



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### 407 Huron Street – Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

<b>Date:</b>	March 2, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
<b>From:</b>	Acting Director, Policy & Research, City Planning Division
<b>Wards:</b>	Trinity-Spadina – Ward 20
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

#### SUMMARY

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This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 407 Huron Street (Thomas W. Wilson House) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. In October 2009, the property owner applied for a residential demolition permit which has not been issued.

Following research and evaluation, staff have determined that the property merits inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Because the site is the subject of a demolition application, staff recommend that Council state its intention to designate the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act to protect the site's cultural heritage values and attributes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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**City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council include the property at 407 Huron Street (Thomas Wilson House) on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.
2. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 407 Huron Street (Thomas Wilson House) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

3. If there are no objections to the proposed designation in accordance with Section 29(6) of the Ontario Heritage Act, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bills in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.
4. If there are objections in accordance with Section 29(7) of the Ontario Heritage Act, City Council direct the City Clerk to refer the proposed designation to the Conservation Review Board.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. The public Notice of Intention to Designate will be advertised on the City's web site in accordance with the City of Toronto Act provisions.

### **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In October, 2009, the owners of the property at 407 Huron Street applied for Residential Demolition Application No. 09-1177242 to demolish the house form building on the site. Heritage Preservation Services was advised through the regular circulation process that a demolition permit had been requested for the subject address and staff advised the Buildings Department that the property was not included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

Following the circulation of the demolition application, staff were provided with photographs of the site, resulting in the undertaking of research and evaluation to determine if the property merited inclusion on the City's heritage inventory. Staff have confirmed that the demolition permit has not been issued because the owners have not applied for a permit for a replacement building as required under the Building Code Act.

### **COMMENTS**

The Reasons for Designation are found in Attachment No. 3. The property at 407 Huron Street, containing the Thomas Wilson House, is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the categories of design and contextual value. Contextually significant on Huron Street, the Thomas Wilson House (1890) is a rare surviving example of late 19<sup>th</sup> century residential design, distinguished by its emphatic corner tower.

A location map (Attachment No. 1) and photographs (Attachment No. 2) are attached. The Reasons for Designation (Statement of Significance) are intended to be posted on the

City of Toronto's web site and served on the owners of 407 Huron Street and on the Ontario Heritage Trust according to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Reasons for Designation include a statement of the cultural heritage value of the property with a description of its heritage attributes.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

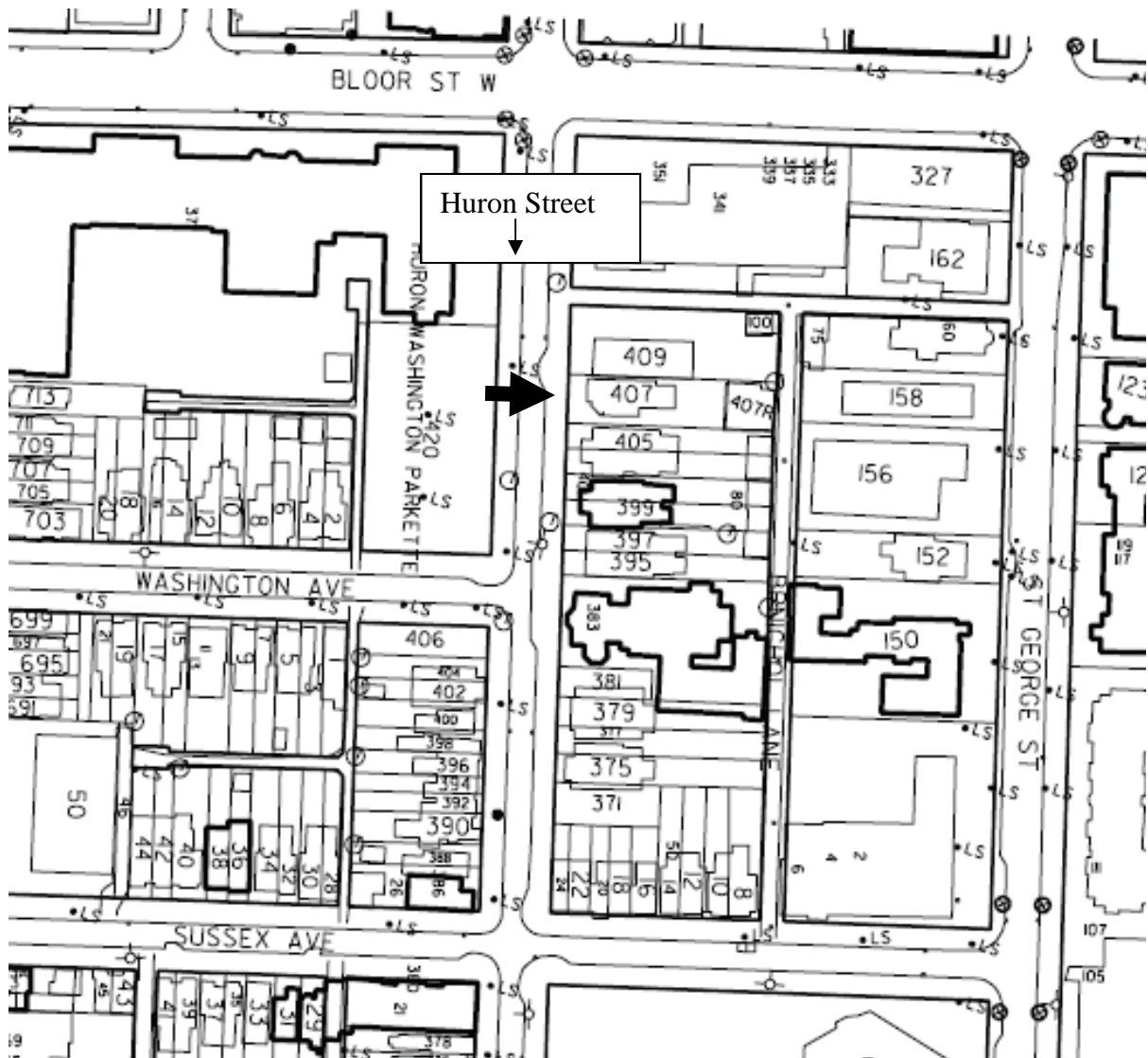
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Kerri Voumvakis, Acting Director  
Policy and Research  
City Planning Division

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map  
Attachment No. 2 – Photographs  
Attachment No. 3 – Reasons for Designation (Statement of Significance)  
Attachment No. 4 – Heritage Property Research and Evaluation Report



The **arrow** marks the location of the property.

This location map is for information purposes only;  
the exact boundaries of the property are not shown.



Thomas Wilson House

Description

The property at 407 Huron Street is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the categories of design, associative and contextual value. Found on the east side of Huron Street in the first block south of Bloor Street West, the Thomas Wilson House (1890) is a 2½ storey house form building. The property is located within the University of Toronto campus precinct.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Thomas Wilson House is a rare and representative example of Queen Anne Revival design, the popular late 19<sup>th</sup> century style identified by its asymmetry, mixture of materials and variety of architectural elements. The Thomas Wilson House is set apart from other residential buildings in the neighbourhood by its distinctive 2 ½ storey bay window that is deliberately placed on the southwest corner to overlook Huron Street and the south end of the property that originally accommodated a mid-block laneway.

The Thomas Wilson House was constructed by and for a contractor who built house form buildings in the Huron and Sussex neighbourhood during a decade-long period in the late 1800s. The property was subsequently occupied by a series of prominent businessmen, beginning with John Douglas, a Toronto manufacturer of building materials and fittings.

Contextually, the Thomas Wilson House demonstrates multiple heritage values. The property supports the historical character of Huron Street, south of Bloor Street, as it first developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a high-end residential enclave northwest of the University of Toronto campus and Queen's Park. With its vintage, appearance, height and setback, the property at 407 Huron Street is also physically, visually and historically linked to the surrounding Huron and Sussex neighbourhood where the adjoining Campus Co-op houses and St. Thomas's Anglican Church are recognized heritage properties. In its current context and as a former fraternity house, the Thomas Wilson House is functionally related to its surroundings in the University of Toronto campus precinct, which contains properties associated with the university's residential, administrative and academic functions.

## Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 407 Huron Street are:

- The 2 ½ storey house form building
- The scale, form and massing
- The materials, with brick cladding and brick, stone and wood detailing
- The gable roof, with a firebreak end wall (north) and gabled dormers
- At the southwest corner, the 2½-storey bay window under a gable roof with wood trim
- Flanking the bay window on the west and south, the two-storey verandahs with wood detailing (the west verandah has been enclosed in the first storey)
- The fenestration, with flat-headed and round-arched window openings with sandstone trim
- On the north wall, the single-storey bay window
- The two-storey rear (east) wing with brick cladding and a mansard roof with gabled dormers
- The placement and setback of the building on the site



**HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT**



**THOMAS WILSON HOUSE  
407 HURON STREET, TORONTO**

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services  
City Planning Division  
City of Toronto

March 2010



## 1. DESCRIPTION



Above: detail, southwest bay

<b>407 Huron Street: Thomas Wilson House</b>	
ADDRESS	407 Huron Street (east side, south of Bloor Street West)
WARD	20 (Trinity-Spadina)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan D207, Part Lots 10 & 11
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Huron-Sussex
HISTORICAL NAME	Thomas Wilson House
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1890
ORIGINAL OWNER	Thomas Wilson, builder
ORIGINAL USE	Residential (single detached house)
CURRENT USE*	Residential (single detached house); vacant in 2010 * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Thomas Wilson, builder
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Brick and wood construction with brick cladding and brick, stone and wood trim
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Queen Anne Revival
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	1946, west entrance porch added, Kaplan and Sprachman architects; 1955, coach house (stable) demolished
CRITERIA	Design/physical, historical/associative and contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	cultural heritage evaluation
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	March 2010

## 2. BACKGROUND

### i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
1874	Plan D207, subdivision of Part Park Lot 14, registered by City of Toronto
1888 Oct	Contractor Thomas W. Wilson purchased parts of Lots 10 and 11 for \$2500
1888 & 1889	Wilson mortgaged the property for a total amount exceeding \$8500
1889 Sept	Tax assessment rolls record an “unfinished house” & stable valued at \$5000 on Wilson’s property
1890	Goad’s Fire Insurance Atlas outlines the house at 407 Huron
1890 Sept	According to tax assessment rolls, Wilson owned and occupied the house
1891 Feb	Wilson sold the property to Annie Douglas
1891 Sept	John Douglas is recorded as the owner/occupant of 407 Huron St
1892 Apr	Mary Jane McCutcheon purchased the site
1939	Mutual Club acquired the property
1965	Zeta Delta Property Association purchased the site
2008	Fraternity house sold

### ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Neighbourhood

The property at 407 Huron Street was originally part of Park Lot 14, one of the series of allotments laid out between present-day Queen and Bloor Streets in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and intended as the setting of country estates for associates of the provincial government. Peter Russell, the first Receiver-General for the Province of Upper Canada, purchased adjoining park lots 14 through 16 as the expansive setting of his country house named “Petersfield.”<sup>1</sup> By the mid 1800s, Russell’s heirs began dispersing his lands, which were subdivided for residential development.

In 1874, the City of Toronto registered Plan D207 as a small 30-lot subdivision bounded by present-day Bloor Street West (north), St. George Street (east), Sussex Avenue (south) and Huron Street (west). While the subdivision remained undeveloped when Goad’s Atlas was published in 1884, subsequent land records indicate that sales of the lots began in 1886. The gradual infill of the subdivision with detached, semi-detached and row houses can be traced on the insurance atlases for 1890 onward, and the city directories for this period indicate that the properties were occupied by prominent businessmen, politicians and other community leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> Lundell, Liz, The Estates of Old Toronto, 1997, 16-17

## 407 Huron Street

In October 1888, contractor Thomas W. Wilson acquired Parts of Lots 10 and 11 on Huron Street for \$2500. He subsequently mortgaged his property for more than \$8500, suggesting the funds were required to finance the construction of the residence at 407 Huron Street. The tax assessment roll dated September 1889 records an “unfinished building” on the site, but by the following year a 2 ½-storey detached house was occupied by Wilson and his family.

Early in 1891, Wilson sold the property at 407 Huron Street to Annie Douglas, the wife of businessman John Douglas, for the substantial sum of \$13,500. In addition to the residence, the site included a brick coach house that was placed near a rear laneway (now known as bpNichol Lane). The Douglas family resided on-site for just over a year before Mary Jane McCutcheon became the new owner. She occupied the house with her husband, a superintendent with the federal Life Assurance Company, until 1900.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the property at 407 Huron Street was owned and occupied by Robert Pentecost, director of a wholesale dry goods, woollens and carpets company. The Mutual Club’s acquisition of the site in 1939 marked the change from single-family occupancy to institutional use. In 1946, Toronto architects Kaplan and Sprachman designed the new west entrance to the building with a brick-clad porch and a Classical door surround and cornice. In 1965, the Zeta Delta Property Association purchased the property for the Sigma Nu fraternity house that remained in operation at 407 Huron Street until 2008.

### iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The property at 407 Huron Street contains a house form building that faces west toward Huron Street. The structure has a 2 ½-storey rectangular plan that rises above a stone base. With red brick cladding and brick, sandstone and wood trim, the building is covered by a gabled roof with a firebreak wall (north) and gabled dormers. A 2 ½-storey bay window with a gabled roof marks the southwest corner. The adjoining walls (west and south) feature two-storey verandahs with wood detailing (the west verandah has been enclosed in the first floor to accommodate the main entrance). The fenestration mixes flat-headed and round-arched openings highlighted with sandstone detailing. The north wall displays a bay window in the first storey, while the rear (east) wall is concealed by the two-storey wing that features complementary brick cladding and a mansard roof with gabled dormers. The brick coach house or stable that originally marked the east end of the property was demolished in 1955 and replaced by a concrete-clad garage (auto shop), which does not support the cultural heritage value of the site.

### iv. CONTEXT

The property at 407 Huron Street is located on the east side of the street in the first block south of Bloor Street West. The Thomas Wilson House is placed between the single detached house form building at 409 Huron (north) and the group of three semi-detached

houses that comprise Campus Co-op at 395-405 Huron (south). Facing the Huron-Washington Parkette to the west, at the east end the property adjoins bpNichol Lane. To the south, Huron Street contains a series of detached, semi-detached and row houses that share a similar scale, setback and vintage, apart from St. Thomas’s Anglican Church at 383-385 Huron, which is an institutional and neighbourhood landmark.

### 3. EVALUATION CHECKLIST

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Ontario Heritage Act: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The evaluation table is marked “N/A” if the criterion is “not applicable” to the property or X if it is applicable, with explanatory text below.

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	<b>X</b>
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>X</b>
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	<b>NA</b>

**Rare and Representative Example of Style** – The Thomas Wilson House reflects the Queen Anne Revival style that was popular in Toronto at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and identified by its asymmetrical expression, mixture of materials and variety of architectural elements. Originating in England, the style was promoted in Canada through pattern books and architectural periodicals, including the Canadian Architect and Builder. Among the earliest and most influential examples of Queen Anne Revival styling in Toronto was Haddon Hall (1883, demolished), commissioned by department store founder Robert Simpson on Bloor Street East.<sup>2</sup>

On the Thomas Wilson house, the Queen Anne Revival style is reflected in the asymmetrical plan with a bevelled southwest corner flanked by open verandahs, as well as the mix of red brick cladding with sandstone details and wood trim. The architectural highlight of the composition is the dominant 2 ½-storey bay window that anchors the southwest corner and, in the attic level, features a balcony with wood embellishments. The dramatic placement and design of the bay is a feature more likely found on buildings occupying corner lots.<sup>3</sup> However, it was deliberately positioned to overlook the laneway that extended along the south edge of the property (illustrated on the Goad’s Atlases). The inclusion of a lane mid-block is an unusual feature of the property, given that the east end of the tract and the coach house originally built there were accessible from the rear laneway (now bpNichol Lane). The design and orientation of the house to maximize the open space on the south end of the site, and to allow views across the property from the

<sup>2</sup> Kalman, Harold, A History of Canadian Architecture, Vol. 2, 1994, 612-613.

<sup>3</sup> Examples are found at 60 and 62 Brock Avenue in Parkdale, where near identical house form buildings with Queen Anne Revival styling and corner ‘towers’ anchor the northwest and southwest corners of Seaforth Avenue. The latter properties are included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

corner bay and the south verandah, is an uncommon and unique feature of the property at 407 Huron Street.

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	<b>X</b>
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>NA</b>
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>X</b>

**Person** – Following the sale of the property at 407 Huron Street by contractor Thomas Wilson, the subsequent owner and occupant was John Douglas. According to the Board of Trade publication, Toronto, Canada (1897-98), he was a partner in Douglas Brothers, the Toronto producers of “slate, metal and gravel roofers, manufacturers of copper and galvanized iron cornices, window caps, skylights, metallic ceilings, Allington and Curtis dust Separators, Mill Piping, etc.”<sup>4</sup> Without documentary evidence, it cannot be determined whether Douglas’s products were represented in his Huron Street residence.

**Builder** – The house form building at 407 Huron Street is attributed to Thomas W. Wilson, the contractor who owned the property when the dwelling was constructed and subsequently occupied the site. For the decade beginning in 1886, Wilson was listed in successive city directories as a carpenter, builder and contractor at various addresses in the Huron and Sussex neighbourhood, suggesting a pattern of acquiring, developing, occupying and selling the properties. “Thomas Wilson” was profiled in Toronto Illustrated (1892) as a well known realtor in the city.<sup>5</sup>

<b>Contextual Value</b>	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	<b>X</b>
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	<b>X</b>
iii. landmark	<b>NA</b>

**Character** – The Thomas Wilson House supports the character of Huron Street, south of Bloor Street West, as it developed as a high-end residential neighbourhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The property at 407 Huron is an integral part of the small-scale subdivision situated directly northwest of the University of Toronto campus and Queen’s Park where “...magnificent houses were going up on large lots laid out on university property ringing the park. The university hoped to foster a high-class residential environment for the campus....The same was true of university property on and around St. George Street.”<sup>6</sup> While part of a collection of surviving late 19<sup>th</sup> century residential buildings in the Huron and Sussex neighbourhood, the Thomas Wilson House stands out with its setting,

<sup>4</sup> Board of Trade, Toronto, Canada, 1897-98, 147

<sup>5</sup> Toronto Illustrated, 1892, Reprint 1992, 180

<sup>6</sup> McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989, 101-102

prominent corner bay and, with the adjoining building at 409 Huron, as a single detached house in an area favoured for semi-detached and row houses.

**Surroundings** – The Thomas Wilson House is physically, visually and historically linked to its surroundings as it reflects the scale, setback, and late 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance of Huron Street, south of Bloor Street West, as it originated as a residential neighbourhood. Directly south of the property at 407 Huron, the three sets of semi-detached houses, built during the same period and later associated with Campus Co-op, are designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. Within the same block and south of Campus Co-op where it terminates the view east along Washington Avenue to Huron Street, St. Thomas’s Anglican Church is designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act as a local landmark designed by the notable Toronto architect, Eden Smith.

Now part of the University of Toronto campus precinct, the Thomas Wilson house is also functionally related to its surroundings where many properties are related to the university’s residential, administrative and academic functions.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 407 Huron Street has cultural heritage value as a rare and representative example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century house form building designed in the Queen Anne Revival style that is set apart from others on the street by its placement on the site with a distinctive corner bay. Developed by a local builder who occupied the premises, the property was subsequently acquired by a series of prominent Toronto businessmen, including manufacturer John Douglas. Contextually, the Thomas Wilson House contributes to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century character of the Huron and Sussex neighbourhood as it developed as a sought-after residential enclave, where it adjoins Campus Co-op and St. Thomas’s Anglican Church, which are recognized for their cultural heritage values and attributes. The property is now included within the University of Toronto campus precinct.

#### 5. SOURCES

##### Archival Sources

Abstract Indices of Deeds, Plan D207, Part Lots 10 and 11

Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto, 1888-1892

Building Records, plans for alterations and additions to 407 Huron St

City of Toronto Directories, 1889-1990

Goald’s Atlases, 1884 and 1890



## Books

Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture: a guide to styles and building terms 1784 to present, 1989

Board of Trade, Toronto, Canada, 1897-98

Gowans, Alan, The Comfortable House: North American suburban architecture 1890-1930, 1986.

-----, Styles and Types of North American Architecture, 1992.

Kalman, Harold, A History of Canadian Architecture, Vol. 2, 1994

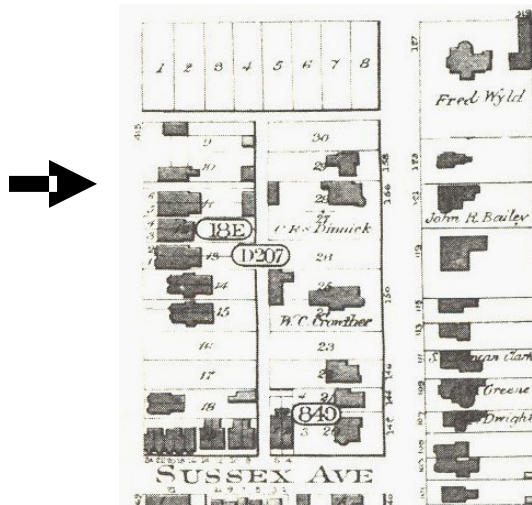
Lundell, Liz, The Estates of Old Toronto, 1997

McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989

Mikel, Robert, Ontario House Styles, 2004

Toronto Illustrated, 1892, Reprint 1992

## 6. IMAGES



Above: extract, Goad's Atlas, 1890, showing the property with the house form building in place (marked by arrow)



Above: historical photograph of Douglas Brothers' manufacturing plant at 124 Adelaide Street West, 1897 (source: Board of Trade, Toronto, Canada, 1897-98, 147)



Contextual view of the east side of Huron Street, looking north from Washington Avenue and showing the Thomas Wilson House near the left (north) end of the group