

**HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT**



**COMMERCIAL BUILDING  
480 YONGE STREET, TORONTO**

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services  
City Planning Division  
City of Toronto

August 2015

## 1. DESCRIPTION



cover: east elevation; above: south (left) and east (right) elevations  
(Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)

<b>480 Yonge Street: Commercial Building</b>	
ADDRESS	480 Yonge Street (west side, north of Grenville Street)
WARD	Ward 28 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan 159, Lot 10
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Yonge Street
HISTORICAL NAME	Not applicable
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1864 (completed)
ORIGINAL OWNER	John Bailey, contractor
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial and residential
CURRENT USE*	Commercial * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	John Bailey, contractor (attribution)
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Brick cladding with brick, stone and wood trim (the brick is currently concealed)
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	See Section 3
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 3
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative and Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto's Heritage Register
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	August 2015

## 2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 480 Yonge Street 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
1797 Sept	James Macauley receives the patent for Park Lot 9
1799 May	Macauley and John Elmsley, owner of neighbouring Park Lot 10, exchange land with Elmsley receiving the north parts of both lots
1855 July	Elmsley sells part of his land to Alexander Clark
1856 June	Clark registers Plan 159 on the "Elmsley Villa Estate"
1862	Browne's Plan of the City of Toronto shows Plan 159
1863 May	Clark and contractor John Bailey are recorded on the tax assessment roll as the owners of vacant Lot 10 under Plan 159
1864 May	William Holland Taylor of Russell and Taylor, corn dealers is Bailey's tenant in a two-storey brick building <sup>1</sup>
1871	The city directory for 1871-72 (with information dating to the former year) records the Blue Posts Hotel on the site
1875 April	The hotel is described as 2½ stories in the assessment roll
1880	On the first Goad's Atlas for Toronto, the building is labelled "2½ stories" with an extended addition linking the Yonge Street premises to a building adjoining the rear (west) laneway (no changes are recorded on Goad's until 1912)
1909 May	Book seller and art dealer John Britnell purchases the property, where he relocates his business according to the city directory
1912 May	The Bank of Montreal leases the property for its "Carlton Street Branch" (remaining in this location until 1928) and commission architects Darling and Pearson to design an addition
1912 Sept	The assessment roll records two "vacant flats" above the bank branch
1912	The revisions to Goad's Atlases show the extended rectangular-shaped building
1915 Sept	James Hodgins, a 40-year-old bank messenger is the first tenant in one of the apartments over the branch bank
1916-19	An archival photograph shows the three-storey bank building
1927 Oct	John Britnell dies
1928 Sept	Britnell's executors lease the property to furniture dealer William MacMillan, who commissions plans to alter the site for "Macey's Sales Room"
1939 July	Ross Cycle leases the property from the Britnell estate, remaining in this location until 1951
1946 Mar	After more than 50 years of continuous ownership, members of the Britnell family sell Lot 10 to Belle Silver, whose estate retains it until 1985
1974	The property at 480 Yonge Street is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register)

<sup>1</sup> This information from the assessment roll is confirmed in Mitchell's Directory of 1864-65, dated June 1864. Taylor purchased the property in 1868

2012	A by-law is introduced to study Historic Yonge Street from College Street to Davenport Road as a potential Heritage Conservation District, including the property at 480 Yonge
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ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Yonge Street

The property at 480 Yonge Street is located on land originally subdivided following the founding of the Town of York (Toronto) in 1793. The area north of the town site between present-day Queen and Bloor Streets was parceled into 100-acre “park lots” and awarded to government and military officials as the location of country estates. Yonge Street was surveyed as a military road in 1796 and formed the east boundary of Park Lot 9, which was granted to James Macauley, a British army surgeon in 1797. McCauley and John Elmsley, Chief Justice of Upper Canada and the owner of adjoining Park Lot 10 to the west, organized a land exchange with Elmsley receiving the north halves of the parcels and each man gaining frontage on Yonge Street. After developing his "Cloverhill" estate, Elmsley commissioned but never occupied a second residence named "Elmsley Villa" that was modified for the fourth Knox College.

In 1855, land developer Alexander Clark purchased part of the Elmsley Villa estate where he registered a residential subdivision under Plan 159 the next year (Image 3). With Yonge Street remaining impassible south of Bloor Street well into the 19th century, the neighbourhood adjoining the intersection of Yonge and College Streets was slow to develop, although commercial and institutional buildings emerged along the latter streets. By 1870, the growth of the area had accelerated, resulting in its selection as the location of a new fire station to serve the north part of the city. Afterward, the opening of the competing department stores of Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton further south at Queen Street turned Yonge into Toronto's "Main Street." In the first part of the 20th century, the unveiling of Eaton's College Street department store at the southwest corner of Yonge and College, as well as the completion on Carlton Street of the headquarters for Toronto Hydro and the Maple Leaf Gardens hockey arena made the intersection an important commercial and recreational destination in the city.

480 Yonge Street<sup>2</sup>

Following the subdivision of the area northwest of Yonge and College Streets under Plan 159, land owner Alexander Clark transferred an interest in Lot 10 to contractor John Bailey. The building was in place by May 1864 when the tax assessment roll was compiled and rented to William Taylor, a dealer in corn who subsequently purchased the site. During the late 19th century, ownership of the property changed several times, and the long-term tenants included a hostelry known as the Blue Posts Hotel and afterward P.

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<sup>2</sup> The street number of the property changed from the original number of 456 to 474 in the 1870s, 474½ in the 1880s and 488 in the 1890s to its present number in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century (Image 19)

G. Goddard, "a large manufacturer of upholstery goods and dealer in cabinet furniture" who was profiled in Toronto, the Queen City of Canada, Illustrated (1893).<sup>3</sup>

In 1909, the property at 480 Yonge Street was purchased by John Britnell (1849-1927), an English book seller who relocated to Toronto in 1884. While Britnell and members of his family operated book stores in various locations on Yonge Street, the assessment roll dated September 1911 recorded Britnell's business on the main floor with a tenant in the apartment above (Image 7). The store with its painted advertising is partially shown in an archival photograph dated to 1912 (Image 8).

The Bank of Montreal entered into a 10-year lease with Britnell in 1912 when it received a building permit for an addition designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Darling and Pearson, which was illustrated on the update to Goad's Atlas that same year (Images 9 and 10). The assessment roll for September 1913 confirmed that the bank's Carlton Street Branch occupied the ground floor with "vacant flats" above.<sup>4</sup> The addition of the classically-detailed third storey during this period is confirmed by the archival photograph dated 1916-19 (Image 11).<sup>5</sup> Following Britnell's death in 1927, his executors retained the property, which stood vacant when the assessment roll was compiled in September 1928. During the latter month, the William MacMillan signed a 10-year lease to operate a furniture store named "Macey's Sales Room" on-site. Drawings for proposed alterations to the building are attached as Image 12. The city directories and assessment rolls record various furniture companies at 480 Yonge Street until 1939 when Ross Cycles, dealers in motor cycles began a 12-year occupancy (Images 13 and 14).

The Britnell Estate sold the property at 480 Yonge Street in 1946. During the late 19th century, it was occupied by a variety of commercial uses as shown in the archival photographs found in Section 6. The site was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register) in 1974.

### Darling and Pearson, Architects

Archival records indicate that the building at 480 Yonge Street was altered in 1912 by architects Darling and Pearson. The origins of the firm dated to the 1870s when Toronto-born architect Frank Darling (1850-1923), following training with local practitioner Henry Langley and in the London offices of G. E. Street and Arthur Blomfield established an architectural firm in the city. Working alone and with partners for 20 years, Darling designed innumerable local landmarks including the Toronto headquarters of the Bank of Montreal at Yonge and Front Streets (1885, and now housing the Hockey Hall of Fame at Brookfield Place). His last partnership with John Pearson (1867-1940) resulted in the famed commission for the headquarters of the Canadian Bank of

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<sup>3</sup> Toronto Illustrated, 140

<sup>4</sup> The apartments in the upper floors remained vacant until 1915 when James Hodgins, described as a 40-year-old bank messenger occupied one of the units (reflecting the age of and reduced number of bank employees during World War I)

<sup>5</sup> The date of the photograph is confirmed by the presence of the Dominion School of Telegraphy at the northwest corner of Yonge and Grenville, which occupied the property during the World War I period

Commerce (1929-31) near the intersection of King and Bay Street, which opened as the tallest building in the British Empire.<sup>6</sup> Darling and Pearson prepared plans for dozens of banks in Toronto, including the Bank of Montreal branches at Yonge and Queen Streets (1910) and Cherry Street in the Port Lands (1920) that are recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.

### iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Current photographs of the property at 480 Yonge Street are found on the cover and in Section 6 of this report. The site contains a combined commercial and residential building dating to the mid 1860s that was altered in the early 20th century with the addition of a third storey and classical detailing on the principal (east) elevation.

Rising three stories, the building displays a rectangular-shaped plan under a flat roof that slopes at the rear (west) end. The brick cladding with brick and stone detailing on the east wall that is visible in archival images is now covered with stucco. The principal (east) elevation is organized into three bays above the first (ground) floor storefronts, which have been altered. Classical quoins mark the outer edges of the east wall, while cornices are placed above the first, second and third floors. There are three symmetrically placed window openings in the second and third stories that are set in eared surrounds. The round-arched openings with keystones in the second floor are surmounted by flat-headed openings. Corbelled brickwork and brackets mark the roofline where a shallow pediment is centered (the pediment has been altered according to Image 11<sup>7</sup>).

### iv. CONTEXT

The location of the property at 480 Yonge Street is shown on the property data map attached as Image 1 below. The building is placed on the west side of the street, north of College Street in the block between Grenville and Grosvenor Streets. It is adjoined to the north by the clock tower from the former Yonge Street Fire Hall, which dates to 1871. Located in the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District Study Area, the commercial building at 480 Yonge is among a group of properties from the late 1800s and early 1900s that are recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register, including the Oddfellows Hall (1896) at the northwest corner of Yonge and College. In the residential neighbourhood west of Yonge Street, the John Irwin House (1872-73) on Grenville Street and the Grosvenor Street Fire Hall (current Station 314) are included on the Heritage Register.

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<sup>6</sup> The building anchors the north end of Commerce Court as part of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Canada's Toronto headquarters

<sup>7</sup> A comparison of Images 11 (dating to 1916-19) and 14 (post-1939) suggests this alteration occurred following the Bank of Montreal's departure in 1928 (when its logo would have been removed)

### 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.

<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>N/A</b>
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	<b>N/A</b>

**Representative and Early Example** – The property at 480 Yonge Street has cultural heritage value as an important surviving commercial building that recalls the evolution of this section of Yonge Street, north of College Street where the first generation of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century mixed commercial and residential buildings were modified with taller more decorative structures that signified their prominence on Toronto's "Main Street". The commercial building at 480 Yonge is set apart by its height in the block, exuberant classical detailing and prominent setting on the property beside the iconic clock tower of the former fire hall at 484 Yonge 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>N/A</b>
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>X</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>

**Community** – The associative value of the building at 480 Yonge Street is linked to its role in the historical development of Yonge Street as it evolved in the mid to the late 1800s from a local shopping destination for the adjoining residential neighbourhoods to its rebranding as Toronto's "Main Street" after Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton opened landmark department stores further south. The building at 480 Yonge Street contributes to the Yonge Street story from its mid 19<sup>th</sup> century origins as a small-scale shop and residence and afterward a local hotel, to its acquisition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as John Britnell's book store and the updates made for the Bank of Montreal's Carlton Street branch.

**Architects** - The property at 480 Yonge is historically associated with the notable Toronto architectural practice of Darling and Pearson. While the Canadian Bank of

Commerce's Toronto headquarters (completed in 1931 and now Commerce Court North) was among Darling and Pearson's best-known commissions, during the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the firm designed innumerable bank branches across Canada, including the updates for the Carlton Street branch at 480 Yonge.

<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>N/A</b>

**Character** – Contextually, the commercial building at 480 Yonge Street is valued for its contribution to the character of Yonge Street, north of College Street, which is typified by the surviving buildings that began and supported its transition in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as Toronto's main commercial corridor. It stands as one of the earliest remaining buildings in the section of Yonge north of College Street where the Oddfellows' Hall (1892) at 450 Yonge, the Bank of Montreal Building (1887) at 496 Yonge and the Scottish Ontario and Manitoba Land Company Stores (1883) at 664-680 Yonge are among the other surviving commercial blocks recognized on the City's Heritage Register.

**Surroundings** – The contextual value of the commercial building at 480 Yonge Street is also related to its historical and visual links to its surroundings on the west side of Yonge Street between Grenville and Grosvenor Streets where, with its height and decorative detailing it stands as a prominent local feature on the property beside the landmark clock tower of the former Yonge Street Fire Hall.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 480 Yonge Street has design, associative and contextual values as a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century commercial building that was updated as a bank branch in the early 1900s, associated with prominent Toronto architects and historically connected to the development of Yonge Street as Toronto's "Main Street" where it is linked contextually to the section north of College Street with its collection of properties recognized on the City's Heritage Register.

#### 5. SOURCES

##### Archival Sources

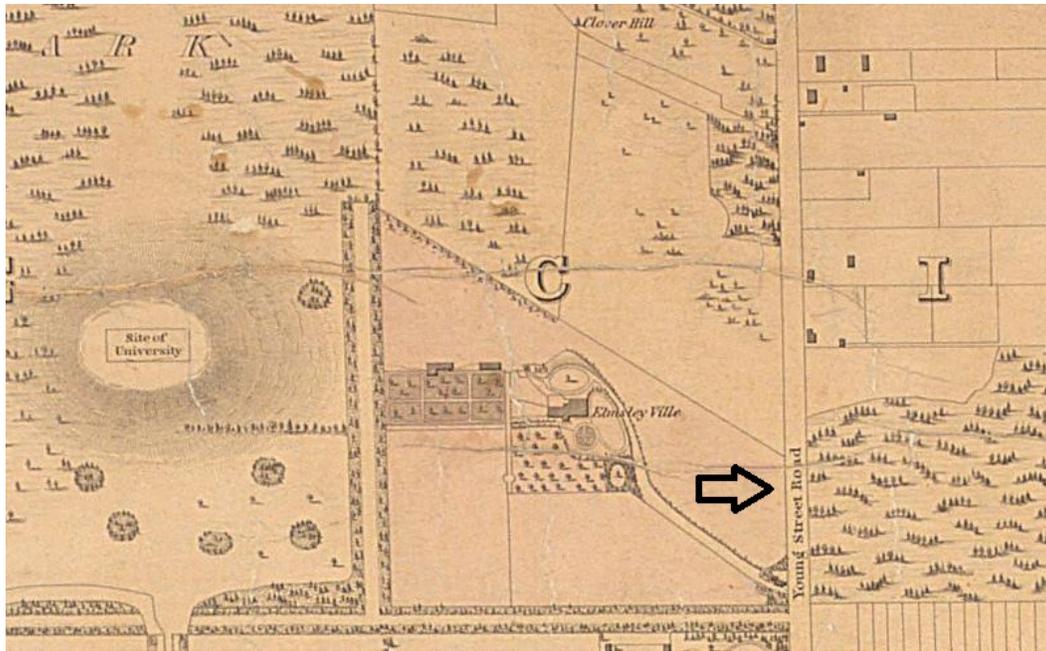
Abstract Indices of Deeds, Park Lots 9 and 10, and Plan 159, Lot 10  
 Archival Photographs, Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, City of Toronto Archives,  
 Toronto Historical Board and Toronto Public Library (individual citations in  
 Section 6)  
 Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto, St. John Ward, 1864-92 and Ward 3, Divisions 3 and  
 6-8, 1892 ff.  
 Britnell Family Records, [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca)

Browne, Plan of the City of Toronto, 1862  
Building Permit #33992, May 17, 1912, City of Toronto Archives  
Building Records, City of Toronto, Toronto and East York  
Cane, Topographical Map of the City and Liberties of Toronto, 1842  
City of Toronto Directories, 1860 ff.  
Goad's Atlases, 1880-1923  
Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas, 1954

### Secondary Sources

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Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture, 1990  
Filey, Mike, Toronto Sketches 9, 2006  
Flack, Derek, What's the Deal with That Strange Clock Tower Near Yonge and College?,  
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[http://www.blogto.com/city/2010/11/whats\\_the\\_deal\\_with\\_that\\_strange\\_clock\\_tower\\_near\\_yonge\\_and\\_college/](http://www.blogto.com/city/2010/11/whats_the_deal_with_that_strange_clock_tower_near_yonge_and_college/)  
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<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1638>  
"John Andrew Pearson," entry in Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950,  
<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2028>  
Lumsden, Liz, The Estates of Old Toronto, 1997  
McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989  
Toronto Illustrated 1897, reprint 1992

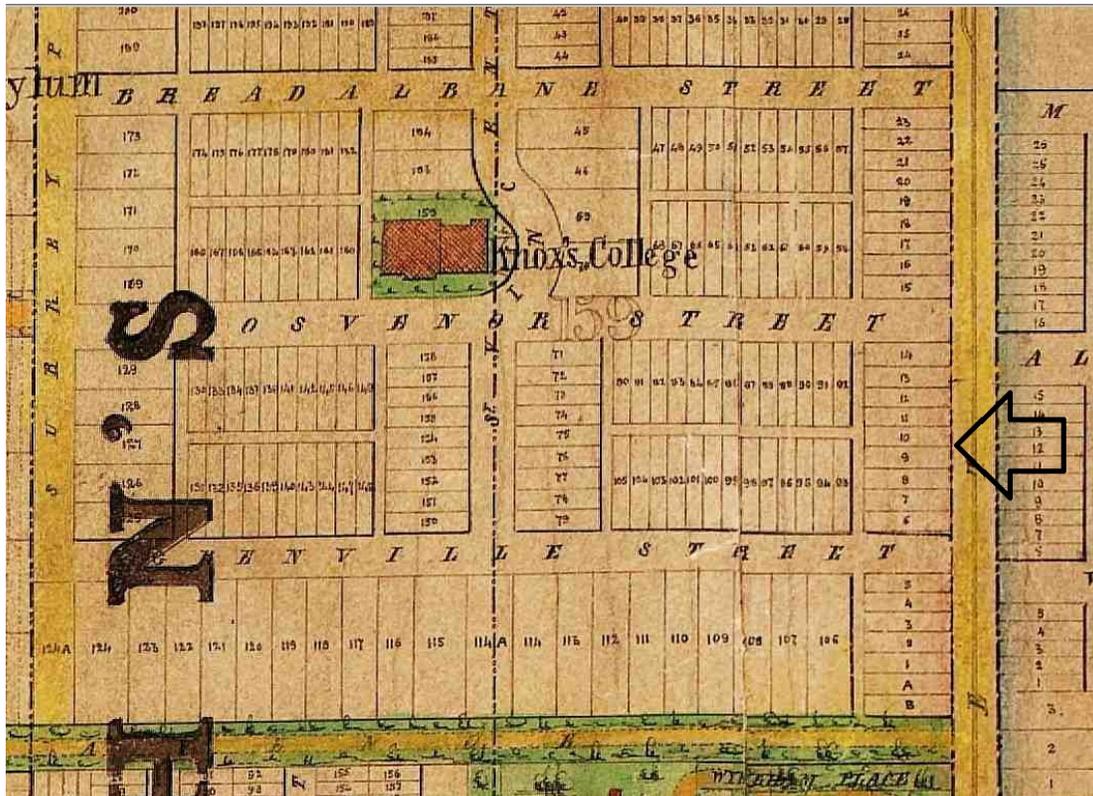




2. Cane, Topographical Map of the City and Liberties of Toronto, 1842: showing the future location of the property at 480 Yonge Street when it was part of Park Lot 9.



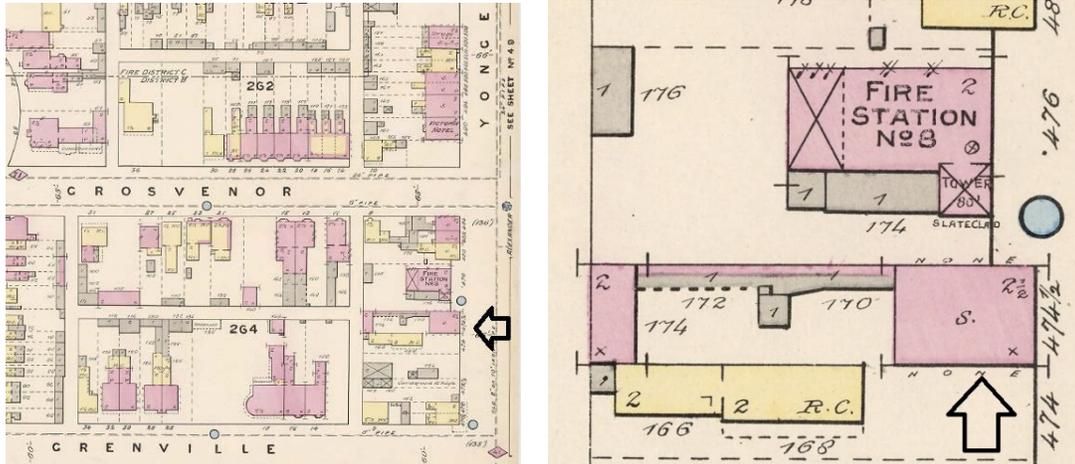
3. Plan 159, June 1856: showing the plan of subdivision for the Elmsley Villa Estate on part of former Park Lot 9



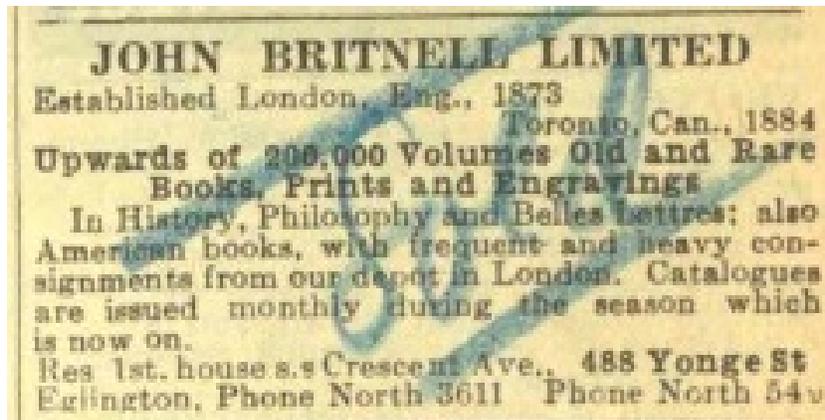
4. Browne's Plan of the City of Toronto, 1862: showing the residential subdivision northwest of Yonge and Grenville Streets



5. Gross's Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876: showing the location of the subject property on the west side of Yonge Street, north of Grenville Street at the time it was occupied by the Blue Posts Hotel (the clock tower of the Yonge Street Fire Hall is depicted north, or right of the subject building)



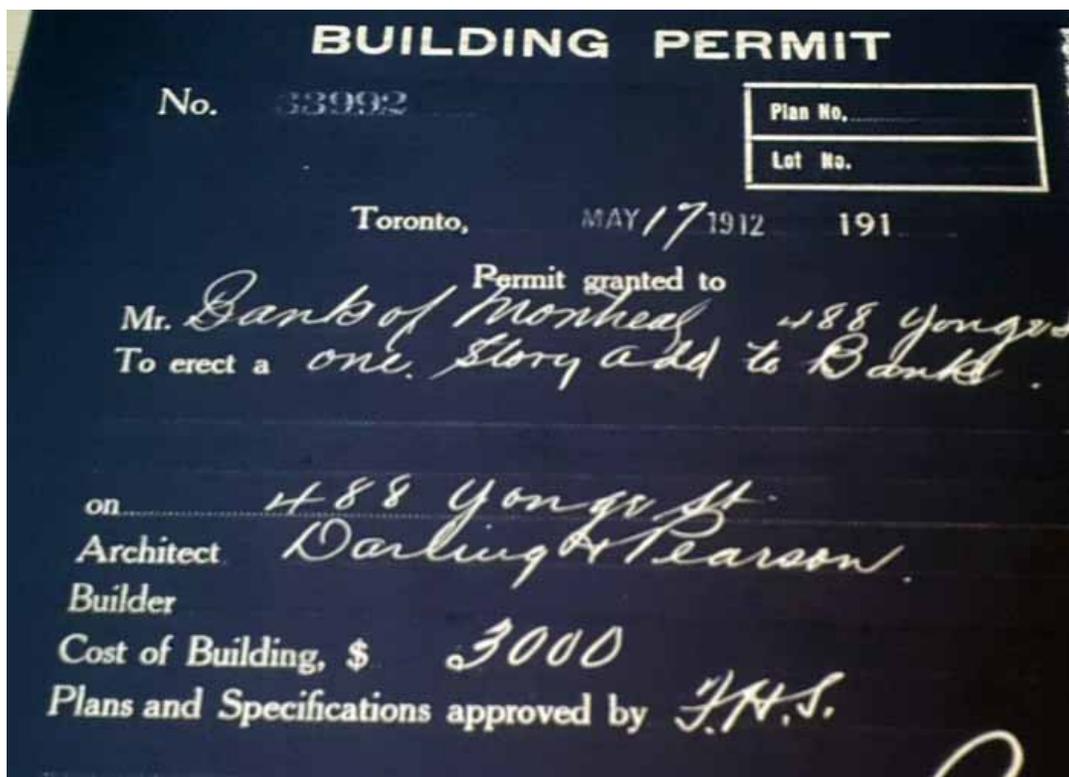
6. Goad's Atlas, 1880: the first Goad's Atlas for Toronto shows the 2½-storey combined commercial and residential building in place at 474½ Yonge Street (present-day 480 Yonge)



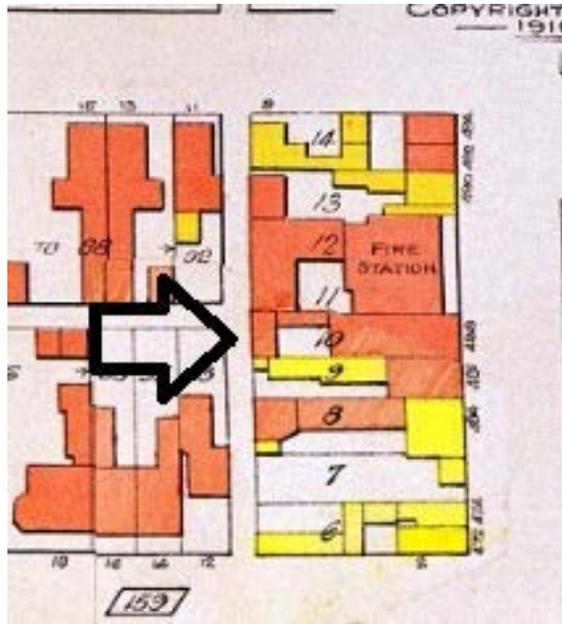
7. City of Toronto, Directory, 1912: indicating the location of John Britnell's business at 488 Yonge Street (present-day 480 Yonge) as recorded in the city directory, which was published in 1912 with information dating to the previous year



8. Archival Photograph, Yonge and Grenville Streets, 1912: showing (outlined in colour in the upper right corner) part of the south wall of the subject building when it was occupied by John Britnell's book business (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds, )



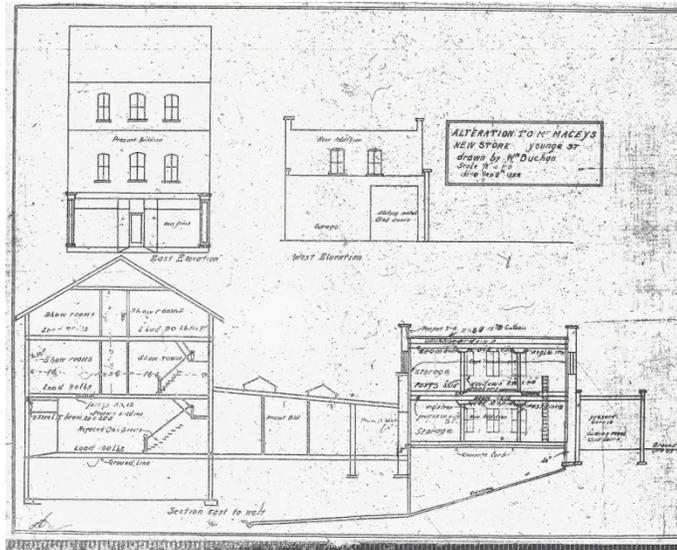
9. Building Permit #33992, May 17, 1912: for a one-storey addition to the building designed by architects Darling and Pearson (City of Toronto Archives)



10. Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1912: showing the additions to the building at present-day 480 Yonge Street coinciding with the lease of the property to the Bank of Montreal as the Carlton Street Branch



11. Archival Photograph, Yonge and Grenville Streets, 1916-19: showing the building at present-day 480 Yonge following the addition of the third storey with the classical detailing that includes an extended pediment above the roofline (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1562)



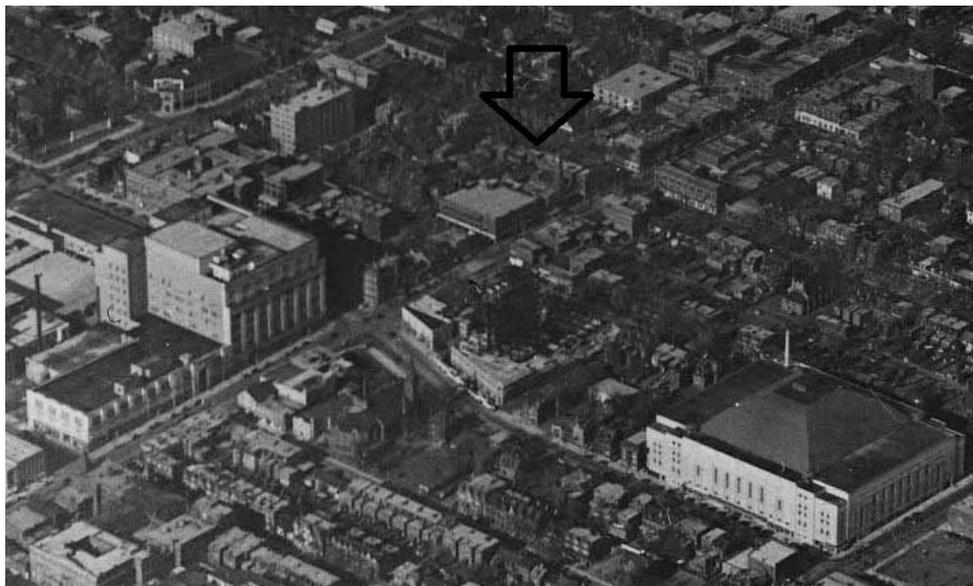
12. Plans, Proposed Alterations for Mr. Macey's New Store, 1928: showing the "present building" in the upper left corner (Building Records, City of Toronto, Toronto and East York)



13. Newspaper Article, Toronto Star, July 24, 1939: announcing the beginning of Ross Cycle's tenancy at present-day 480 Yonge Street, which lasted until 1951



14. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, c. 1940s: The building is shown when it was occupied by Ross Cycles (Filey, 171)



15. Aerial Photograph, Yonge and College Streets, 1930s: showing the location of the subject property in context with the surrounding neighbourhood where Eaton's College Street Store and Maple Leaf Gardens are the large complexes in the lower corners of the image (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1950)



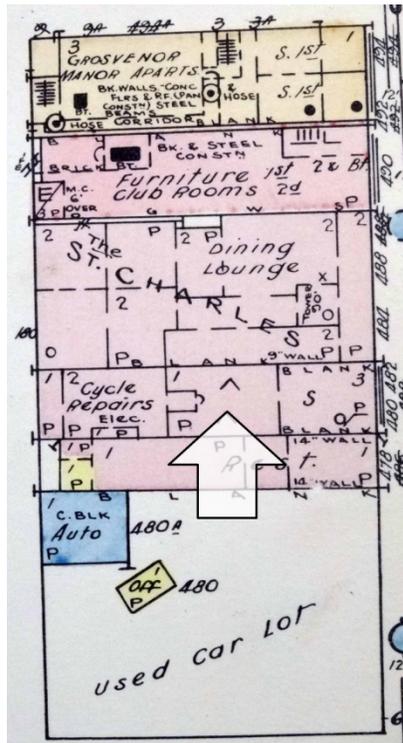
16. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, 1941: showing the subject building during the fire at the neighbouring Lyon's store (City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Item 162)



17. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, 1950s: showing the context of the building on the west side of Yonge Street, south of Grosvenor Street and the Yonge Street Fire Hall (City of Toronto Archives, reproduced in [http://www.blogto.com/city/2010/11/whats\\_the\\_deal\\_with\\_that\\_strange\\_clock\\_tower\\_near\\_yonge\\_and\\_college/](http://www.blogto.com/city/2010/11/whats_the_deal_with_that_strange_clock_tower_near_yonge_and_college/))



18. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, 1951: showing the context of the building from College Street and its visibility in the block north of Grenville Street beside the former Yonge Street Fire Hall (City of Toronto Archives, Series 574, Item 49680)



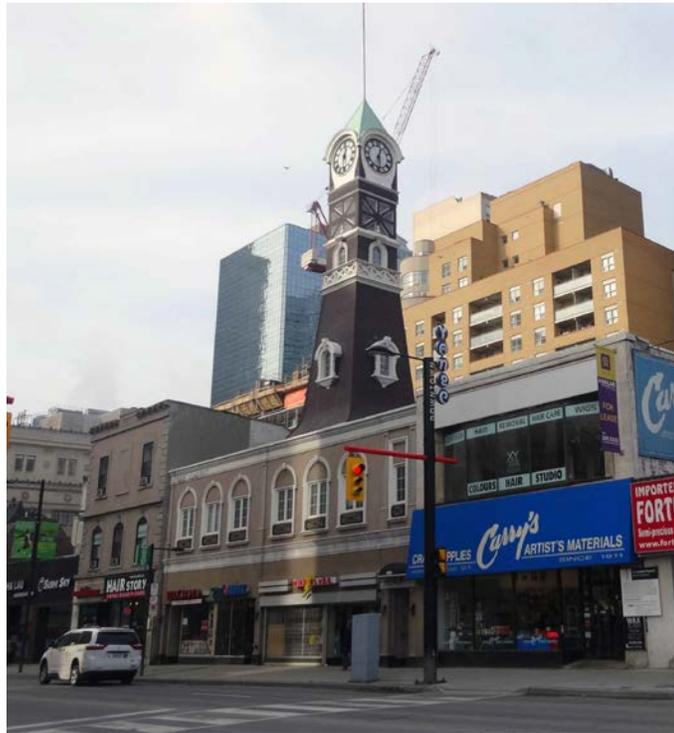
19. Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas, 1954: showing the status of the property and its surroundings on the west side of Yonge Street between Grenville Street (below) and Grosvenor Street (above)



20. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, 1970s: showing the east and north elevations (image reproduced from <http://www.clga.ca/whats-archives-st-charles-tavern>)



21. Archival Photograph, 480 Yonge Street, 1970s: showing the east elevation where the original brickwork has been painted (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 124, Item 75)



22. Current Photographs, 480 Yonge Street, 2015: showing the property in its context south of Grosvenor Street (above) and north of Grenville Street (below) (Heritage Preservation Services)