

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



VIVIAN HOUSE
48 LAUREL AVENUE, TORONTO

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

October 2015

1. DESCRIPTION



Above left: south wall with the bay window on the left; above right: main (east) entrance;
Cover: principal (east) elevation of the Vivian House (Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)

48 Laurel Avenue: Vivian House	
ADDRESS	48 Laurel Avenue (west side, south of Danforth Road)
WARD	Ward 35 (Scarborough Southwest)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan 1093, Section M, Lot 19 and part Lots 18 and 20
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Scarborough Junction
HISTORICAL NAME	Vivian House ¹
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1901
ORIGINAL OWNER	Abraham Gowler
ORIGINAL USE	Residential (single detached house)
CURRENT USE*	Residential * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	None found
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	See Section 2.iii
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Ontario House
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 2.iii
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative & Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto's Heritage Register
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	October 2015

¹ The building is identified on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register as the Vivian House for its extended association with the Vivian family, who owned the property for over 40 years

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 48 Laurel Avenue, and applies evaluation criteria to determine whether it merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The conclusions of the research and evaluation are found in Section 4 (Summary).

i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
1796	Lot 27 in Concession C of Scarborough Township is patented to John Adair, followed by the first subdivision of the tract in 1816
1860	Tremaine's map shows the property at the northwest corner of present-day St. Clair Avenue East and Midland Avenue when it was owned by the Torrance family and adjoined the Grand Trunk Railway line
1871	Land owner Margaret Torrance conveys part of Lot 27 to the Toronto and Nipissing Railway, which extends its line northward along the east edge of the allotment
1873	"Scarborough Junction" Post Office opens at the corner of present-day St. Clair and Kennedy, west of the subject property, to serve the community adjoining the junction of the railway lines
1878	Miles' Historical Atlas of York County illustrates the subject property when it remained farmland owned by Robert Young and transected by the two railway lines
1891 May	Detroit realtor C. W. Harrah purchases part of the south half of Lot 27 for \$10,000
1891 June 6	Harrah registers Plan 1093, with lots aligned along residential side streets named for trees, including Laurel Avenue ²
1891 June 9	Toronto resident Abraham Gowler purchases several lots in Section M of Plan 1093 on the west side of Laurel Avenue
1895	Gowler transfers his land on Laurel Avenue to his wife, Ellen ³
1895-1900	According to the tax assessment rolls, Gowler's property, comprised of Lots 19-22 in Section M of Plan 1093, remains undeveloped
1901	Irwin Graves, a foreman for the railway section in Scarborough Junction is Gowler's tenant on property valued at \$400 (this arrangement continues until 1905 ⁴)
1905	Frederick Warren, an engineer and his wife, Sarah are Gowler's new tenants
1919 Jan	Ellen Gowler sells the property to Sarah Warren, who buys additional land to the north
1919 May	Albert R. Vivian purchases the property at 48 Laurel, adding adjoining

² Several streets in the community were subsequently renamed, including Magnolia Avenue (south of the subject property) as Harmony Avenue

³ Abraham Gowler continues to be described as the property owner on the tax assessment rolls, and is recorded in the City of Toronto directories as a Parkdale resident and the caretaker at Richmond Hall (a commercial building at 25-27 Richmond Street West, which housed the Federated Association of Letter Carriers during the early 20th century)

⁴ Graves relocates to a new house on the east side of the street (Section S, Lots 12-20 under Plan 1093), which is now numbered 23 Laurel and included on the Heritage Register

	properties on Laurel and Linden Avenues over the following decades
1934	The Vivian House is illustrated on the Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas updated from 1924
1954	Vivian severs the south part of the property (where the adjoining bungalow is built)
1961	Following Vivian's death, his widow, Margaret sells the subject property
1998	The City of Scarborough amalgamates with the new City of Toronto, after which the Scarborough Inventory of Historic Sites is included in the city-wide Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register)
2006	The inclusion of the property at 48 Laurel Avenue on the heritage inventory is confirmed ⁵
2015	A demolition application is submitted for the property at 48 Laurel Avenue

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Scarborough Junction

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue is located in the Scarborough Junction neighbourhood of Toronto. Following the surveying of Scarborough Township in the late 18th century, the area adjoining St. Clair Avenue East between Kennedy Road (west) and Midland Avenue (east) was divided into 200-acre farm lots. In 1852, the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) extended its tracks across Scarborough Township on a line parallel to Danforth Road and south of present-day St. Clair Avenue. Two decades later, the Toronto and Nipissing Railway (T&N) constructed the first phase of its narrow-gauge line from Scarborough to Uxbridge, sharing the GTR's route until a point west of Midland Avenue when its tracks ran northward.⁶ Following the opening of the T&N's station, the adjoining area was named "Scarborough Junction" in 1873 when a local post office relocated to Bell's general store at the corner of St. Clair Avenue East and Kennedy Road (Image 4).⁷ The hamlet that developed near this location included a school, Methodist church and Temperance Hall.

By the close of the 19th century, Scarborough Junction was described as "the most populous village in the township" when about 40 houses were identified in the community.⁸ The growth of Scarborough Junction was accelerated in the early 20th century with the opening of the first residential subdivisions on the former farm lots adjoining the hamlet. More extensive development of both the area and the township followed World War II, after which Scarborough was incorporated as a borough in 1967 and a city in 1983 (Images 10 and 11).

⁵ <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/plt/plt060905/it003.pdf>

⁶ The T&N upgraded its tracks to the standard gauge by the 1880s when it merged with another company before it was leased, then purchased by the GTR (following bankruptcy, the GTR became part of Canadian National Railways: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/railway-history/>)

⁷ The Scarborough Historical Society provides an overview with archival images of the founding and development of Scarborough Junction on its web page at <http://scarboroughhistorical.ca>

⁸ Bonis, 165

48 Laurel Avenue

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue occupies land originally subdivided in 1791 as Lot 27 in Concession C of Scarborough Township, which was patented to John Adair in 1796. Located near the northwest corner of present-day St. Clair Avenue East and Midland Avenue, the farm lot was first subdivided in 1816. Tremaine's map of 1860 illustrated the south part of this allotment when it was owned by members of the Torrance family and the Grand Trunk Railway cut across the southeast corner of the site (Image 2). During the following decade and after the opening of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway's line along the east edge of Lot 27, Miles' historical atlas depicted Robert Young's farm on the subject property, as well as the "Scarborough Junction" post office to the west (Image 3).

In 1890, the south part of Lot 27 was acquired by entrepreneur C. W. Harrah, a Detroit realtor and a partner in railway companies in North America at the end of the 19th century. Harrah registered Plan 1093 in 1891, creating a large residential subdivision where the side streets were named for trees, including Laurel Avenue (Image 5).⁹ That same year, Toronto resident Abraham Gowler purchased land on the west side of Laurel Avenue. Gowler's property remained vacant for a decade until Irwin Graves, a foreman on the railway section at Scarborough Junction became his tenant on the site in 1901. After Graves moved to 23 Laurel Avenue in 1906, engineer Frederick Warren and his wife Sarah rented the property at 48 Laurel. During this period, the street and house were captured in a post card dated circa 1911 (Image 6). In 1919, Sarah Warren purchased 48 Laurel from Gowler's widow and immediately sold it Albert (Bert) Vivian.

Albert Richard Vivian (1894-1961) was the son of Frederick R. (Fred) Vivian, Sr. (c. 1863-1944), a well-known local cattle dealer and butcher in Scarborough whose sons followed him into the family business. Members of the Vivian family were early tenants in the residential subdivision founded by C. W. Harrah and over time acquired numerous lots under Plan 1093. After Bert Vivian purchased the property at 48 Laurel Avenue, he opened a butcher shop beside his residence that "was only opened on Saturdays until midnight, but it was a thriving business with people lining up along the street waiting to buy their weekly meat supplies."¹⁰ By the late 1940s, Vivian had extended his property in both directions on Laurel Avenue and west to neighbouring Linden Avenue.¹¹ Bert Vivian occupied the house at 48 Laurel for over 40 years.

The property at 48 Laurel Avenue with the Vivian House was included on the Inventory of Historic Sites in Scarborough prior to the amalgamation of the current City of Toronto in 1998, after which it was absorbed into the city-wide Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register).

⁹ Charles Wendel Harrah (1862-1941) owned the Windsor (Ontario) Electric Street Railway in the 1890s

¹⁰ Richard Schofield, archivist, Scarborough Archives, October 2015

¹¹ The fire atlas attached as Image 8 and updated to 1934 shows the extent of Vivian's property to date, including the outbuildings in place for his butcher business

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Current photographs of the property at 48 Laurel Avenue are found on the cover and in Sections 2 and 6 of this report, with early 20th century archival photographs of the Vivian House attached as Images 6 and 7. The Vivian House was designed as an "Ontario House", a style of residential building that originated in the early 1800s and remained popular into the next century. Identified by the gable centered on the principal facade, the Ontario House was developed in response to early 19th century tax laws that assessed dwellings based on the number of stories and resulted in the addition of an economical half-storey rather than a full-height second floor.¹² The front gable was introduced to improve lighting and ventilation, with the overhang protecting the main entry below.¹³ Over time, the Ontario House evolved, with the height of the exterior walls extended to allow full upper stories, but the designs retained the distinctive and familiar centre gable.

The Ontario House became identified with the province as "similar houses appear in other parts of Canada, as well as in some American states, but never in the same numbers as from Windsor to Cornwall."¹⁴ Examples of Ontario Houses are found in Toronto where the style was most popular in the rural areas beyond the city core, including former Scarborough Township.¹⁵ In Scarborough Junction, Bell's general store where the community's post office opened in 1873 originated as an Ontario House (no longer extant, the building is shown in Image 4).

As an early 20th century example of the Ontario House, the Vivian House rises two stories with a rectangular-shaped plan beneath the gable roof with chimneys at the north and south ends. On the principal (east) elevation, the centre gable retains its king post. While archival images indicate that the dwelling is clad with brick, it is currently covered with synthetic siding (Images 6-8). The east elevation is symmetrically arranged with the main entrance centered in the first (ground) floor in a flat-headed surround with a transom. Flat-headed window openings are placed in the first (ground) and upper storey (the window opening near the apex of the gable, which is visible in the archival photograph attached as Image 7, is currently concealed).¹⁶ The single-storey full-length open verandah was added or altered after c.1911 based on a comparison of the archival photographs attached as Images 6 and 7. However, with its classical detailing, including the tapered posts on the piers flanking the east entry, as well as the pediment above, it complements the Ontario House style.

¹² McIlwraith, 112-113

¹³ This feature was also linked to the Gothic Revival style, popular during the 19th century. Its application on an early Ontario House with distinctive roof detailing is shown in Image 4

¹⁴ Cruickshank, 68

¹⁵ Several 19th century examples of the Ontario House are illustrated in [Home Sweet Scarborough](#)

¹⁶ The detailing of the original window openings is revealed in the archival image (Image 7), but partially concealed by the current cladding

The south side wall has a single-storey bay window (which is also an addition according to a comparison of Images 6 and 7), while the north elevation is devoid of openings. There are no heritage attributes on the rear (west) wall of the house, and the detached garage is not identified as a heritage feature.

iv. CONTEXT

The location of the property at 48 Laurel Avenue is illustrated on the property data map attached as Image 1 in this report. The Vivian House is found on the west side of the street between Danforth Road (north) and Harmony Avenue (south). With its distinctive appearance and its placement on the property where it is flanked by pairs of small-scale bungalows, the Vivian House stands out on the street.

This section of Laurel Avenue north of St. Clair Avenue East contains a mixture of house form buildings dating to the early and mid 20th century, as well as a small apartment complex near Danforth Road. Directly south of the Vivian House and on the opposite side of the street, the Walton House at 41 Laurel and the Graves House at 23 Laurel are early 20th century L-shaped house form buildings that are also recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.¹⁷

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. While the criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, the City of Toronto uses it when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties. 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.

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

Representative Example of a Style and Type – The Vivian House at 48 Laurel Avenue has cultural heritage value for its design as an Ontario House, a distinctive style that originated in the early 1800s in response to provincial legislation that taxed dwellings according to the number of stories and is identified by its central gable peak that was originally designed to light and ventilate while concealing the upper floor. The Vivian House is an early 20th century version of the Ontario House that represents the evolution

¹⁷ In the adjoining area (and part of the residential subdivision under Plan 1093), the building known historically as the Beckett-Hollis House at 786 Danforth Road is also listed on the Heritage Register.

of the style where the upper storey is no longer concealed, but the prototypical centre gable remains as the prominent feature of the design.

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

Community - The property at 48 Laurel Avenue has associative value for its role in the evolution of the Scarborough Junction community. After the Grand Trunk Railway (1852) and the Toronto and Nipissing Railway (1871) laid their lines across Scarborough Township and created a junction near St. Clair Avenue East and Midland Avenue, a hamlet developed west of the latter intersection. Scarborough Junction was described as the most populous village in the township at the end of the 19th century when the residential subdivision including Laurel Avenue was opened on the former farmland. The Vivian House was among the first residential buildings completed on Laurel Avenue, and remains one of the oldest surviving house form buildings from the period when Scarborough Junction was flourishing as a railway community.

No architect or builder was identified at the time of the writing of this report.

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

Surroundings – Contextually, the Vivian House is valued for its historical and visual links to its setting on Laurel Avenue where it is one of the oldest surviving houses in this early residential subdivision in Scarborough Junction. The Vivian House and the neighbouring Graves House at 23 Laurel and the Walton House at 41 Laurel are early 20th century residential buildings that reflect the initial development of the street after 1900 and are recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 48 Laurel Avenue has design, associative and contextual values. The Vivian House is an early 20th century Ontario House that contributed to the development of the community of Scarborough Junction where it is historically and visually linked to its setting on the west side of Laurel Avenue, south of Danforth Road where it is a recognized heritage property in Scarborough.

5. SOURCES

Archival Sources

Abstract Indices of Deeds, Plan 1093, Section M, Lots 18-20
Aerial Maps, City of Toronto Archives, 1947 ff.
Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives, former City of Scarborough,
Scarborough Archives and Toronto Public Library (individual citations in
Section 6)
Assessment Rolls, Scarborough Township, 1895 ff.
City of Toronto Directories, 1895 ff. (Suburban Directories)
Miles, Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878
Tremaine, Plan of the City of Toronto and the County of York, 1860
Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas, Vol. IX, March 1924 revised to July 1934

Secondary Sources

Bonis, Robert, A History of Scarborough, 1968, reprint 1982
Brown, Ron, Toronto's Lost Villages, 1997
Cruikshank, Tom, and John De Visser, Old Toronto Houses, 2003
Gowler family records, www.ancestry.ca
Graves family records, www.ancestry.ca
Harrah family records, www.ancestry.com
McIlwraith, Thomas, Looking For Old Ontario, 1997
Scarborough LACAC, Home Sweet Scarborough, 1996
Vivian family history, Scarborough Archives and www.ancestry.ca

6. IMAGES – the **arrows** mark the location of the property at 48 Laurel Avenue. All maps are oriented with north at the top.



1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the subject property at 48 Laurel Avenue, south of Danforth Road and in the area northwest of the intersection of St. Clair Avenue East (bottom) and Midland Avenue (right).



2. Tremaine, Map of the County of York, 1860: this extract shows part of Lot 27 in Concession C when the subject property near the northwest corner of present-day St. Clair Avenue East and Midland Avenue was farmland owned by John Torrance (the Grand Trunk Railway line runs across the southeast corner of the property, south of and parallel to Danforth Road).



3. Miles' Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878: showing the subject property when it was owned by Robert Young and after the Toronto and Nipissing Railway opened its line along the east end of Lot 27. The area is labeled "Scarboro Junction," with the post office marked with the "X" on the southwest corner of present-day St. Clair Avenue East and Kennedy Road.



4. Archival Post Card, Scarborough Junction, c. 1910: now demolished, the Scarborough Junction Post Office at the corner of St. Clair Avenue East and Kennedy Road, west of the junction of the Grand Trunk Railway and the Toronto and Nipissing Railway gave the hamlet its name. An elaborate mid-19th century version of the Ontario House, the building was occupied by Bell's general store in 1873 when the local post office relocated to the premises (Toronto Public Library, Item 6445).



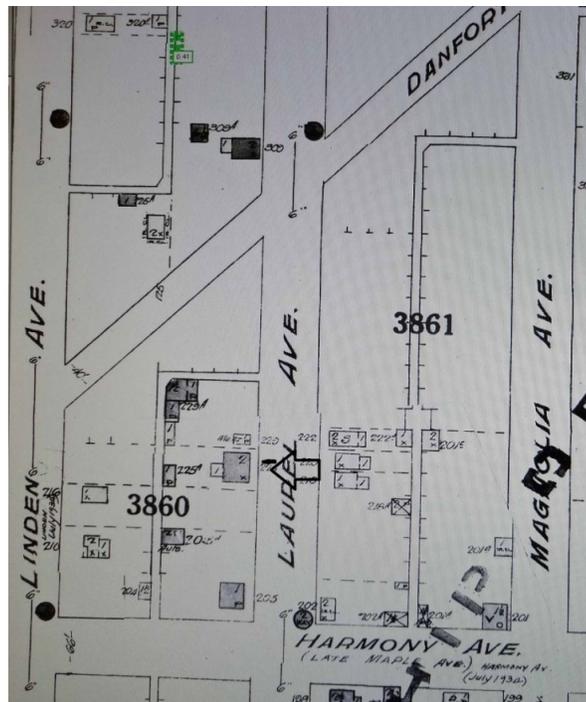
5. Plan 1093, 1891: showing part of the residential subdivision where the Vivian House was built on Lot 19 in Section M (Maple Avenue was later renamed Harmony Avenue).



6. Archival Post Card, Laurel Avenue, c. 1911: looking north toward Danforth Road and showing the Vivian House on the west side of the street prior to the addition of the bay window on the south wall. A comparison of the detailed image above with Image 7 below suggests that the verandah was altered after 1911 (Scarborough Archives).



7. Archival Photograph, 48 Laurel Avenue, undated: showing the Vivian House with its brick cladding visible and following the addition of the bay window (left), which is not present in Image 6 above (Scarborough Archives as reproduced on <http://scarboroughhistorical.ca>).



8. Atlas, Underwriters' Survey Bureau, March 1924 revised to July 1934: the Vivian House on the west side of Laurel Avenue was one of the few buildings in place on the street when the atlas was updated.



9. Archival Photograph, St. Clair Avenue East near Laurel Avenue, 1956: the Scarborough Junction neighbourhood is shown following World War II (Toronto Public Library, Item 6445).



10. Aerial Photograph, Scarborough, 1960: showing the subject property and the further development of the residential subdivision in Scarborough Junction (City of Toronto Archives).



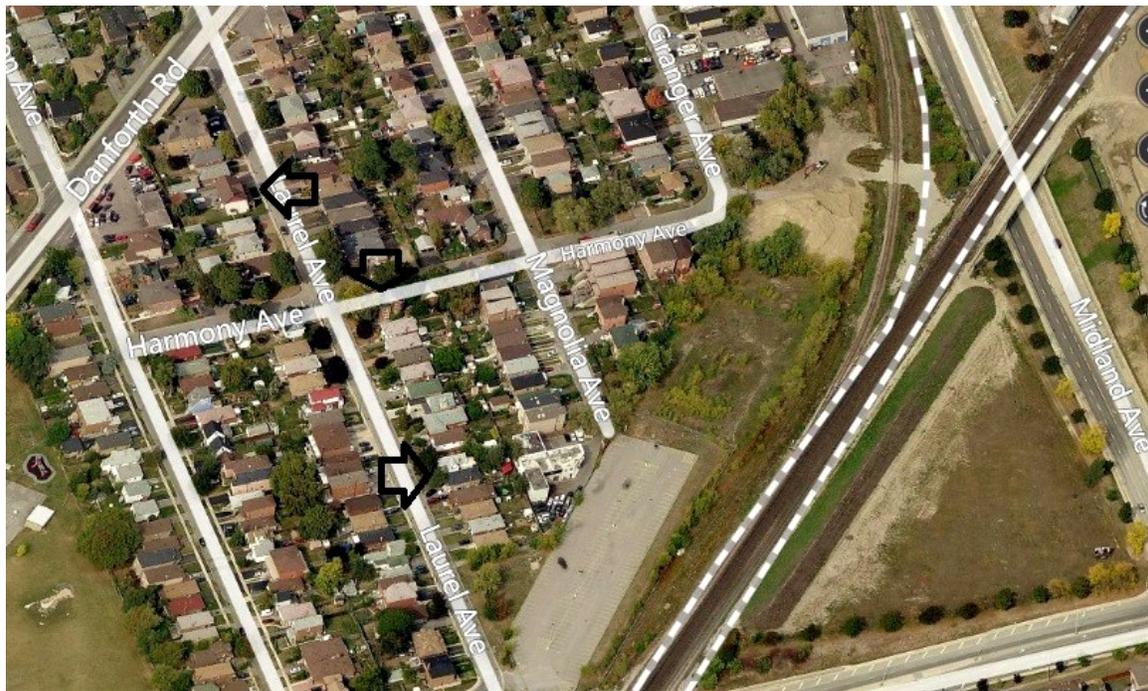
11. Archival Photograph, 1996: showing the Vivian House following the addition of the synthetic cladding (City of Scarborough).



12. Current Photograph, 48 Laurel Avenue, 2015: looking south from Danforth Road, the north elevation of the Vivian House and its location on the west side of the street are shown (Heritage Preservation Services).



13. Current Photograph, 48 Laurel Avenue, 2015: contextual view, looking north along the west side of the street to Danforth Road and showing the Vivian House flanked by mid 20th century housing (Heritage Preservation Services)



14. Aerial Map: showing the Vivian House at 48 Laurel (top) and its proximity to the Walton House at 41 Laurel on the southeast corner of Harmony Avenue (centre) and the Graves House at 23 Laurel (bottom), all of which are included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.



15. Photographs, 23 Laurel Avenue: showing the **Graves House** on the east side of Laurel Avenue, south of Harmony Avenue in an undated archival photograph (left) and a current photograph (right). The house was originally owned by Irving Graves, who moved here after renting the subject property at 48 Laurel Avenue in the early 1900s (archival photograph: Scarborough Archives reproduced on <http://scarboroughhistorical.ca>; current photograph: Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)



16. Photographs, 41 Laurel Avenue: the **Walton House** on the southeast corner of Laurel Avenue and Harmony Avenue is shown in 2015 (right) and in an undated archival photograph (left). With the Vivian House at 48 Laurel Avenue and the Graves House at 23 Laurel Avenue, it is one of three properties representing the early development of the street and subdivision that are included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register (archival photograph: Scarborough Archives reproduced on <http://scarboroughhistorical.ca>; current photograph: Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)