

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



GEORGE GRAY HOUSE
1299 DON MILLS ROAD, TORONTO

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

April 2015

1. DESCRIPTION



above: undated archival photograph of the George Gray House
www.donaldclub.ca/public/about-us/history.aspx;
 cover: principal (west) elevation facing Don Mills Road (Heritage Preservation Services)

1299 Don Mills Road: George Gray House	
ADDRESS	1299 Don Mills Road (east side, north of Lawrence Avenue East)
WARD	Ward 34 (Don Valley East)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan 4760, Part Block M
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Don Mills
HISTORICAL NAME	George Gray House
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1893-94 ¹
ORIGINAL OWNER	George Gray, farmer
ORIGINAL USE	Residential (single detached house)
CURRENT USE*	Residential (single detached house) * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	None found ²
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Brick cladding with brick, stone and wood trim
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	See Section 2
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	Early 1920s, original east wing replaced; 1950s, single-storey additions
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative & Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto Heritage Register
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	April 2015

¹ This date is based on the tax assessment rolls for York Township. In an interview with the North York Historical Society, George Gray's nephew Harold Gray suggested that the date of construction was c.1897, which was reported in the "Heritage Structure Report" (1981, 4) prepared for the inclusion of the property on North York's heritage inventory

² Building permits do not survive for former York Township (this section of which was incorporated as North York Township in 1922, after the subject building was constructed)

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 1299 Don Mills Road, 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
1801	The patent for Lot 8 in Concession 3, east of Yonge is issued to Elijah Huson (sic), who first subdivides the tract in 1838
1847	William Gray, owner of adjoining Lot 9, acquires the east half of Lot 8 (the subject property)
1860	Tremaine's Map of York County labels Gray's name on Lot 8 (followed by Miles' Illustrated Atlas in 1878)
1886 Sept	William Gray's will bequeaths the east half of Lot 8 to his sons Timothy and William George (known as George) as tenants in common, along with Lot 9
1891	When the Decennial Census is compiled, George Gray resides with Timothy on Lot 9
1892 Dec	George Gray marries Hannah Milne
1893 Mar	According to the assessment roll, George and Timothy Gray are assessed together on Lots 8 and 9
1894 Mar	George Gray is identified on the tax roll as a farmer on Lot 8 where the property has an assessed value of \$5000 (no increase is recorded for the remainder of the 19th century)
1899	Timothy Gray transfers his interest in Lot 8 to George Gray
1901	According to the Decennial Census, George Gray lives on Lot 8 with his wife and two daughters
1920	Gray sells the east half of Lot 8 to David Dunlap, who adds it to "Don Alda" (Donalda), his country estate and model dairy farm on Lot 9
1952	Dunlap's heirs sell the subject property to Don Mills Development Limited
1955	Plan 4760 is registered on part of Lot 8, placing the George Gray House on Block M, which is conveyed to Clarence and Mary Snelgrove the next year
1969	Cyril and Dorothy Fockler acquire the property at 1299 Don Mills Road
2006	The inclusion of the property on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties is confirmed ³

³ <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/plt/plt060905/it003.pdf>

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Don Mills

The property at 1299 Don Mills Road is located in Don Mills, the Toronto neighbourhood that originated in the early 19th century as a farming and milling community adjoining the Middle Don River between Eglinton Avenue (south) and York Mills Road (north). Among the first settlers were brothers William and James Gray who arrived from Scotland after the War of 1812, established a grist (flour) mill and a distillery, respectively on the west side of the river, and acquired other acreage nearby.⁴ Access to the area proved particularly challenging until the 1850s when members of the Gray family were among the local landowners who collectively extended an existing road along the Don River from Todmorden to York Mills as the Don Independent Road (Don Mills Road). Unlike typical cross-roads settlements that developed around Toronto, in Don Mills "the Gray brothers' mills north on Don Mills Road were the hub of this loose community: here were the school, store and inn".⁵

The historical maps included in Section 6 of this report illustrate the Gray family's land holdings in Don Mills, including William Gray's grist mill on Lot 9 in Concession 3 east of Yonge Street, and the adjoining Lot 8 where the George Gray House was built (Image 2).

George Gray House

Following the death of William Gray in 1886, his sons Timothy and William George (George) Gray jointly inherited Lot 9 with Gray's Mill, as well as the subject property comprised of the east half of Lot 8 (Image 3). Sixteen years younger than his brother, George Gray (1863-1948) lived with Timothy when the census was taken in 1891.⁶ The next year, George Gray married Hannah Milne, a member of another famous milling family on the Don River. According to the tax assessment rolls for York Township, while George Gray was still recorded as a miller with his brother on Lots 8 and 9 in March 1893, a year later George was separately identified as a farmer on Lot 8.⁷ The assessed value of the latter property at \$5000 (a substantial amount in relation to other properties in the locale) suggests that the house at present-day 1299 Don Mills was in place. George Gray resided on-site with his wife and two surviving daughters until 1920 when he sold the property to David Dunlap.⁸

⁴ Their brother, Alexander Gray established a saw mill on the east side of the river, and three other brothers operated a carriage works, feed store and black smithy in the vicinity

⁵ "19th Century Settlements in North York," 1

⁶ Timothy Gray occupied the second of William Gray's two houses on Lot 9, which dated to the mid 19th century and was purportedly bricked in the late 1880s (Image 11)

⁷ In March 1894, Timothy Gray was identified as a miller on Lot 9 only, a further indication that the brothers had separate properties and occupations

⁸ The youngest of William Gray's 13 children, in Tales of the Don George Gray described himself as "the last of the Grays" (Image 4)

David Dunlap (1864-1924), the notable Toronto mining mogul and his wife, Jessie Donalda Bell had previously acquired the neighbouring Gray's Mill property as the location of "Don Alda", their country estate where they developed a famed model dairy farm.⁹ While commissioning nearly 40 new buildings for the site, Dunlap retained William Gray's two houses and a remnant of the grist mill. The George Gray House was purportedly occupied by Dunlap's veterinarian and was conveyed with the rest of Dunlap's Don Mills land holdings to Edward Plunkett Taylor (1914-1985) in the early 1950s.¹⁰

E. P. Taylor, the famous entrepreneur and philanthropist who headed Canadian Breweries accumulated over 800 hectares of land adjoining the intersection of Don Mills Road and Lawrence Avenue East for "the first large-scale modern community of the post-war era developed solely by private enterprise."¹¹ Through Taylor's company, Don Mills Development Limited, Lot 8 was surveyed for a residential subdivision, with the George Gray House preserved as a single family residence on a generous parcel (Image 6). The setting of the George Gray House is shown prior to and after the development of Don Mills in the aerial photographs attached as Image 5.

In 1969, the Fockler family began its nearly half-century occupancy of the George Gray House. The property at 1299 Don Mills Road was listed on the heritage inventory of the former City of North York and absorbed into the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register) following the amalgamation of the current municipality.

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Photographs of the property at 1299 Don Mills Road are found on the cover and in Section 6 of this report. The George Gray House is a variation of the popular "Ontario House" of the 19th century that was particularly utilized for farm houses, publicized in pattern books and incorporated architectural motifs drawn from high-end styles. This type of 1½-storey dwelling evolved from the early 1800s when properties were taxed according to the number of floors in houses, resulting in the upper rooms being less than full height and 'hidden' under sloped ceilings.¹² As the 19th century progressed, the form remained popular, although gables and dormers were added for improved light and

⁹ Dunlap acquired his fortune as a developer of one of the largest silver mining ventures in the world in Cobalt, Ontario, as well as from his involvement in the second largest gold mine discovery in Northern Ontario

¹⁰ Apart from his business prowess, Taylor was the famed owner of a horse breeding and training enterprise and his "Windfields" estate was located on Bayview Avenue, south of York Mills in North York

¹¹ Shim, 158. The entry provides an overview of the planning, development and unique features of the Don Mills community, with a more detailed account found in a history of the Donalda Club, the private golf and country club that acquired Donalda Farm and modified Dunlap's residence for the club house: www.donaldaclub.ca/public/about-us/history.aspx

¹² The origins and evolution of the "Ontario House" with its prototypical storey-and-a-half form is discussed extensively in McIlwraith, Chapters 6 and 7

ventilation, and the space was extended by side wings and rear extensions, as well as higher walls and steeper roofs.¹³

As an L-shaped form of the Ontario House type, the George Gray House blends the gabled roofline and decorative woodwork of the Gothic Revival style with the round-arched openings and frontispiece associated with the Italianate style. Above a stone foundation, the structure is clad with red brick and trimmed with brick and wood.¹⁴ The cross-gable roof has extended eaves, brick chimneys, and gables on the west end where wood panels incorporate sunburst motifs.¹⁵ On the west elevation, the main entrance is placed on the long wall near the intersection of the projecting wing (north) where it is concealed by an enclosed wood porch (not original to the design, the porch is not identified as a heritage attribute).¹⁶ In the upper floor, a round-arched opening is placed under the gable, with a smaller version beneath the eaves to the north. The projecting wing on the left (north) end of the west elevation incorporates a gabled frontispiece that includes single round-arched window openings in the first floor and upper half-storey. The brick relieving arches over the openings are connected by brick string courses that extend across the west elevation and wrap around the side walls (north and south) where the window openings are segmental-arched.¹⁷

Attached to the rear of the main house, the east wing purportedly dates to the early 1920s after David Dunlap acquired the property. The sketch attached as Image 7 shows its relationship to the original building. The wing features complementary brick cladding, a hipped roof and segmental-arched openings, as well as an oriel window on the rear (east) wall. To the east, the single-storey brick-clad extensions and attached garages are not identified as heritage attributes.

Situated to face west toward Don Mills Road, open landscaped space with trees separates the house from the main road (west) and the side street (north). Following the widening of Don Mills Road to four lanes that reduced the west frontage of the property, a privacy fence was erected along the west and north edges of the site, with the latter adjoining Legato Court (the archival photograph in Section 2 shows the setting and landscaping of the house prior to the road widening).

¹³ The second William Gray House built for George's father on the adjoining property at 1413 Don Mills Road is a mid-19th century version of the Ontario House type with the centre gable (Image 11)

¹⁴ According to the Heritage Impact Assessment (2009), the house is clad with John Price bricks produced at the Don Valley Brick Yards, while the Heritage Structure Report (1981) described the particular colour of the brick with thin mortar joints as further evidence of the late 19th century construction date

¹⁵ The Heritage Impact Assessment (2009) indicates that the current chimneys on the main body of the house are not original, but were probably rebuilt when the east wing was completed in the early 1920s

¹⁶ The original design would typically have included an open verandah, as described in McIlwraith, 128-129

¹⁷ The Heritage Impact Assessment (2009) indicates that the wood windows and frames are original. The one-over-one sash is another indication of the late 19th century date of construction

iv. CONTEXT

The location of 1299 Don Mills Road is shown on the property data map attached as Image 1. The George Gray House is found on the east side of Don Mills Road adjoining Legato Court, midway between Lawrence Avenue East (south) and York Mills Road (north). Directly northwest, the adjoining heritage property at 1413 Don Mills Road (Donalda Club) contains the first and second William Gray Houses (dating to the mid and late 1800s, respectively) and the Donalda Cattle Barn from 1920-21 with the early 19th century remnant of Gray's Mill (Images 11-12).¹⁸ As it was absorbed into the planned community of Don Mills, the George Gray House is adjoined on the north, east and south by a residential subdivision with 1950s housing on smaller lots.

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	X
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

Representative and Well-crafted Example of a Style and Type – The property at 1299 Don Mills Road has cultural heritage value for the design of the George Gray House as a rare surviving late 19th century farm house in its original location in Don Mills that has been identified as one of the few remaining heritage buildings from its era in North York. The George Gray House is a variation of the prototypical Ontario House mixing Gothic Revival and Italianate features, which is particularly distinguished by its low-scale L-shaped plan, the varied fenestration and the wood detailing in the gables, as well as its setting on Don Mills Road.

Historical or Associative Value	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	X
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	X

¹⁸ The remnant of Gray's Mill is described as "the most intact mill of its kind still standing on its original site in Toronto" on a commemorative plaque installed by Heritage Toronto in 2010

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	N/A
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Person - The associative value of the George Gray House is derived from its links to a prominent pioneering family in Don Mills. As the youngest son of William Gray, one of the original settlers of the area who was also instrumental in extending Don Mills Road through the community, George Gray was a miller at Gray's Mill until he and his elder brother inherited their father's properties. Afterward, George Gray operated a farm on the land adjoining Gray's Mill where he commissioned the historic farm house and resided with his family until 1920.

Community - The property at 1299 Don Mills Road is also valued for its role in communicating the story of Don Mills, which began as a milling and farming community where George Gray's father, William built and operated the first grist (flour) mill on the Middle Don River. In the World War I era, George's farm lot and the neighbouring Gray's Mill property were transformed into a country estate and model dairy farm by mining magnate David Dunlap and his wife, Jessie Donalda Bell, who retained the George Gray House as part of Donalda Farm. Following the Second World War, entrepreneur Edmund Plunkett (E. P.) Taylor absorbed the properties as part of his planned community of Don Mills where the George Gray House stands as a reminder of the origins and evolution of the area.

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	X

Surroundings and Landmark - Contextually, the George Gray House is historically, visually and physically linked to its surroundings on Don Mills Road where it remains the only surviving farm house in its original location on the street and a local landmark in the Don Mills community.

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 1299 Don Mills Road has design, associative and contextual values as a well-crafted surviving example of a late 19th century farm house that is historically linked to the pioneering Gray family and later became part of David Dunlap's famed Donalda Farm before it was preserved in the development of the planned community of Don Mills where it remains a local landmark.

The George Gray House has been described as the only surviving late 19th century farm house remaining on its original lot on Don Mills Road where it retains its integrity and represents "a period from which almost no other buildings survive in North York." ¹⁹

SOURCES

Archival Sources

Abstract Indices of Deeds, Lot 8, Concession 3 East, York Township, and Plan 4560, Block M
Aerial Map, City of Toronto Archives, 1947
Archival Photographs, (individual citations in Section 6)
Assessment Rolls, York Township, 1885-1905
Miles, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878
Tremaine, Map of the County of York, 1860
Will of William Gray, Archives of Ontario, Register 23, Folio 184, Item 6118

Secondary Sources

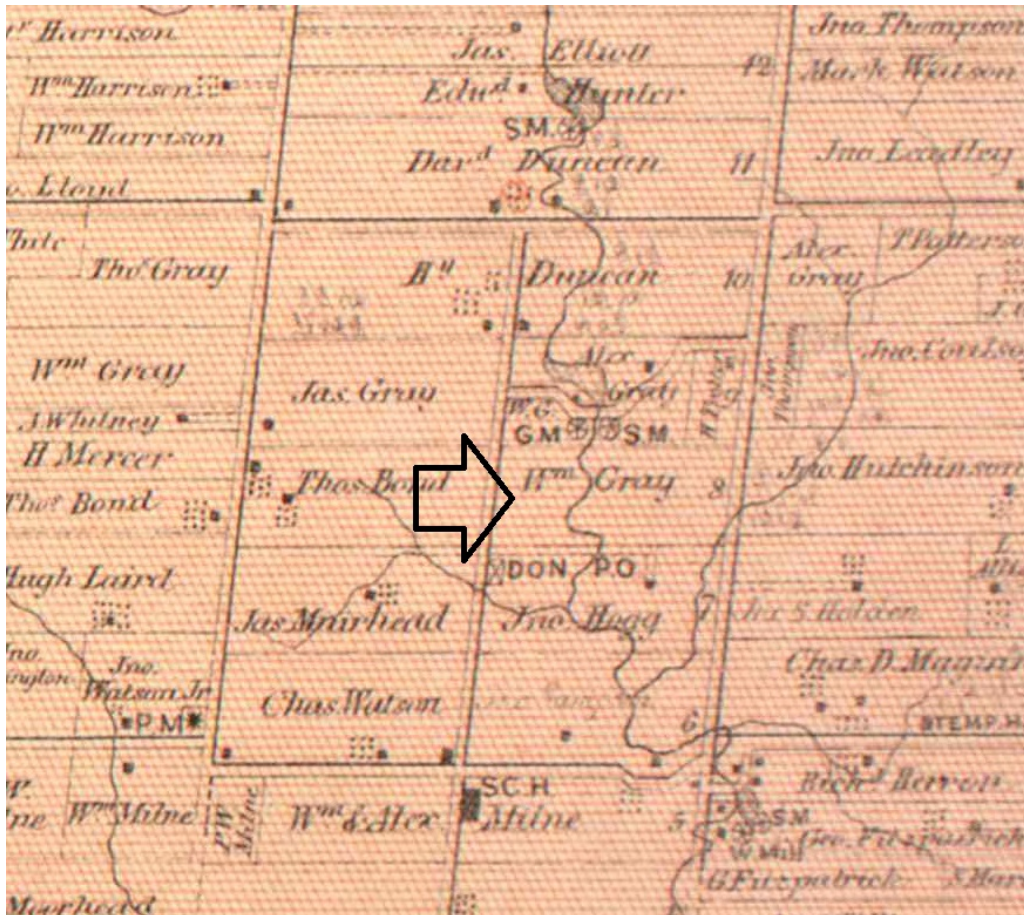
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Historical Outline of the Administration of the Borough of North York, 2nd ed., 1978
History of Toronto and County of York, C. Blackett Robinson, 1885
Hopkins, Jeanne, The Henry Farm, 1987
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Lumsden, Liz, The Estates of Old Toronto, 1997
McIlwraith, Thomas F., Looking for Old Ontario, 1997
Miller, Jim, The Founding of the Donalda Club, 1984
Sauriol, Charles, Pioneers of the Don, 1995
-----, Tales of the Don, 1987
Shim, Brigitte, "Don Mills," entry in Toronto East/West, 2002

¹⁹ Greer, 8 and Directory to the Inventory (1996), 24. Another 19th century farmhouse (c. 1865) commissioned by farmer David Duncan was relocated from Don Mills Road, south of York Mills Road to Moatfield Drive in 1986 where it was designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act four years later

5. IMAGES – Historical maps and atlases are followed by other archival and current images. The **arrows** mark the location of the subject property. All maps are oriented with north at the top



1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the subject property on the east side of Don Mills Road, north of Lawrence Avenue East (above) with the detailed location (below)



2. Late 19th Century Map and Atlas, York County: showing Tremaine's map of 1860 (above) and Mile's illustrated atlas (below) where the east half of Lot 8 (the future location of the George Gray House at 1299 Don Mills Road) is labeled "William Gray" (with his grist mill directly north on Lot 9)

I give and devise to my sons Timothy Gray and William George Gray as tenants in common the east half of lot Number Eight in the Third Concession of the Township of York East of Yonge Street containing one hundred and one acres and also the property known as Gray's Mills and the parcels of land comprising about twenty acres usually used therewith being parts of lot Number Nine in the Third Concession of the Township of York

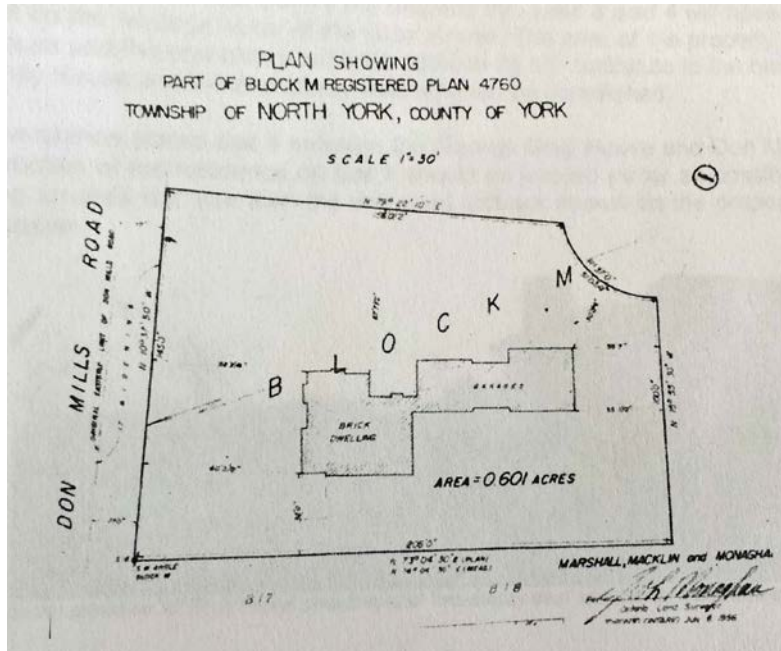
3. William Gray's Will, 1886: with the excerpt indicating that part of Lot 8 (the subject property) and Lot 9 (with Gray's Mill and the William Gray Houses) were jointly bequeathed to Timothy and William George (George) Gray (Archives of Ontario, Register 23, Folio 184, Item 6118)



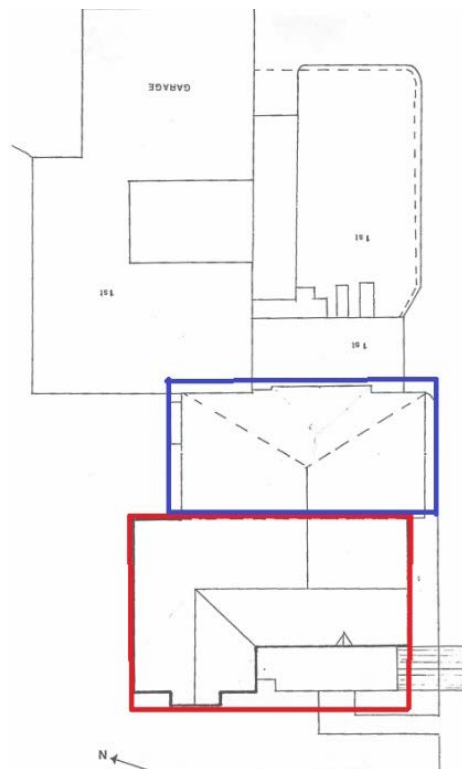
4. Archival Photograph, Gray Brothers, 1907: showing William Gray's six sons, with the youngest, William George (George) Gray seated second from the left (The Mirror, March 9, 1977)



5. Aerial Photographs, Don Mills Road north of Lawrence Avenue, 1947 (above) and 1957 (below): showing the George Gray House when it was part of Donalda Farm (upper right) and after the development of the planned community of Don Mills (City of Toronto Archives)



6. Survey, Plan 4960, Block M: showing the George Gray House and the east wing (labelled "brick dwelling") with the single-storey additions to the east (labelled "garages") (Toronto Land Registry Office)



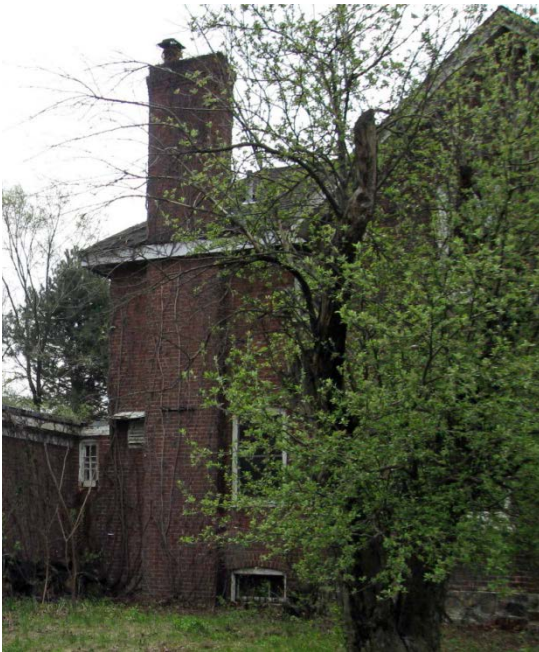
7. Sketch, 1299 Don Mills Road, 1981: showing the original house outlined in red with the east wing in blue (Heritage Structure Report, North York Historical Board, 1981)



8. Archival Photographs, 1299 Don Mills Road, 1981: showing the principal (east) elevation and the setting of the George Gray House in landscaped open space at the time the property was listed on North York's heritage inventory (North York Historical Board)



9. Photographs, 1299 Don Mills Road: showing the principal (west) and south elevations of the original house (above) and the east wall of the rear (east) wing dating to the 1920s (below) (Heritage Preservation Services)



10. Photographs, 1299 Don Mills Road: showing the west and north elevations (above), part of the north wall (below left), and the connection between the main body of the house and the 1920s east wing (below right)



11. Contextual Photographs, 1413 Don Mills Road: on the neighbouring property north of 1299 Don Mills Road, the first (left) and second (centre) William Gray Houses and the Donalda Cattle Barn with the remnant of Gray's Mill (right) are recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register (North York Historical Board, 1977 and 1981)



12. Context Photograph, Bing Maps: showing the context of the property at 1299 Don Mills Road with its neighbour at 1413 Don Mills Road (northwest) where the Donalda Cattle Barn incorporating the former Gray's Mill and the two adjoining William Gray Houses are now part of the Donalda Club property (www.bing.com/maps)