Creamery used to be at the corner of Ann and Queen Streets. This sawmill burnt in 1892 or 1893.



The Smith brothers had bought the property north of the railway tracks in 1886 from William Ainley who had in his turn purchased it from John Ament. The owner of the property listed on the map of Brussels in Belden's *1879 Atlas* is "Ament." The Smiths built and operated a large mill, shipping rough lumber and trim to Toronto which was in a building boom. However, an economic downturn in the 1890s reverberated down the line from builders to suppliers, and the Smith brothers went into receivership in 1892.

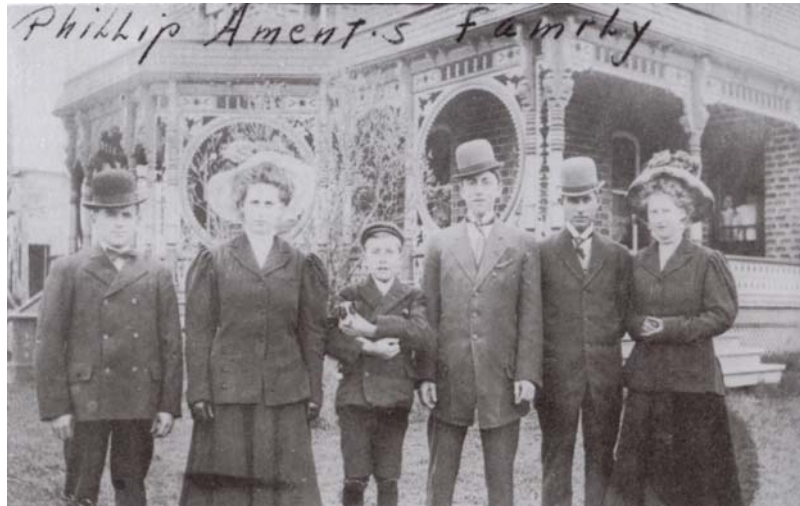
The house was likely built some time between 1886 and 1890. Philip Ament added to it after he bought it in 1893. The house was used as a showcase for the trim produced by the mills. Prospective customers were invited inside to see the different trim in each room.

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John Ament left the mill business soon after 1893. He owned the American Hotel for a time before moving to London. Philip Ament and his sons operated the planing and sawmills. Philip purchased timber lots from local farmers, and also bought and sold farms with timber lots, to keep the mills supplied. Logs were cut in the early winter and hauled into the mill yard using heavy horses. In the planing mill they dried wood in a large kiln. This wood was used to produce the fancy trims for windows, doors, and verandahs. As well as the saw and planing mills, they had a cooper shop where barrels were made. In one corner of the planing mill butter moulds were also made. The Ament children and their friends, with their smaller hands, were paid 5¢ per 100 to put the screws in the butter moulds.



Philip Ament



Six of Philip and Matilda Ament's eight children, standing in front of the family home, c. 1900.

An addition to the sawmill, after the cooperage was discontinued, was the stave factory where curved slats for barrels were made. The staves were shipped in bundles, made-up into barrels elsewhere. In the lower corner of the planing mill the heading, or barrel tops, were made, usually in July and August. The boards had to be kiln-dried first. The three younger Ament sons, Earl, Scott and Harry, did the turning and the job of separating the heads from the waste material. Waste material was sold as kindling.

The mill burned in 1905 and was replaced by a cement building. The business was carried on by two of the sons, Bill and Scott Ament, after their father retired. They went into partnership with the Whites from Wroxeter, making children's wagons, sleighs, and wheelbarrows. By this time, local sources of timber had been depleted. Shipping logs in to Brussels was too costly and the mill was soon closed. In its heyday, the Ament mills and related industries provided much of the employment in the area.

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