

Heritage Impact Statement
Vaughan Baptist Church
Previously Pine Ridge Congregational Church and Pine Ridge Baptist Church
8274-8286 Islington Avenue, Woodbridge, ON
In the City of Vaughan
15 February 2022



Figure 1. View from northeast, as Pine Grove Baptist Church in August, 1976. Photo from Vaughan Archive.

8274-8286 Islington Avenue, Woodbridge

Paul Oberst, B.Arch. (hons.) CAHP
Heritage Consultant and Architect, (Ret.)

Mandate:

The Provincial Policy Statement addresses the situation of development on identified heritage resources in Section 2.6.1:

2.6.1 Significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved.

Conserved is defined in the Provincial Policy Statement as follows:

Conserved: means the identification, protection, management and use of built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources in a manner that ensures their cultural heritage value or interest is retained. This may be achieved by the implementation of recommendations set out in a conservation plan, archaeological assessment and/or heritage impact assessment that has been approved, accepted or adopted by the relevant planning authority and/or decision-maker. Mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches can be included in these plans and assessments.

This Heritage Impact Statement is prepared in compliance with this requirement in the Provincial Policy Statement, and relies on the guidance provided in the City's *Heritage Impact Assessment Terms of Reference*.

Heritage Resource Owner: 8274-8276 Islington Avenue Inc.
c/o Oben Group Inc.
60 Pears Avenue, Suite 418
Toronto ON M5R 3P8

Heritage Consultant: Paul Oberst,
152 Kensington Avenue South,
Hamilton ON, L8M 3H5
pauldurfeeoberst@gmail.com

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1. Historical Overview

The original plan for Vaughan Township in York County was a rough sketch dated 1788. The township was surveyed into lots and concessions over several decades.

Woodbridge was founded in 1837 with the arrival of miller Rowland Burr and was first known as Burwick. The name was changed to Woodbridge in 1855. The 1878 Historical Atlas for the County of York describes the village:

Woodbridge is an important village situated on the Humber, a station of the T.G. & B. R.R.; Mr. John Abell's foundry and machine shop employs some 200 men, where agricultural implements are manufactured. The lumber trade and other business done here gives animation to the place. The population is in the neighborhood of 1200.

Pine Grove likewise originated around mills. The Wikipedia entry for Pine Grove, Vaughan describes the early days:

John Smith (Schmidt), a farmer from Edgeley, came to Pine Grove where he erected a grist mill and saw mill in 1828. In 1831 he built a store. In 1840 John Smith sold the mill to John W. Gamble who later became the first reeve of Vaughan Township. The mill was sold to Gooderham and Worts in 1860. By the time of Confederation, Pine Grove was home to a flour mill, churches, three hotels, a blacksmith shop, harness shops, a spool factory, one common school and a large general store with a post office. A stage coach ran daily to Weston.

In a chapter titled *The Beginning of Religion in Vaughan*, *The Burwick Women's Institute Tweedsmuir History* (1987) describes the earliest days:

It is beyond the imagination of succeeding generations to fathom the privations of the early settlers. When we realize that by the year 1801 there were only nineteen men, seventeen women and sixty-seven children in the whole of the Township of Vaughan, it is understandable that there were no schools for the education of the children, no physician when sickness plagued the family, and no church in which to worship.

Saddle-back preachers rode a circuit, visiting scattered families on an infrequent basis. In summer when the roads were passable, meetings would be held in homes, barns, or at outdoor camp meetings. Burial grounds were established, and when physical churches appeared the were usually located on these sites. In the beginning, the parishes didn't have the resources to support a resident minister, and the clergy remained itinerant and infrequent.

The *Tweedsmuir History* lists only four churches predating the Pine Grove Chapel, as it was called when it was founded in 1841. *Tweedsmuir* quotes from an old Church Record Book as follows:

On the first day of January 1841, a Christian Church was formed by the Rev. Samuel Harris, a Congregational Minister, at Pine Grove Chapel.... (They) declare the faith, church order and discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters, as adopted

by the third general meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the year 1833.

The land for the church and the road leading up to it was donated by George Stegman, brother of John Stegman, well known as the surveyor of many townships in the County of York. A large frame church was constructed, and was considered a fine structure in those days. The road leading up to the church is now called Gamble Street in Woodbridge. The church burying ground which was to the east of the church has been preserved as the Pine Grove Cemetery at 61 Gamble Street, by the City of Vaughan.

The church prospered and in September 1861 the members began to talk of a new church, more conveniently located on Islington Avenue. A suitable site was offered by James G. Worts, distiller and miller, which was gratefully accepted. James Smith, a Toronto architect was engaged to produce a design, specified to be forty by sixty feet in plan. A contract was then let to Robert

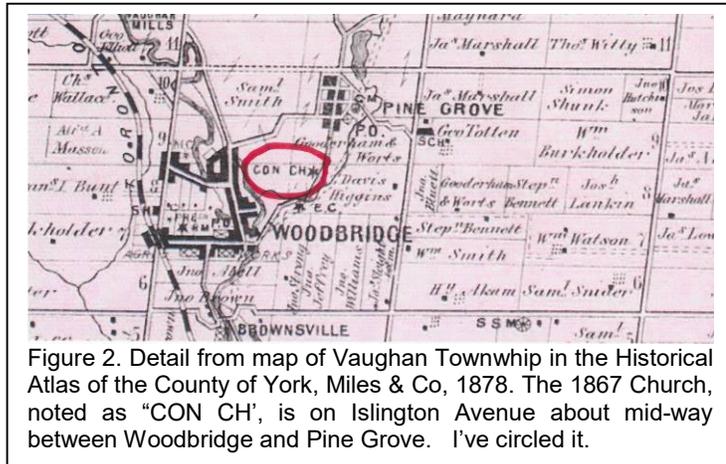


Figure 2. Detail from map of Vaughan Township in the Historical Atlas of the County of York, Miles & Co, 1878. The 1867 Church, noted as "CON CH", is on Islington Avenue about mid-way between Woodbridge and Pine Grove. I've circled it.

Mason to produce bricks for the church, on site, for \$3 per thousand. It took some time to clear the land, acquire wood for the kiln, and make the bricks, but on the 4th of September, 1866 the cornerstone was laid by the pastor, Rev. Robert Hay. The completed church was opened September 15th and 22nd, 1867. Four years later, land for a parsonage was purchased from James G. Worts for a parsonage.

On April 16th, 1902, the church was destroyed by fire, caused by sparks from an adjacent field landing on the roof. The pulpit, Bible, the organ, two pews and some chairs were all that could be saved.

Tweedsmuir describes the aftermath:

Some of the congregation were not in favour of rebuilding, as they felt they could attend the Woodbridge churches.

However, there were the few who felt that a Sunday School of fifty-five scholars laid a

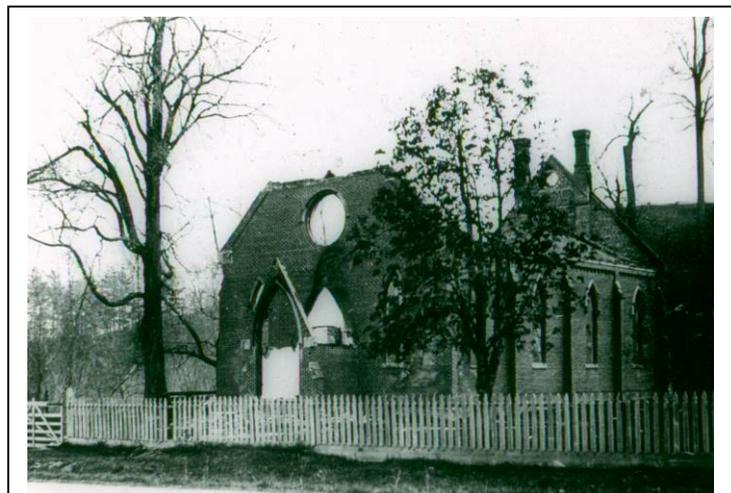


Figure 3. Aftermath of 1902 fire. There are detail differences with the current building shown in Fig 1: rose window above porch and lancet windows flanking, 4 windows along nave rather than 3, and more stone detailing. Photo from Vaughan Archive.

responsibility upon them, as these children were too far from other Sunday Schools to attend. They were encouraged by donations coming from friends in the denomination and other churches and Sunday School workers. Messers. Wm Jeffery, Wm Hutchison and Edward Hutchison collected among the people of the entire district, and met with a ready response in gifts to rebuild. The best of the bricks were cleaned and used to erect the present building.

The reconstructed church was opened by Rev. J. Findlater on July 1903. It is said that in addition to the bricks the doors of the original church were retained. The new church, which is the existing building, is smaller in plan, at 25 by 48 feet, with three window on each side rather than four. Comparing the photo of the burned church with the present building, it looks like the reconstruction was a simpler design, having dropped the rose window in the main front gable, the flanking lancet windows on either side of the entry porch, and the stone trims at the windows and at the bases of the gables.

In May, 1957, the Church joined the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, and changed its name to Pine Grove Baptist Church. I haven't found any record of the fate of that congregation, but at some date the building became the home of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, who maintained ownership until the current tenant, the Vaughan Baptist Church, acquired the property.

In 1991 Pastor William E. Adams planted the Vaughan Baptist Church in the Vellore School and Vellore Memorial Hall, rented on Sundays from the City of Vaughan. In 1994 the parish rented its present home in the 1903 Pine Grove Congregational Church building, and purchased it the following year.

The Vaughan congregation grew and in 2005, a new larger sanctuary was added—a mid-slope side-gable building behind the original church—and acquired the lot and house on the property to the north for use in children's activities. The new sanctuary is used for service, and the old church building is used for meetings, events, and classes.

In 2019, the congregation voted to sell the property to the present owners, and it is planning a move to a new site at Weston Road and Teston Road. The congregation remains on the property as tenants at this time.

2. Chain of Title

The Chain of Title to the two lots is somewhat complex. It appears that the Church leased the land for some time before James G. Worts granted both lots to the Pine Grove Congregational Church on 28 July 1873. The south lot was sold by the Pine Grove Baptist Church in 1979 to an individual and went through ownership by two religious organizations until it was transferred to the Vaughan Baptist Church in 1996. The north lot was sold by the Pine Grove Baptist Church in 1950 and went through a series of owners until it was transferred to the Vaughan Baptist Church in 2015. Chain of Title listings for the two lots are below.

CHAIN OF TITLE RE PIN 03302-0086 – 8274 ISLINGTON AVE., VAUGHAN:

Patent 20 May 1801 Crown to David Thompson;
4982 Bargain & Sale 4 Oct./24 ...Thompson to John Smith;
13452 B & S 3 Dec./36 ...Smith to George Stegman;
15377 B & S 25 Aug./38 ...Stegman to William H. Boulton;
31550 Indenture 1 May 1848 George Stegman to William Hy. Boulton;
31551 Indenture 1 May 1848 John Smith Sr. to William Hy. Boulton;
N.B. a number of documents which are unavailable from Teranet intervene which may or may not pertain to this Chain;
85508 Indenture 16 Jan. 1863 John Boulton to James G. Worts;
87785 Grant 6 Feb. 1865 John Boulton to James G. Worts;
1355 Grant 28 July 1873 ...Worts to Trustees of Pine Grove Congregational Church of Township of Vaughan; ("0030 & 0086)
39513 Grant 10 Mar. 1958 Trustees of Pine Grove Congregational Church to Trustees of Pine Grove Baptist Church; "0086"
A766281 Transfer 15/5/79 the Trustees of Pine Grove Baptist Church to Fredrik Van Stralen;
LT41835 Transfer 23 Apr./81 ...Van Stralen to Pentecostal Holding Corporation of Western Ontario;
LT116640 Transfer 13/4/83 Pentecostal... to The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Toronto;
LT1096602 Transfer 30/04/96 The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Toronto to Trustees of Vaughan Baptist Church;
YR158315 Transfer 2002/06/14 Trustees...to Vaughan Baptist Church;
YR3038188 Transfer 2019/11/26 Vaughan...to 8274-8286 Islington Avenue Inc.

CHAIN OF TITLE RE PIN 03302-0030 – 8286 ISLINGTON AVE., VAUGHAN:

Patent 20 May 1801 Crown to David Thompson;
4982 Bargain & Sale 4 Oct./24 ...Thompson to John Smith;
13452 B & S 3 Dec./36 ...Smith to George Stegman;
15377 B & S 25 Aug./38 ...Stegman to William H. Boulton;
31550 Indenture 1 May 1848 George Stegman to William Hy. Boulton;
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N.B. a number of documents which are unavailable from Teranet intervene which may or may not pertain to this Chain;
85508 Indenture 16 Jan. 1863 John Boulton to James G. Worts;
87785 Grant 6 Feb. 1865 John Boulton to James G. Worts;
1355 Grant 28 July 1873 ...Worts to Trustees of Pine Grove Congregational Church of Township of Vaughan; ("0030 & 0086)
26105 Grant 1 Nov. 1950 Trustees of Pine Grove Congregational Church to Robert N. Lindley and Christabel H. Lindley; sketch – "0030"
44601 Grant 11 Apr./60 Robert N. Lindley and Christabel H. Lindley to Albert William Feilders and Katherine Josephine Feilders;
A775950 Transfer 27/6/79 Albert William Feilders and Katherine Josephine Feilders to Nellie Van Stralen;
LT321635 Transfer 10/09/86 Nellie Van Stralen to Keith Peter Hay and Janice Darlene Hay;

LT910311 Transfer 1993/05/10 ...Hays to A.M.I. Enterprises Inc.;

YR2335087 Transfer 2015/08/07 A.M.I. ... to Vaughan Baptist Church & Flintstone Drilling Limited;

YR3038187 Transfer 2019/11/26 Vaughan/Flintstone... to 8274-8286 Islington Avenue Inc.

3. Engagement

I was engaged by the owner, 8274-8286 Islington Avenue Inc., to produce a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for removal of the existing buildings at 8274-8286 Islington Avenue, Woodbridge, and their replacement by a new multi-family residential building. I made a site visit on 16 February 2022 to interview the current pastor, examine the property, and document it and its context with photographs. I engaged Diane Harman to undertake research for an ownership chronology.

My assessment of the heritage impact relies on my own expertise—I am a recently retired architect and a professional member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals—taking guidance from accepted standards for heritage conservation in Ontario.

4. Introduction to the Site

The property is located on the west side of Islington Avenue, about 1kilometer north of Woodbridge Avenue. It is on a rise, and the land behind it—to the west—rises steeply to the lots on Waymar Heights Boulevard. On the east side of Islington Avenue the land falls to a tributary of the Humber River. To the south of the property there are single family dwellings. and to the immediate north there is a five-storey condominium. Directly across the street there are 3 single family dwellings with large condominiums to the north and south, a sign indicating the loss of at least the south house for construction of another proposed condominium.

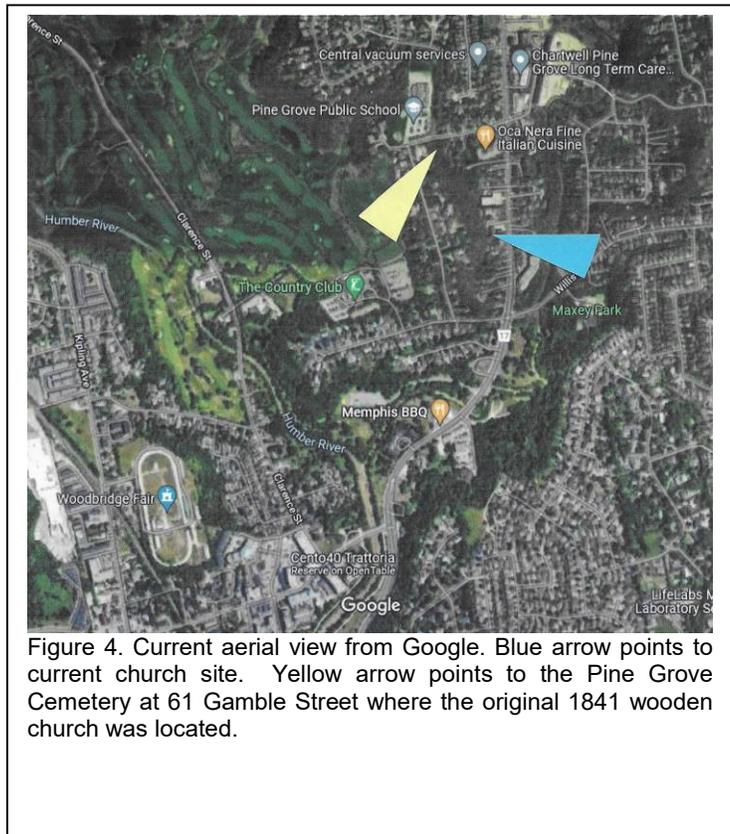


Figure 4. Current aerial view from Google. Blue arrow points to current church site. Yellow arrow points to the Pine Grove Cemetery at 61 Gamble Street where the original 1841 wooden church was located.

5. Description of the Existing Condition

5.1 Context and Non-heritage Buildings

Most of the two lots that comprise the site are relatively flat due to a substantial amount of cutting and filling in a strongly rolling surrounding topography. The elevation roughly matches that of Islington Avenue at the north end of the site, but the roadway falls about 2m at the south end of the site. As a result the east and south edges of the property are bounded by retaining walls. There are two buildings on the site that are without heritage interest. Directly behind the old church building is the new Sanctuary, constructed in 2005. It is set at right angles to the old church with the low-slope gable end facing the parking lot to the north. I would describe the style as suburban ecclesiastical. Two constructions of different eras link the new Sanctuary to the old church.

Near the western edge of the north lot is a rambling two-storey stucco dwelling, much added to and altered. Part of the lot is used for parking and part as a children's playground.

The surrounding uses are residential, and what was once a single-family area is becoming home to multi-residential condominiums of varied sizes. There is one to the immediate north, and a very large one to the southeast. Two others are under construction on opposite side of Islington Avenue.

Except for Figure 10, all following photos are by the Author, 16 Feb 2022.



Figure 6. New Sanctuary building, 2005. This building does not have heritage interest.



Figure 7. House on north lot. This building does not have heritage interest.



Figure 8. Large residential building to the immediate north of the property.



Figure 9. Large residential building across the road.

5.2 1903 Building

The 1903 building has some heritage interest, in itself, and as the successor to two previous churches as described in Section 1, above. Of particular interest is the re-use of the doorway and some of the bricks from the 1867 building.

The building is included in the City of Vaughan's *Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value*, where its style is listed as Gothic Revival.

The building is brick, with a fieldstone foundation. It has a rectangular plan, with a steep front-facing gable. There is a cross installed on the main wall above the vestibule. The side elevations have three lancet masonry openings with stepped brick pilasters at each end and between the windows. The pointed arch tops of the openings have been filled with frame construction, and replacement rectangular windows installed in the lower openings. There are rectangular basement windows in the foundation walls directly under the ground floor windows. There is a vestibule porch with a front-facing gable, housing a pointed arch opening with a transom window over a pair of simple paneled doors. There is a coach light above the arch. There are stepped pilasters at the front corners of the side walls. The only decorative elements on the building are dressed stone sills at the windows and dressed stone blocks at the pilaster steps on both the church and the vestibule.



Figure 10. View from northeast, undated but post-2005. Photo by Mapio. Note that glazing fills entire lancet window openings.



Figure 11. Front porch with doors reported to be saved from the fire. Entry stairs and deck is not original.



Figure 12. Interior of ogee transom window.

On the south side, a small frame shed covering an exterior basement entrance sits just behind the front pilaster, and part of the rear addition that links to the 2005 Sanctuary wraps around the rear corner.



Figure 13. View from northeast. Note that pointed arches are now filled with plywood panels.



Figure 14. View from southeast.



Figure 15. View from the north.

5.3 Interior, 1903 Building

When the 2005 Sanctuary was completed, the old church space became a multi-use room, for meetings, events and classes. Supporting uses, such as kitchen, washroom and storage are accommodated in the link building between the old and new. The interior is very plain, with a paneled wainscoting on drywall walls. The pointed arches above the windows are concealed. What was once a “cathedral” ceiling is now a dropped t-bar ceiling with fluorescent lighting. No original material is visible. It is not identifiable from the inside as having been a church.



Figure 16. Interior looking northeast.



Figure 17. Interior looking east.

6. Heritage Evaluation of the 1903 Church Building

The building is a modest, simple version of a gothic revival church, with a rectangular plan, steep roof, and small entry vestibule. It is smaller than its predecessor, which burned in 1902, and lacks the architectural flourishes that the previous building possessed. It is neither rare nor unique in its design or construction, and the designer is unknown. The windows are modern replacements that don't fill their masonry openings. The front entry deck is a replacement of what was probably a replacement, as shown in Figure 1. The interior has been altered to the extent that its ecclesiastical character has been eradicated. The original congregation left the building behind 43 years ago.

The surroundings have changed over the life of the building. In figure 3, the burned church photograph, it appears that the surroundings are rural. It was a country church, and the two nearby villages of Woodbridge and Pine Grove had not yet extended to the site. The single-family dwellings to the north, south and east appear to date from the 1940s and later. The current development pattern is intensification by assembly of single-family properties, their removal, and the construction of multi-unit condominium dwellings. In brief, the evolving context is no longer defined or supported by the church building.

In my professional opinion, the 1903 Church building at 8274 Islington Avenue in Woodbridge does not possess the degree of heritage value or interest such that it merits preservation. I believe it does merit commemoration for its connection to early Woodbridge, as discussed in Section 8, below.



Figure 19. Isometric View from Northeast.



Figure 21. Isometric View from Northwest.



Figure 20. Isometric View from Southeast.



Figure 22 . Isometric View from Southwest



ISLINGTON AVENUE ELEVATION

Figure 23. Islington Avenue Rendered Elevation

7.1 Conclusions

In my professional opinion, as an architect, heritage consultant and heritage planner, the proposed development does not harm the heritage character or other characteristics of its surroundings. It appears to be a well-detailed design of some serenity, and is in keeping with recent contemporary development on this part of Islington Avenue.

8. Proposed Commemorative Elements

The owner proposes to retain the entry of the 1903 Church—doors, frame, and transom—and use it within the development as an entry feature for the common interior amenity space, and to retain a quantity of the bricks from the Church for re-use as low landscaping walls. According to local history and lore, both of these elements are survivors of the 1867 Church. Details as to locations of these commemorative installations will be determined by discussions with Heritage Staff.

9. Bibliography

Adams, Pastor William E., current incumbent of Vaughan Baptist Church: Interview by the author, February 16, 2022

Barker, Estelle (Mrs. Roy), et al: Tweedsmuir History, Burwick Women's Institute, Woodbridge ON. Published to the Woodbridge Public Library on October 5, 1987

Miles & Co.: Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, etc. Toronto
Obtained from The Canadian County Digital Atlas Project, McGill University

Murdoch, Su: extracts from historical material on Woodbridge, commissioned previously by the author.

Ontario: Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter O. 18, as amended.

Ontario Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs. Provincial Policy Statement 2020, Toronto: 2020

Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport: Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2006.

Vaughan Baptist Church: website <https://www.myvbc.org/history> accessed 1 February 2022.

Wikipedia, entry on Pine Grove, Vaughan: accessed 1 February 2022.

EDUCATION

1970 **B. ARCH** (WITH DISTINCTION) University of Michigan

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

1993 – 2020 Paul Oberst Architect, Principal

1995-2020 Consultant to:
Phillip H. Carter Architect

1994-1996 Consultant to:
R. E. Barnett Architect

1989 - 1993 Designer
Gordon Cheney Architect Inc.

1984 - 1989 Paul Oberst Design, Principal

1981-1984 Designer
Lloyd Alter Architect

1973-1981 Major Works Building, Principal

SELECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCE:

HERITAGE PROJECTS



The Beverley Street project preserved a large Victorian row of 16 houses, maintaining their original use as single-family dwellings. It was nominated for an Ontario Renews Award.

For Lloyd Alter Architect
Contact Lloyd Alter, 416-656-8683
Beverley Street Row, Toronto,
Renovation and preservation, 1982

This project was part of the redevelopment of a largely vacant city block. The developer chose to preserve this 16-house Victorian row, an enlightened attitude for the time.

Mr. Oberst worked on several of the houses in the project, with responsibilities including design, construction documents, and field review .

McCabe Houses, 174-178 St. George Street,
Toronto restoration for adaptive re-use, 1982

Mr. Oberst assisted in working drawings and field review.

For Lloyd Alter Architect

Fulton-Vanderburgh House, Richmond Hill,
exterior restoration, 1984

This project was part of a development agreement for farmland south of Richmond Hill. CAPHC member David Fayle was the LACAC liaison.

Mr. Oberst handled the project, having full responsibility for design, construction documents, and field review.



The Fulton-Vanderburgh House in Richmond Hill, after its restoration. Built around 1810, this is the oldest house in



Woodstock Public Library. Phillip Carter's project combined sensitive alterations and an addition with the restoration of one of Ontario's finest Carnegie libraries.

For Phillip H. Carter Architect and Planner
Contact Phillip Carter, 416-504-6497
Woodstock Public Library,
Restoration, addition, and renovations, 1996

Mr. Oberst assisted in the production of working drawings and wrote the specifications.

Port Hope Public Library, restoration, addition and renovations, 2000

Mr. Oberst wrote the specifications.



Setting back the third-floor addition allowed the restored bank building to retain its street presence, and maintain the detail significance of the cornice and entry-bay decoration. Preservation Services provided oversight for work under the façade improvement program.

For Paul Oberst Architect

The Dominion Bank

2945 Dundas Street W., Toronto

Restoration, addition, and renovation, 2002

This 1915 bank by John M. Lyle Architect was converted to a commercial residential building with a penthouse addition, set back 2.3m from the building line, and following the curve of the façade.

The original structure was restored under a local façade improvement program, including cleaning and installation of replacement 1-over-1 double hung windows on the second floor.



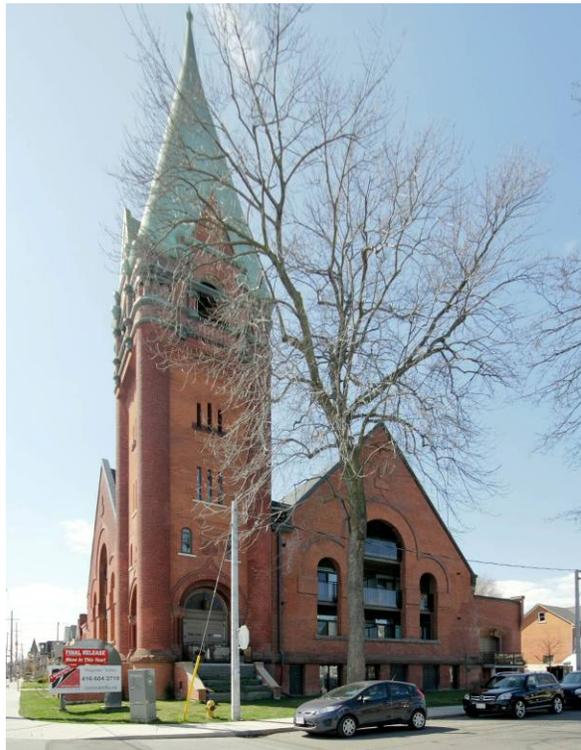
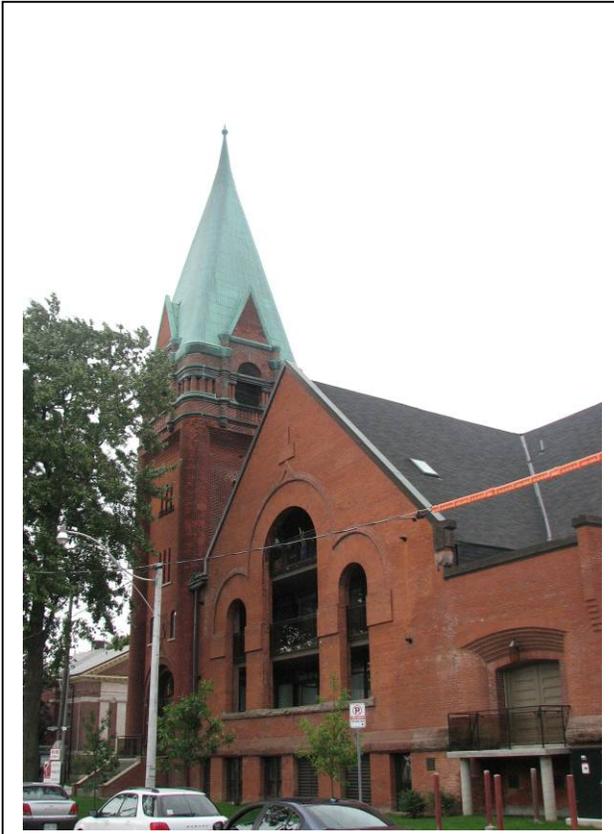
This building has a set-back addition similar to the one at the Dominion Bank across the street. In this case the penthouse has a Moderne design, reflecting the Art Deco style of the original building.

Medland Lofts

2925 Dundas Street W., Toronto

Restoration, addition, and renovation, 2005

This Art Deco building was in extreme disrepair following an uncompleted renovation. The completed project provided 10 residential and 3 commercial condominium units. It contributes to the revitalization of the Junction commercial area.



Balconies behind the original arches double the window area to meet the requirements of residential use, without cutting new openings in the historic masonry structure.

For Paul Oberst Architect

Victoria Lofts

152 Annette Street, Toronto

Residential Conversion,
Occupied 2011

The 1890 Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church was designed by Knox and Elliot, who were also the architects for the Confederation Life building on Yonge Street. In 2005, the parish ceased operation, no longer having sufficient members to maintain this large and important heritage building.

The project preserves and restore the building envelope and many of the interior features, and will provide 34 residential condominiums.

Significant elements that were not used in the project, like the 1908 Casavant organ, and the enormous stained glass windows have been preserved intact in new homes at other churches.

This project received the William H. Greer Award of Excellence at the Heritage Toronto Awards 2013.

HERITAGE DISTRICTS

In association with Phillip H. Carter Architect and Planner

Collingwood Downtown Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2001-2002

Kleinburg-Nashville Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2002-2003

Old Burlington Village Heritage Conservation District Study, 2004-2005. Resulted in our Urban Design Guidelines for the downtown.

Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2005-2006. Received Honourable Mention (2nd place nationally) in the Neighbourhood Plans category—Canadian Institute of Planning, 2007.

Village of Maple Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2006-2007.

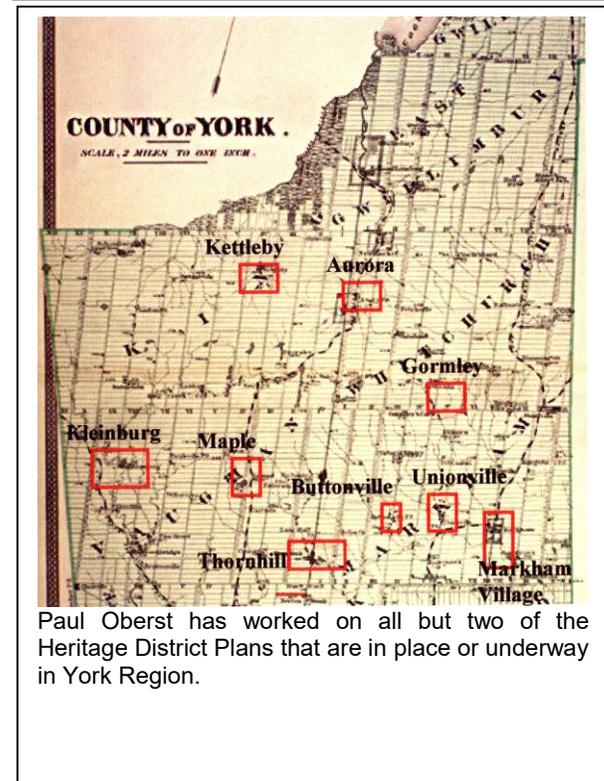
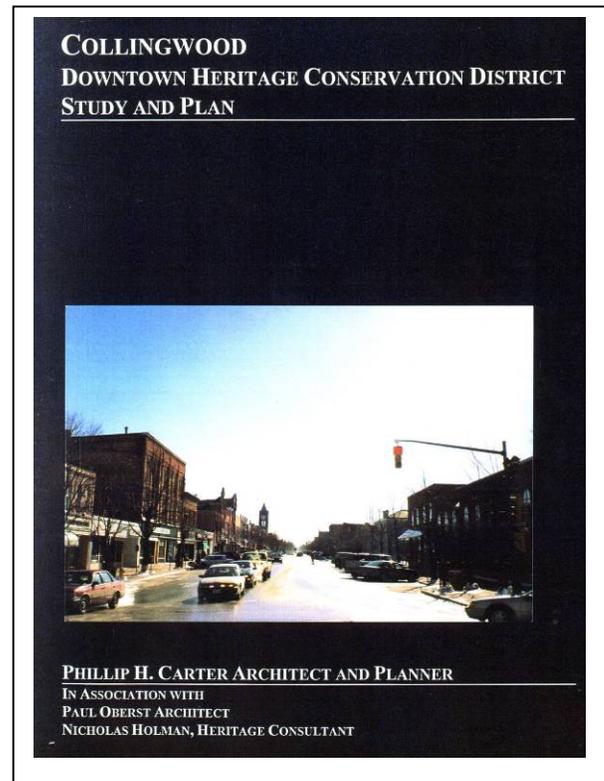
Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, underway.

Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2007.

Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2007.

Gormley Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, 2008

Kettleby Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan, suspended by Council.



Talk of preserving heritage a façade

Zoning change to Spadina will raze historic buildings



JOE FIORITO
City columnist

Walk slowly up Spadina, from Dundas to College; it doesn't take much time. Get yourself some barbecued duck, a bowl of pho, a bag of star fruit and keep walking. Look closely at the buildings as you walk.

Under decades of neglect and

cheap signage you will see a streetscape of handsome bay windows, latticed brick and old stone cornices — the remnants of Victorian Toronto.

Now listen carefully: Hidden in the noise of traffic, there is another, softer sound — landlords rubbing their hands, lawyers drafting agreements, wrecking crews licking their chops.

Final arguments over a zoning change to Spadina Avenue have just been heard by the Ontario Municipal Board; if the change is approved, those old buildings may topple like dominoes.

To boil it down: Certain developers want a change in zoning to allow an increase in the density of the street, which would make the narrow little properties on Spadina more valuable as real estate, which in turn would make it easy for somebody with the cash to bundle up several of the narrow lots into larger parcels for redevelopment — i.e., demolition.

City council has approved the

change, in spite of staff recommendations to the contrary. Perhaps council believes a denser, post-development Spadina will still look like Spadina, only better, healthier, more vibrant; and perhaps one day the fire hydrants will be filled with cherry Kool-Aid.

It could happen, but it ain't likely.

I went to the offices of the OMB last Friday, to listen as the opposition made its case.

I was won over.

Architect and neighbourhood resident Paul Oberst led the arguments by calling a planner for the city, Suzanne Pringle. She explained that if the density along that strip of Spadina were increased, it would make it easy to assemble small lots. However, in order to achieve the proposed density, it would be necessary to demolish what's there and rebuild.

Next, heritage expert Marcia Cuthbert testified that there are a number of architecturally significant buildings along this stretch of Spadina that ought to be considered historic properties. They have not yet been designated as such, partly because the heritage board is overloaded, and partly because of delays caused by amalgamation.

See SPADINA on Page A17

Better safe than sorry?

SPADINA

Continued from Page A16

Among the more notable buildings are: the Standard, a Yiddish theatre that morphed into the Victory Burlesque which in turn became the Golden Harvest Chinese Theatre, at 285 Spadina; Grossman's Tavern, at 377; the house where Red Emma Goldman lay in state upon her death, at 346; and Broadway Hall, once used by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, at 450 Spadina.

Margie Zeidler, one of the few developers in town who preserves heritage buildings for a living, noted that many of the buildings on this stretch of the street were architecturally outstanding, and in reasonable

shape. She said that the economics of preservation were generally equivalent to the economics of demolition.

Cathy Nasmith, another heritage expert, noted that there were whole blocks of Spadina worth preserving — including one stretch of 11 Victorian buildings in a row. When challenged by a lawyer who said that façades could easily be preserved as a part of redevelopment, she observed succinctly, "If there is a heritage scale, with demolition at one end and renovation at the other, I'd say saving a façade is one step up from demolition." In any case, there's no way to enforce the preservation of façades.

And that is a rather brutal summary of a day's worth of arguments and cross-examinations. A couple of questions:

Why is it that when you knock a building down, what goes up in its place is generally uglier? Why don't we force developers to pay a price for zoning changes that give them profits they don't earn? Why, when it comes to Toronto's irreplaceable architectural heritage, don't we take the position that it's better to be safe than sorry? And why don't we follow the example of certain, um, world-class cities — London, Paris, Edinburgh — and encourage preservation?

I'm not one of those guys who thinks old is intrinsically good; neither am I certain that we should erase, deface, or reface our common heritage for the sake of a few bucks.

It's worth noting that the OMB rarely rules against a decision taken by city council, but it has happened. Yes, and the water in the hydrants could run sweet and red.

National Post

CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Mr. Oberst was the "Party", before the Ontario Municipal Board, opposing an application for rezoning and Official Plan Amendment on Spadina Avenue in Toronto in 2001. Rezoning threatened 113 heritage properties on one kilometre of street frontage.

He organized and presented the case to the OMB, with the assistance of residents and many heritage activists.

Joe Fiorito's column, to the left, provides a succinct narration.

Mr. Oberst continues to work on heritage issues in the neighbourhood, being involved in the designation of Kensington Market as a National Historic Site, and the preservation of the historic parish of Saint Stephen-in-the-Fields.

Contact:
Catherine Nasmith
416-598-4144

Building adaptation **HONOURABLE MENTION** Jury comments



The community-driven development process for this project is commendable and as such this residential project deserves recognition that goes beyond its spare architectural treatment and physical form. A skillful rehabilitation of a surplus building not only for residential use but also with adjacent spaces that have been adapted to the visual benefit of the neighbourhood.

Kensington Market Lofts
 Architect
 Robert E. Barnett Architect and
 Paul Oberst Architect in Joint Venture

The building on the left was originally a 1927 elementary school. The building on the right was the 1952 Provincial Institute of Trades. Although this is not a restoration project, it retained the main aspects of these traditionalist and early-modern buildings. This contrasts with the advice of a City consultant that they be demolished and replaced with an 8-storey tower.

OTHER ARCHITECTURAL WORK

RESIDENTIAL

Kensington Market Lofts
 Condominium Conversion, George Brown College Kensington Campus, \$13,000,000

Design partner, in joint venture with R.E. Barnett Architect.

At the Toronto Architecture and Urban Design Awards 2000 the jury created the new category of ‘Adaptive Re-use’ to recognize this project and the Roundhouse. Since it was a new category, we received an honourable mention rather than an award.

St John’s Lofts
 Condominium Conversion, 1 St. John’s Road, Toronto, \$1,000,000
 Design partner, in joint venture with R.E. Barnett Architect

COMMERCIAL

Retail/Apartment Building, 80 Kensington Avenue, Toronto, \$400,000
 Designer for Paul Oberst Architect

Kings Tower, 393 King Street West Toronto, 12 Storey mixed use building, \$10M
 Designer for Gordon Cheney Architect Inc

Office Building, 2026 Yonge Street Toronto, 3 Storey mixed use building, \$3M
 Designer for Lloyd Alter Architect

THEATRE WORK

Set designer, *A Ride Across Lake Constance*, by Peter Handke
 New Theatre, Toronto 1975

Set and Costume designer, *The Curse of the Starving Class*, by Sam Shepard
 New Theatre, Toronto, 1979

