

Box Furniture

Location: 20 Main St. South, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: 1877

HOME TO BOX FURNITURE for many years now, this 2-storey yellow brick block was built in 1877 for William M. Robertson. In 1863, William M. Robertson and Co. were hardware merchants, with W.O. Reid as manager. They conducted business in a frame building on part of this site until moving to another location on Main Street. After the fire of 1876, Robertson bought the property and built “the finest warehouse in town,” a large 35’x126’ (11x38 m) block with basement and two flats or apartments. Later, it was here that Reid & Wilson’s “Sign of the Circular Saw” Hardware carried on business for many years.



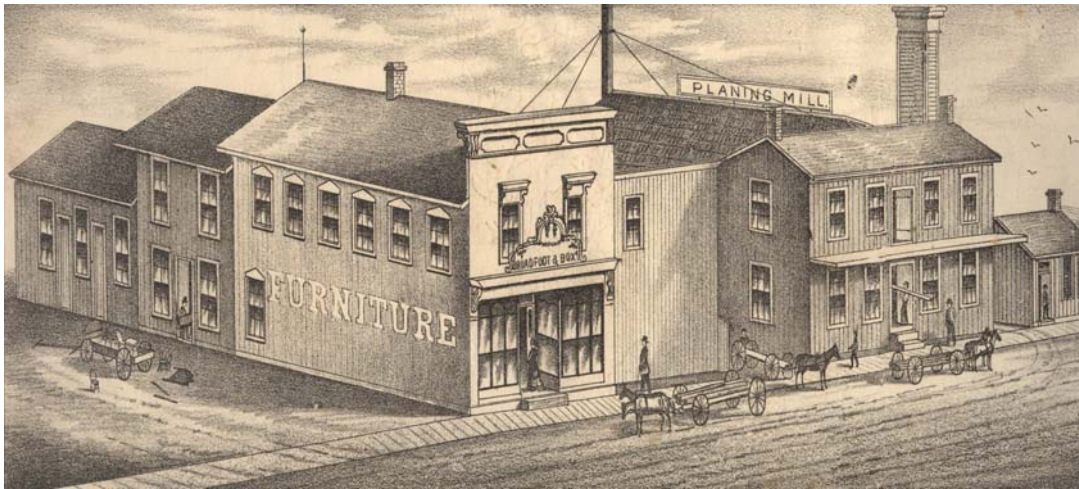
Reid & Wilson's "Sign of the Circular Saw"



Broadfoot & Box Furniture Warerooms c. 1900

Box Furniture has its roots in the early days of furniture manufacturing in Ontario. *Sutherland's County of Huron Gazetteer and General Directory for 1869-70* notes: “Messrs. Broadfoot & Gray’s planing mill, door, sash and blind factory was established in 1863, their buildings are frame, 55’x50’, two stories high, a fifteen horse power engine is used and twelve hands employed in the making of doors, sash, blinds, planing, etc., building material of all kinds can be here supplied.” Isabelle Campbell in her *Story of Seaforth* says that in 1866, the same year the Market House was built, John H. Broadfoot began a planing mill nearby, at the northeast corner of Market and Jarvis Streets. Adam Gray was a partner from 1869 to 1871. It was in 1876 that William T. Box joined the business. By 1878, they had a planing mill and a 2-storey factory. The first floor of the factory was filled with furniture

of their own making while the upstairs was used for finishing, upholstery and a general workroom. Broadfoot & Box Furniture Factory employed 15 men.



An etching from Belden's 1879 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Huron* shows the Cabinet Shop & Furniture Store of Broadfoot & Box, Seaforth, Ont. and the Planing Mill Sash Door & Blind Factory of J.H. Broadfoot, Seaforth, Ont.

1883 was a good year for Broadfoot & Box: in February the company received an order from Winnipeg for over \$10,000 of doors, window sashes, and other manufactured building materials. A large white brick warehouse and finishing rooms were built in 1886 and the old warehouse was removed to a lot across the street. The business expanded again in 1887 to include a partner in Manitoba, W.F. Wilson.

The furniture manufacturing industry in Ontario underwent a period of consolidation. In 1901, the complete holdings of the Broadfoot & Box Company were purchased by the Canadian Furniture Manufacturers based in Woodstock.

On the existing building you can see that the decorative brickwork and

window labels of the upper façade are the same design as that of neighbouring buildings to the north. The upper cornice with decorative brackets and the storefront cornice with dentils are part of the extensive restoration work done in 1990.

In 1917 a silent movie theatre, *The Strand*, was opened by James Willis in part of the Box Furniture Store. But, by the early 1920s, the theatre had already closed its doors.

Richard S. Box operated the furniture store for many years. He also had a funeral parlour on High Street, now the Box & Smith Funeral Chapel. For many years now, Box Furniture has been owned and operated by Gary Bettles.