

Authority: Toronto Community Council Report No. 16, Clause No. 68
as adopted by City of Toronto Council on October 3, 4 and 5, 2000
Enacted by Council: October 5, 2000

CITY OF TORONTO

BY-LAW No. 659-2000

To designate the property at 111 Richmond Street West (Yolles and Rotenberg Building) as being of architectural and historical value or interest.

WHEREAS authority was granted by Council to designate the property at 111 Richmond Street West (Yolles and Rotenberg Building) as being of architectural and historical value or interest; and

WHEREAS the *Ontario Heritage Act* authorizes the Council of a municipality to enact by-laws to designate real property, including all the buildings and structures thereon, to be of historical or architectural value or interest; and

WHEREAS the Council of the City of Toronto has caused to be served upon the owners of the land and premises known as 111 Richmond Street West, and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Notice of Intention to designate the property and has caused the Notice of Intention to be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the municipality as required by the *Ontario Heritage Act*; and

WHEREAS the reasons for designation are set out in Schedule "A" to this by-law; and

WHEREAS no notice of objection to the proposed designation was served upon the Clerk of the municipality; and

The Council of the City of Toronto HEREBY ENACTS as follows:

1. The property at 111 Richmond Street West, more particularly described in Schedule "B" and shown on Schedule "C" attached to this by-law, is designated as being of architectural and historical value or interest.

2. The City Solicitor is authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be registered against the property described in Schedule "B" to this by-law in the proper Land Registry Office.

3. The City Clerk is authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be served upon the owners of the property at 111 Richmond Street West and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of this by-law to be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the City of Toronto as required by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

ENACTED AND PASSED this 5th day of October, A.D. 2000.

CASE OOTES,
Deputy Mayor

NOVINA WONG,
City Clerk

(Corporate Seal)

SCHEDULE “A”**REASONS FOR DESIGNATION****YOLLES AND ROTENBERG BUILDING
111 RICHMOND STREET WEST, TORONTO, WARD 24****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report is the “Long Statement of Reasons for Designation” for the designation of the property at 111 Richmond Street West (Yolles and Rotenberg Building) under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. It contains the Heritage Property Profile, as well as sections on the Historical Occupancy, Architectural Description and Significance of the property. Sources, a Location Map and Photographs are included. The introduction, below, forms the “Short Statement of Reasons for Designation”, intended for publication.

The property at 111 Richmond Street West is recommended for designation for architectural and historical reasons. The development company of Yolles and Rotenberg commissioned the building as its new head office. The firm engaged Peter Dickinson, in his capacity as chief designer for the Toronto architectural partnership of Page and Steele, to prepare the designs. Morden Yolles was the engineer. Opening in 1954, the Yolles and Rotenberg Building was notable as the first office building in Toronto with automatic elevators.

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building employs a concrete slab structural system that was innovative at the time. Rising 15 stories, the building is designed with a podium and tower. The recessed single-storey base has a transparent appearance and features glazed shopfronts and strip windows. The top three stories are setback as a penthouse. In all floors, operable windows contain green tinted glass. Placed on the north façade along Richmond Street, the principal entrance is identified by Dickinson’s trademark canopy that projects over the street and extends into the interior vestibule. On the west elevation, the south part of the wall is setback above the podium. The north end of the west wall is clad with a solid sheath of green-glazed brick, now concealed by the neighbouring building at 121 Richmond Street West. The east and rear (south) walls face the courtyard of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre.

On the interior, the lobby is an important feature. Extending across the ground floor of the building, it is entered from the north end and features an open staircase to the basement. As originally designed, the lobby incorporated terrazzo floors, a scalloped plaster ceiling and a multi-coloured marble-clad east wall (the lobby has been altered).

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building is located on the south side of Richmond Street West between York and Shepherd Streets. It is important in context with the adjoining Federal Building (1922-1923) at 85 Richmond Street West and the Richmond-Adelaide Centre (1964) at 120 Adelaide Street West, both commissioned by Yolles and Rotenberg.

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building at 111 Richmond Street West is an important surviving example of the work of Peter Dickinson (1925-1961). As the chief designer for Page and Steele (1950-1958) and as the principal of his own firm (1958-1961), Dickinson designed landmark buildings in Toronto during the Modern era, many of which were commissioned by Yolles and Rotenberg. The Yolles and Rotenberg Building joins the Benvenuto Place Apartments, the O'Keefe Centre (now the Hummingbird Centre), the Prudential Building, and the Queen Elizabeth Building at Exhibition Place as recognized heritage buildings designed by Peter Dickinson.

1.1 HERITAGE PROPERTY PROFILE

*Circa 1960*

YOLLES AND ROTENBERG BUILDING

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|--------------------------|---|
| ADDRESS: | 111 Richmond Street West (south side of Richmond Street West, between Sheppard Street and York Street) |
| WARD: | 24 |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY: | Financial District |
| HISTORICAL NAME: | Yolles and Rotenberg Building |
| CONSTRUCTION DATE: | 1954 |
| ORIGINAL OWNER: | Yolles and Rotenberg |
| ORIGINAL USE: | Commercial (office building) |
| CURRENT USE: * | Commercial (office building); (* this does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law) |
| ARCHITECT: | Page and Steele; Peter Dickinson, chief designer |
| BUILDER/CRAFTSMAN: | Morden Yolles, engineer |
| ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: | Modern |
| ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS: | 1963, two-storey addition, east wall |
| EVALUATION: | Architectural and historical criteria |
| RECORDER: | Kathryn Anderson, Heritage Preservation Services |
| REPORT DATE: | July 2000 |

2.0 HISTORIAL OCCUPANCY AND SIGNIFICANCE

2.1 FINANCIAL DISTRICT

In 1793, Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe directed the establishment of the Town of York in a ten-block area east of present-day Jarvis Street. With the rapid development of the townsite, Peter Russell, in his capacity as provincial administrator, extended the boundaries of the community west to Peter Street in 1797. With this incursion into the lands formerly reserved for the garrison, Russell created New Town as the location for the community's public buildings, including the first courthouse and jail, St. James' Cathedral, and the original Toronto General Hospital. In 1829, the establishment of the Third Parliament Buildings on Front Street West (present site of the CBC Broadcasting Centre) and Upper Canada College at King and Simcoe Streets prompted the development of the surrounding area for upscale housing. Among the prominent residents was John Ritchie, a Toronto contractor who completed his own house, as well as an impressive rowhouse called Ritchie's Terrace on the north side of Adelaide Street West, east of York Street, in the mid-1800s.

When the Town of York was incorporated as the City of Toronto in 1834, King Street was the municipality's original "main street" and ran west from Old Town through the New Town neighbourhood. However, the establishment of department stores by Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton turned Yonge Street into the principal commercial street by the end of the 19th century. While financial institutions and businesses still dominated King Street, the area southwest of King and Yonge emerged as the industrial core, spurred by the arrival of the railways in the 1850s. When the Great Fire of 1904 destroyed this manufacturing centre, it was redeveloped as Toronto's Financial District. The city's first skyscrapers clustered near the corner of Yonge and King Streets in the World War I era, and the 1920s introduced a second generation of tall buildings along Bay Street from King to Queen Streets. The area between Toronto's Third (Old) City Hall at Queen and Bay and the Toronto Stock Exchange on lower Bay Street was filled with financial institutions and insurance companies.

With the extension of the City Beautiful Movement from Europe to North America in the late 19th century, Toronto's Financial District became the focus of civic improvement schemes. In 1905, the Guild of Civic Art financed a plan that laid out a series of ceremonial boulevards between Front and Queen Streets, west of Bay Street. The Civic Improvement League proposed a scheme in 1911 to develop "Federal Avenue", running north from Union Station (then in the planning stages) to a ceremonial square where Toronto's New City Hall now stands. The route followed the line of present-day Sheppard Street that runs west of and parallel to Bay Street between Adelaide and Richmond Streets. After World War I, as the Financial District expanded west of Bay Street, the Graphic Arts Building (1913) at 73 Richmond Street West was designed to flank the planned Federal Avenue. By the time the aptly named Federal Building (1922-1923) and Concourse Building (1928) were in place, plans to reorient Federal Avenue as Cambrai Avenue were blocked by the development of buildings along the proposed route. Construction activities were curtailed during the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. After the war, increasing prosperity resulted in infill and redevelopment in the Financial District.

2.2 YOLLES AND ROTENBERG BUILDING

In 1923, the building firm of Yolles and Rotenberg completed the Federal Building on the southwest corner of Richmond and Sheppard Streets as their head office. As ‘construction engineers’, Leon Yolles and Harry Rotenberg began acquiring land and acting as their own general contractors to develop the sites. The firm had previously focused on industrial projects, among them the Capital Building (1920) at 336 Adelaide Street West in the King-Spadina manufacturing district. The success of the Federal Building led to a series of contracts, including the National Building (1926) at 347 Bay Street and the Sterling Tower (1928) at 372 Bay Street. The latter two buildings are identified on the City of Toronto’s Inventory of Heritage Properties.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the block bounded by Adelaide, York, Richmond and Sheppard Streets, with the exception of the Federal and Concourse Buildings, was redeveloped with a series of parking lots and garages. Yolles and Rotenberg acquired land on Richmond Street, directly west of the Federal Building, as the site of one of the first major commercial developments of the post-World War II era. To design their new head office on the site, the firm engaged architect Peter Dickinson, chief designer at the Toronto architectural firm of Page and Steele. The Yolles and Rotenberg Building housed the firm’s head office and that of engineer Morden Yolles, whose interior was designed by the important Vancouver-based architect, Ron Thom.

In 1963, Yolles and Rotenberg planned the development of a third office complex in the block. The Richmond-Adelaide Centre is located on the north side of Adelaide Street West, midway between York and Sheppard Streets. The development includes an open plaza with an office tower and banking pavilion above an underground pedestrian mall. All of the latter features appear in the Toronto-Dominion Centre that post-dates it. The underground concourse at the Richmond-Adelaide Centre was specifically designed with a future connection to the PATH system, then in the planning stages and ultimately connecting a series of office complexes between Union Station and New City Hall.

3.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 CONTEXT

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building is located on the south side of Richmond Street West, midway between York and Sheppard Streets. It is set in an open plaza with the Richmond-Adelaide Centre to the south and the Federal Building to the east. Originally placed in open space, a portion of its west wall now abuts the neighbouring building at 121 Richmond Street West.

In the immediate neighbourhood, the Graphic Arts Building at 73 Richmond Street West, the Victory Building at 78 Richmond Street West, the Federal Building at 85 Richmond Street West, and the Concourse Building at 100 Adelaide Street West are identified as heritage properties designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

3.2 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE AND ARCHITECT

Architect Peter Dickinson designed the Yolles and Rotenberg Building in his capacity as chief designer for the Toronto architectural firm of Page and Steele. The origins of the firm date to 1925 when Forsey Pemberton Page established his own practice following a decade-long partnership with Stanford Warrington. Two years later, he formed a new firm with W. Harland Steele, a recent graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. While Page and Steele quickly gained a following among high-profile clients with its Georgian Revival buildings, it turned to Modern design with the Park Lane Apartments (1938) on St. Clair Avenue West and to the Moderne style with the Garden Court Apartments (completed 1942) on Bayview Avenue in Leaside. Following World War II, the firm engaged many graduates of English polytechnical schools, among them Peter Dickinson (1925-1961).

Peter Dickinson enrolled at the Architectural Association in London during World War II, graduating in 1948. Two years later, the architect entered a competition for the Festival of Britain, an exhibition of English arts and technology in London that created a stage for modern architecture in post-war England. With this background, “Dickinson was part of a school of designers that eschewed “cold” Miesian (i.e. T. D. Centre) architecture and formed a modern architectural aesthetic that was more whimsical and picturesque: patterned walls, colour panels, and a level of detail at street level which engaged the passerby” (E. R. A., 111 Richmond Street West, 3). Following his arrival in Toronto, one of Dickinson’s first projects at Page and Steele was the Yolles and Rotenberg Building, a commission initiated in 1950 and completed four years later. As he assumed the role of chief designer for the firm, Dickinson’s projects included the Benvenuto Place Apartments (1955), the Queen Elizabeth Building (1956-1957) on the exhibition grounds, and the O’Keefe Centre (completed in 1960 with Earle C. Morgan as the architect of record in association with Page and Steele).

In 1958, Dickinson left Page and Steele to open his own firm, Peter Dickinson Associates. Until his untimely death in 1961, Dickinson designed a range of buildings in Ontario and Quebec. The Prudential Building (1960) at 2 King Street West is one of the few surviving examples of his firm’s work in Toronto, although in altered form. His work was continued by four of his employees who formed the Webb Zerafa Menkes Housden Partnership. They completed projects commissioned by Yolles and Rotenberg, including the Telegram Building (1963-1964, now the Globe and Mail Building) on Front Street West and the Richmond-Adelaide Centre at 120 Adelaide Street West.

3.3 EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building is designed in the Modern style. The building employs a concrete slab structural system that was innovative at the time. Brick and stone are applied for the cladding. Rising 15 stories, the design is organized with a single-storey podium supporting an 11-storey tower with a three-storey penthouse. The recessed single-storey base has a transparent appearance and, along the north wall, features glazed shopfronts between coloured granite piers. The main entrance is positioned on the north wall where a large curved canopy (a feature often employed on Dickinson’s designs) projects over the street and extends into the interior vestibule. Above the base, the next 11 floors are organized with alternating horizontal bands of glazing and masonry. Projecting limestone spandrels separate

strip windows containing operable metal-framed windows with tinted green glass. The penthouse displays similar finishes and is clad with glazed green-coloured brick. The partial party wall on the west elevation was created as a special feature of the building but is now concealed by the adjoining office building at 121 Richmond Street West. As designed, the west wall was organized in two sections, with the north end clad with a solid plane of glazed green-coloured brick. The south end of the west elevation is set back from the podium to let light in. It repeats the pattern of solid and void introduced on the other walls. The ear and rear (south) walls face the north and south courtyards of the Richmond-Adelaide Centre. On the east wall, a two-storey glazed addition dating to 1963 is not included in the Reasons for Designation.

3.4 INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building contains a ground-floor *lobby* that is identified in the Reasons for Designation. Entering under the canopy and through the north entrance, a vestibule leads to a lobby that extends south to the Richmond Street wall. Featuring an open staircase to the basement level, the lobby has a landing that is placed above the entrance to the underground parking garage off York Street. Significant interior features in the *lobby* are the terrazzo floor, the scalloped ceiling, the marble-clad west wall with elevator doors, and the patterned multi-coloured marble tiles (later concealed by mirror glass panels) on the east wall.

4.0 SUMMARY

The Yolles and Rotenberg Building is an important post-World War II office building completed in Toronto's Financial District. It was designed with a number of technical innovations, including the first automatic elevators in a commercial structure in Toronto. The Yolles and Rotenberg is a significant example of the work of the important Modern Toronto architect, Peter Dickinson.

5.0 SOURCES

Blumenson, John. Ontario Architecture. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990.

Careless, J. M. S. Toronto to 1918. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1984.

Dendy, William. Lost Toronto. 2nd ed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993.

E. R. A. Architect Inc. "Architectural Assessment" (100 Adelaide Street West, 85 Richmond Street West, and 111 Richmond Street West). Prepared for Oxford Properties Group Inc., 1999.

Freedman, Adele. Sight Lines. Toronto: Oxford University, 1990.

Kalman, Harold. A History of Canadian Architecture. Vol. 2. Toronto: Oxford University, 1994.

McHugh, Patricia. Toronto Architecture: a city guide. 2nd ed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989.

Murray, Peter, and Stephen Trombley. Modern British Architecture Since 1945. London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1984.

Scadding, Henry. Toronto of Old (1873). Ed. by F. H. Armstrong. Toronto: Oxford University, 1966.

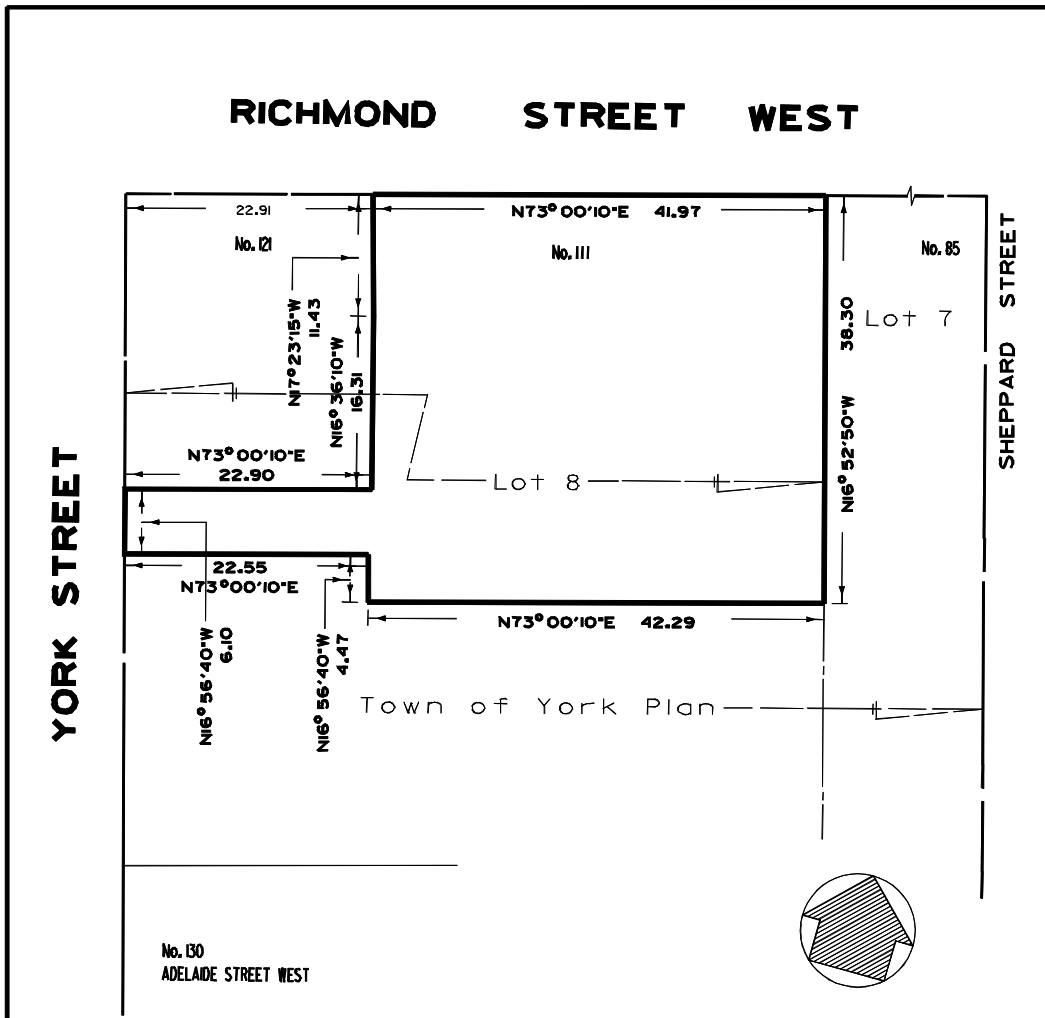
SCHEDULE “B”

In the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario, being composed of parts of Town Lots 7 and 8 on the south side of Hospital Street, now Richmond Street West, according to the Town of York Plan registered in the Land Registry Office for the Metropolitan Toronto Registry Division (No. 64), designated as PARTS 27, 28 32 and 33 on a plan of survey deposited in the said Land Registry Office as 63R-1677.

The southerly limit of Richmond Street West and the easterly limit of York Street as confirmed under the Boundaries Act by Plan BA 1786 registered on September 10, 1980 as CT431216.

The hereinbefore described land being delineated by heavy outline on Plan SYE2951 dated September 18, 2000, as set out in Schedule “C”.

Schedule "C"



Premises No. 111 Richmond Street West

NOTE:

THIS SKETCH IS NOT A PLAN OF SURVEY AND HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM SURVEY NOTES AND OFFICE RECORDS. IT SHALL NOT BE USED EXCEPT FOR THE PURPOSE INDICATED IN THE TITLE BLOCK.



WORKS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

SKETCH TO ILLUSTRATE

**LAND DESIGNATED AS
 BEING OF ARCHITECTURAL AND
 HISTORICAL VALUE OR INTEREST**

RATIO 1:500



Drawn ME
 Checked K.F.
 Date: SEPT. 18, 2000

W. Kowalenko - City Surveyor

FILE
 A2-Z14

PLAN SYE2951

SYE2951