

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



COCA-COLA BUILDING
42-46 Overlea Boulevard, TORONTO

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

August 2015

1. DESCRIPTION



Above: detailing on the west end of the south elevation; cover: south elevation of the Coca-Cola Building viewed from Overlea Boulevard (Heritage Preservation Services)¹

42-46 Overlea Boulevard: Coca-Cola Building	
ADDRESS	42-46 Overlea Boulevard (north side, east of Thorncliffe Park Boulevard)
WARD	Ward 26 (Don Valley West)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan M735, Block A (part)
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Thorncliffe Park
HISTORICAL NAME	Coca-Cola Building
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1964
ORIGINAL OWNER	Coca-Cola Limited
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial (office building)
CURRENT USE*	Vacant * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Mathers and Haldenby, architects
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Stone, concrete, metals and glass
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Modern
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	1995: north addition ²
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative and Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	August 2015

¹ The non-archival photographs in this report were taken before scaffolding was added to the site

² Dating to the same time as the office building, the neighbouring bottling plant was demolished in 2014

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard, 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
1878	Miles's Historical Atlas of York County illustrates the property when it was owned by members of Toronto's famed Taylor family, who established mills, a brewery and a brickyard along the Don River, as well as a house named "Thorn Cliff" (later the location of brewer Robert Davies's Thorncliffe Farm)
1920	The Thorncliffe Racetrack is in operation on the Thorncliffe Farm site
1952	The Ontario Jockey Club purchases the racetrack, transferring the property to a development group
1954	The Town of Leaside annexes the former racetrack property
1958	Thorncliffe Park Limited registers Plan M736 for the area southeast of Millwood Road and the Canadian Pacific Railway line
1960	The City Directory for 1961 (with information compiled in 1960) lists Overlea Boulevard, but describes it as "not built on"
1961	Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas illustrates the layout of Thorncliffe Park
1962	In a transaction dated 1962 and registered the next year, Coca-Cola Limited acquires 13 acres on the north side of Overlea Boulevard
1963	Architects Mathers and Haldenby prepare plans for Coca-Cola Limited's administration building and bottling plant on Overlea Boulevard
1964	Coca-Cola Limited owns an unfinished building at 42 Overlea according to Leaside's tax assessment rolls
1965	The "Toronto Star" announces the official opening of Coca-Cola Limited's "new home office"; the property is listed on Leaside's tax assessment roll with the office building valued at \$93,900
1995	An addition is attached to the north side of the office building
2012	The property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard is listed on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register)
2013	Coca-Cola relocates its head office to downtown Toronto
2014	The bottling plant is demolished (the production line was previously moved to Brampton)
2015	The "Coca-Cola" sculpture by artist Walter Yarwood is relocated from the property to the company's Brampton facility

i. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Thorncliffe Park

The property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard is located in the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood of Toronto. Its origins date to the late 18th century when this part of York

Township was divided into farm lots. In the early 1800s, the land adjoining the "Forks of the Don" was acquired by members of the pioneering Taylor family for farming and lumbering in support of the paper, saw and grist mills, brewery and brick making factory they established along the Don River at and north of Todmorden (Image 2). A member of the third generation of the family built a house named "Thorn Cliff" on the west side of the river, which was acquired in the late 19th century by Robert Davies, a prominent Toronto brewer who was related to the Taylor family by marriage. Davies renamed the tract Thorncliffe Farm where he developed "one of the best equipped stock farms in Canada at the time" and showcased his stable of thoroughbred race horses.³ Following Davies's death in 1916, his model farm was purchased by a Baltimore investment group for a racetrack (Image 3). The Thorncliffe Park Racing and Breeding Association introduced thoroughbred and harness racing on a mile-long track, adjoined by a grandstand and other facilities for 4000 spectators, as well as stables for over 600 horses (Images 4-5). Hosting innumerable events and showcasing King's (later Queen's) Plate winners, the racetrack operated between 1920 and 1952.

During the latter year, the Ontario Jockey Club acquired the racetrack, immediately transferring the property to Thorncliffe Park Limited, a land development company. The neighbouring Town of Leaside annexed the nearly 400-acre tract in 1954, and the organization of the area into distinct manufacturing and residential sectors recalled its own development as a planned community⁴ (Image 6). Running east from Millwood Road, Overlea Boulevard was established as the main commercial thoroughfare where Thorncliffe Park Market Plaza (now the East York Town Centre) opened as one of the earliest covered shopping malls in Canada. During the 1960s, 30 mid- to high-rise residential complexes were constructed in the residential enclave and adjoined by institutional buildings.⁵ Thorncliffe Park paid homage to the former racetrack in streets named Grandstand Place and Milepost Place, along with the preservation of the concrete winner's circle on property occupied by Coca-Cola Limited on Overlea Boulevard.⁶

Coca-Cola Building

Coca-Cola Limited acquired a 13-acre parcel on Overlea Boulevard in 1963, two years after the first commercial and manufacturing complexes were introduced to Thorncliffe Park.⁷ As a subsidiary of the American firm founded in 1886 to manufacture a line of non-alcoholic beverages, Coca-Cola began operations in Canada in the early 20th

³ Pitfield, 134

⁴ The Leaside Planning Board supervised the development of Thorncliffe Park until 1967 when the municipality amalgamated with the adjoining township as the Borough of East York

⁵ The tallest apartment towers in the community at 85 and 95 Thorncliffe Park Drive were completed in 1971

⁶ Pitfield, 139

⁷ In 1961, the American Optical Company of Canada opened at 62 Overlea, along with the administrative offices of Sayvette Canada at 50 Overlea. According to the City Directory of 1962 (with information from 1961), Sayvette was one of the anchors at the Thorncliffe Park Market Plaza along with Steinberg's grocery store, the Thorncliffe Bowl bowling alley and a community auditorium

century. The company's office building and bottling plant were under construction in Thorncliffe Park in 1964 and formally opened in July 1965 (Images 7-10).

A review of the Directory for East Central Toronto for 2001 (one of the final print volumes) indicates that Coca-Cola was the last of the original occupants in an office and manufacturing complex on Overlea Boulevard.⁸

Mathers and Haldenby, Architects

The Coca-Cola Building was designed by the Toronto architectural practice of Mathers and Haldenby. The partnership began in 1921 when architect Eric W. Haldenby (1893-1971), a recent graduate of the University of Toronto joined Alvan S. Mathers (1895-1965), who had experience working with several local architectural firms. The pair achieved early success after winning a competition to design the University Club Building (1929), followed by high-profile commissions such as the Canada Permanent Building on Bay Street (1931, in association with other firms) and the main building for Upper Canada College (1932). In the decades prior to World War II, Mathers and Haldenby designed institutional, commercial, industrial and residential buildings in the popular styles of the era. The firm's ability to adjust to changing architectural tastes and embrace new technologies resulted in commissions linked to the Modern Movement in architecture during the last half of the 20th century. During this period, Mathers and Haldenby continued to complete projects for two long-term clients - the University of Toronto and Toronto General Hospital - and, as early as 1940 were engaged by Coca-Cola Limited as part of an expansion of the soft drink firm's facilities across Canada. Mathers and Haldenby designed the Coca-Cola Building on Overlea Boulevard in 1963, before the original founders transferred the firm to their respective sons, Andrew S. Mathers and Douglas C. Haldenby who continued the partnership until 1991.

ii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Photographs of the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard are found on the cover and in Sections 2 and 6 of this report. The Coca-Cola Building is identified with the Modern Movement in architecture that "reached Canada tentatively in the 1930s and became firmly entrenched in the 1950s."⁹ Modernism represented a rejection of the applied ornament associated with historical architectural styles and embraced the new materials, construction methods and clean-lined design aesthetic that distinguished this era. Its appearance coincided with the affluence and building boom that followed World War II when Toronto welcomed new development in the urban core and the suburbs beyond it. This included the Coca-Cola Building on Overlea Boulevard in Thorncliffe Park where the curtain wall construction, the fenestration where expanses of glass are interspersed

⁸ The former Barber-Ellis Building and Crang and Boake's previous architectural offices at 20 and 86 Overlea, respectively are other surviving first-generation complexes on Overlea. The Thorncliffe Park Market Plaza (now the East York Town Centre) has been a fixture since 1961, while the Macedonian Orthodox Church (later the Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral) was the first institutional building recorded on Overlea in 1963

⁹ Kalman, 779

with spandrels, and the flat roofline are all hallmarks of Modernism, while the vertical louvers, the copper-coloured columns and the elements identified with the company's brand are special features of the design.¹⁰

The Coca-Cola Building has a near-square plan (excluding the rear or north addition) that rises three stories from a podium and includes a penthouse. Showcasing steel, stone, metals and glass, the structure is covered by a flat roof that extends as an overhang or canopy above the principal (south) elevation. On the latter wall, the bays are arranged by eight columns with copper-coloured cladding that rise from the podium to the canopy. In-between the columns, the bays contain continuous windows with metal spandrel panels. Although the columns appear to be freestanding, they are attached to the spandrels at the mid level of the wall. At the east end, the south elevation is recessed in the lower storey where the main entrance is found. The west section of the south elevation is enclosed as a wing that features black granite cladding with a geometric pattern recalling the bottom of Coca-Cola bottles.

On the side elevations (east and west) above the ground floor, the south parts of the walls contain two-storey vertical louvers (sunshades), which were originally operable and contributed to both the functionality and distinctive design aesthetic of the building. The rear (north) wall is concealed by the addition (1995), which is not identified as a heritage feature.

East of the Coca-Cola Building, the adjoining open space features a sunken courtyard separating the office complex from the bottling plant, which was demolished in 2013 (the latter industrial building is visible in the photographs attached in Section 6 below). Until July 2015, the courtyard contained a bronze "Coca-Cola" sculpture of intertwined bottles rising from a domed base with the name of the soft drinks brand inscribed in international languages. The piece was designed by Walter Yarwood (1917-1996), a self-taught Canadian painter, sculptor and art instructor who was a member of the influential "Painters Eleven", the group credited with introducing abstract expressionism to this country. Following the disbanding of the group, Yarwood turned his focus to sculpture, and his Toronto portfolio included commissions from the Ontario Government, the University of Toronto, and Coca-Cola Limited. Working in different medium as his career progressed, the "Coca-Cola" sculpture is noted as among the last projects where Yarwood mixed bronze, iron casting and welded steel.

iii. CONTEXT

The location of the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard is shown on the property data map and aerial photograph in Section 6 (Images 1 and 7). The Coca-Cola Building is found on the north side of the street, opposite the East York Town Centre shopping complex. Its placement on the main east-west corridor through Thorncliffe Park reflects

¹⁰ In his entry for the property on the Toronto Modern blog, architect Robert Moffat describes the use of polished copper as an unusual feature of this design

the Coca-Cola Building's status as one of the last surviving original complexes in the industrial sector of the planned community.

3. EVALUATION: Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed by the Province of Ontario for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

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

The Coca-Cola Building has cultural heritage value as a well-crafted office building reflecting the Modern Movement in architecture in Toronto in the late 20th century. Employing clean lines, contemporary materials and technologies, the structure's curtain wall construction with the fenestration and the spandrel panels under the flat roof are all hallmarks of Modernist design. However, the building is particularly distinguished by the distinctive vertical louvers (sunshades), the columns with the polished metal cladding, and especially the projecting south wall where geometrical shapes associated with the Coca-Cola brand are incorporated in the black granite facing.

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	X

The Coca-Cola Building is valued for its association with the development of Thorncliffe Park where, following the acquisition of the former racetrack lands and the annexation of the tract by the adjoining Town of Leaside the community was laid out with separate sectors for high- and mid-rise residential buildings and low-scale industrial complexes. As the long-time occupant of one of the last original industrial sites on Overlea Boulevard, the Coca-Cola Building reflects the mid 20th century origins of Thorncliffe Park as a planned community.

The value of the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard also relates to its association with the architectural partnership of Mathers and Haldenby, which was one of the best-known and most successful practices in Toronto throughout most of the 20th century and noted for its range of commissions for residential, institutional, commercial and industrial buildings. As part of its extensive portfolio, Mathers and Haldenby prepared plans for Coca-Cola Limited's complexes in 17 cities in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia between 1940 and 1963, with the office

building and bottling plant in Thorncliffe Park marking the culmination of their work for the soft drink firm.

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

Contextually, the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard has cultural heritage value for its role in maintaining and supporting the historical character of Thorncliffe Park as it evolved in the early 1960s as a planned community where the Coca-Cola Building stands as one of the original structures in the sector first devoted to industrial uses. It is also visually and historically linked to its surroundings on Overlea Boulevard where it is set back from the street in a highly visible location opposite the East York Town Centre (formerly the Thorncliffe Park Market Plaza).

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard has design, associative and contextual values. The Coca-Cola Building is a fine representative example of Modernist design applied to a commercial building in Thorncliffe Park according to the plans of the notable architectural partnership of Mathers and Haldenby and featured a complementary sculpture by Canadian artist Walter Yarwood. As a surviving reminder of the historical development of the planned community of Thorncliffe Park, the Coca-Cola Building maintains and supports the historical character of the neighbourhood where it remains visually and historically linked to its surroundings on Overlea Boulevard.

5. SOURCES

Archival Sources

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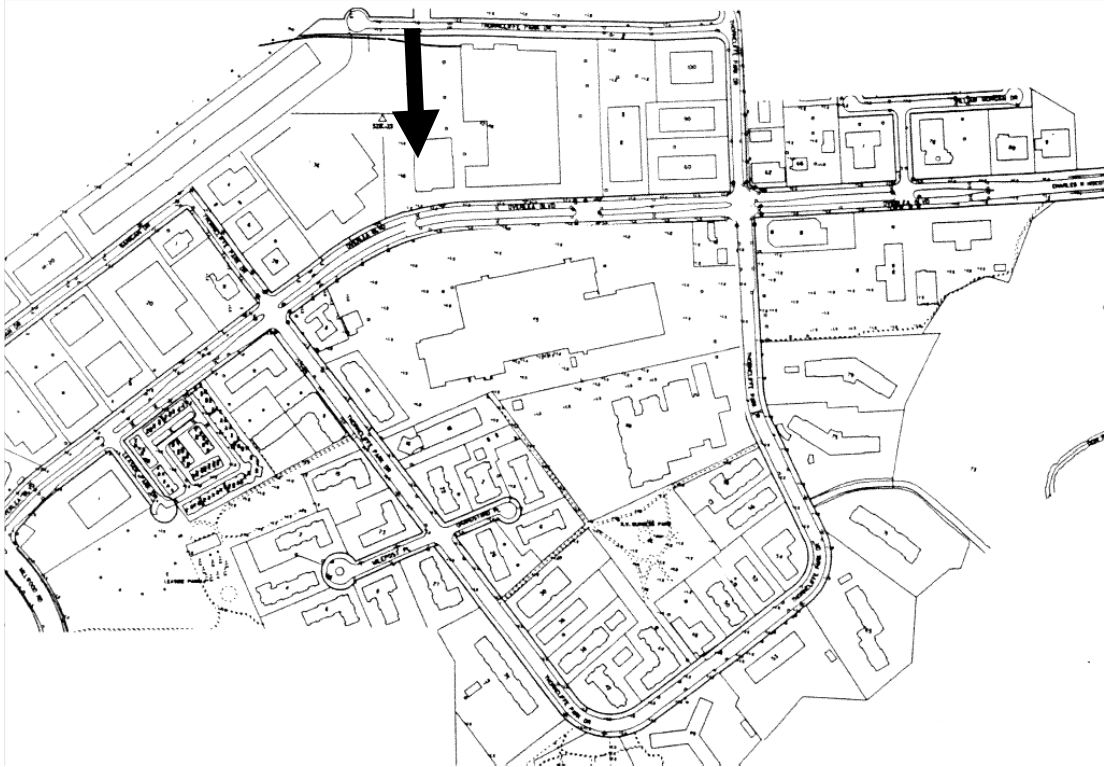
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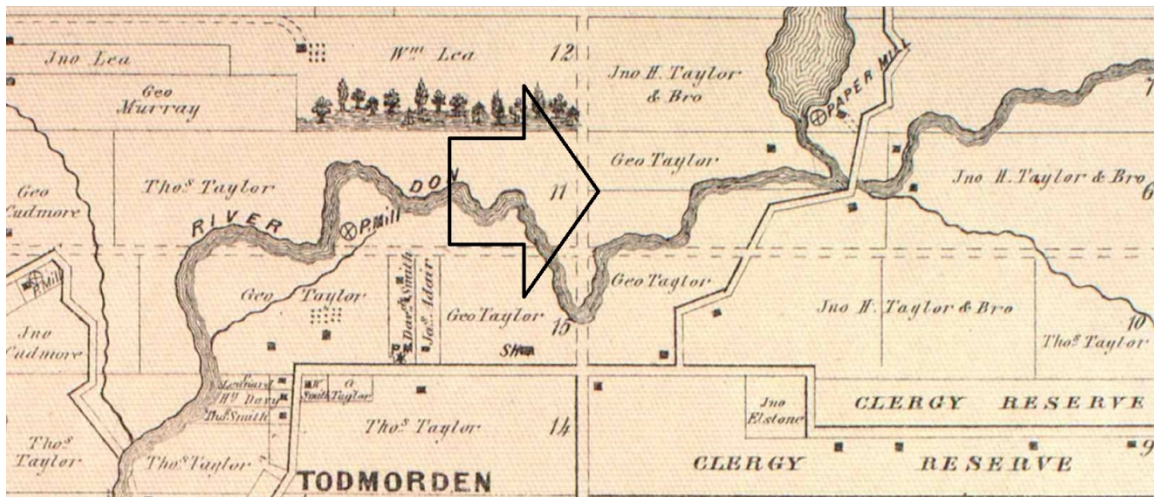
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Property Nomination Forms, 42 and 46 Overlea Boulevard, North York Community Preservation Panel, February 2012

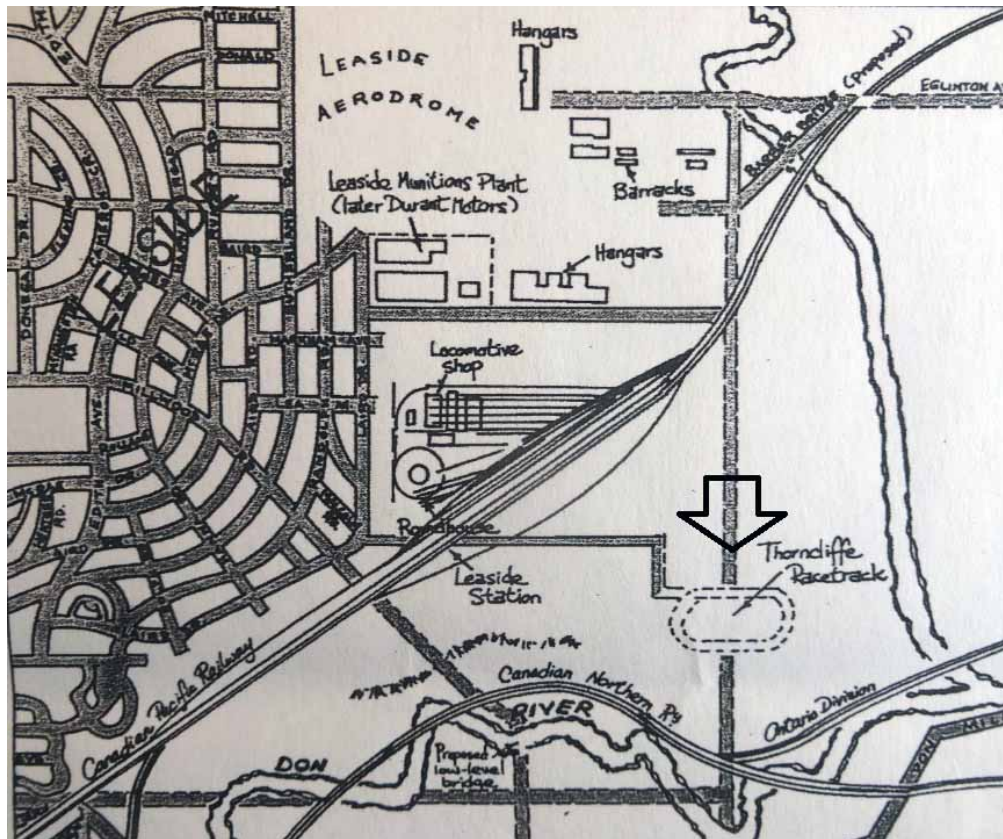
6. IMAGES



1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard where the **arrow** marks the site of the Coca-Cola Building



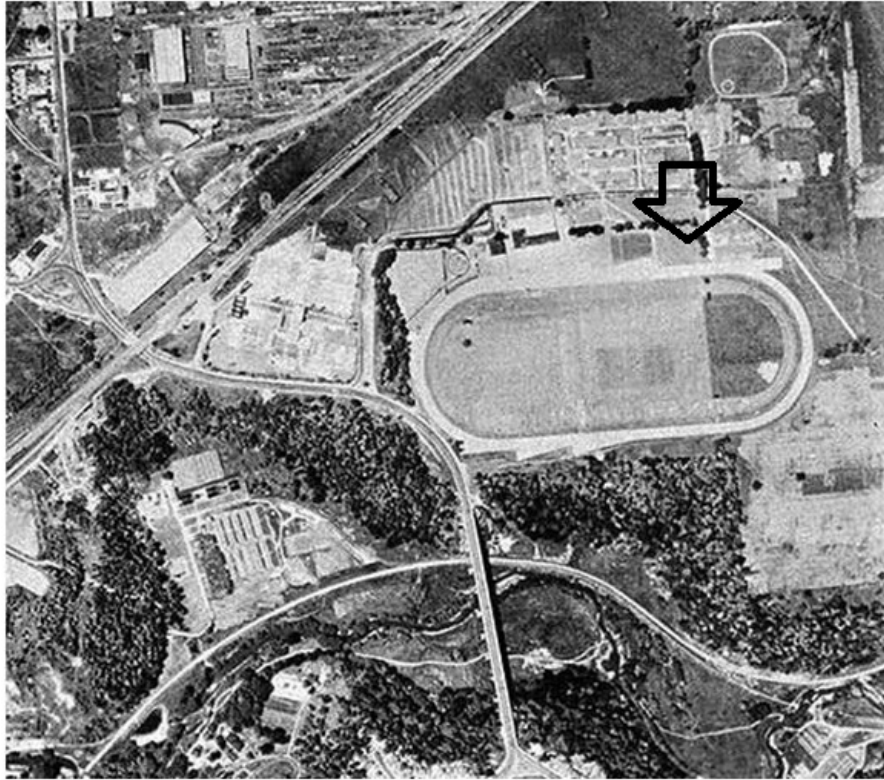
2. Mile's Historical Atlas of the County of York 1878: showing the area where members of the pioneering Taylor family owned most of the farm lots adjoining the Don River, including the subject property



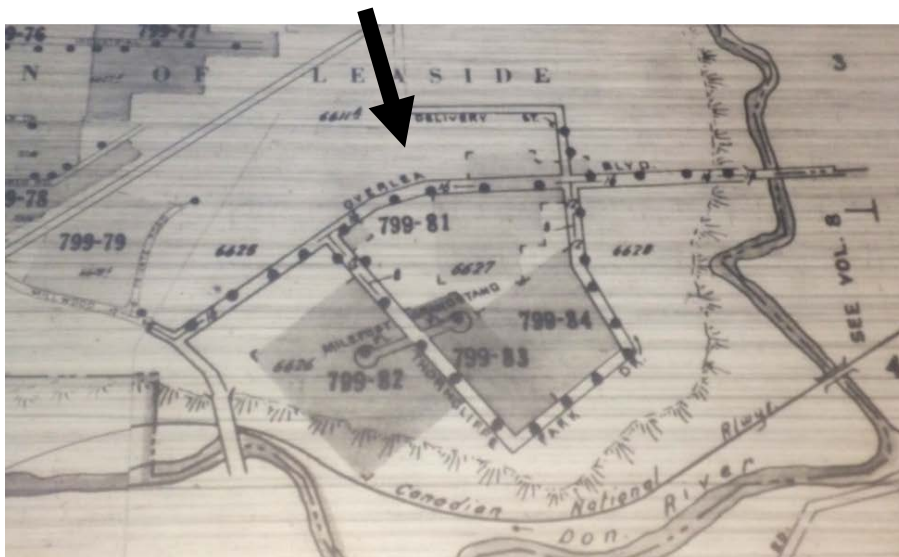
3. Illustration, "Toronto World", 1918: showing the Leaside community with the Thorncliffe Racetrack directly south (Pitfield, 137)



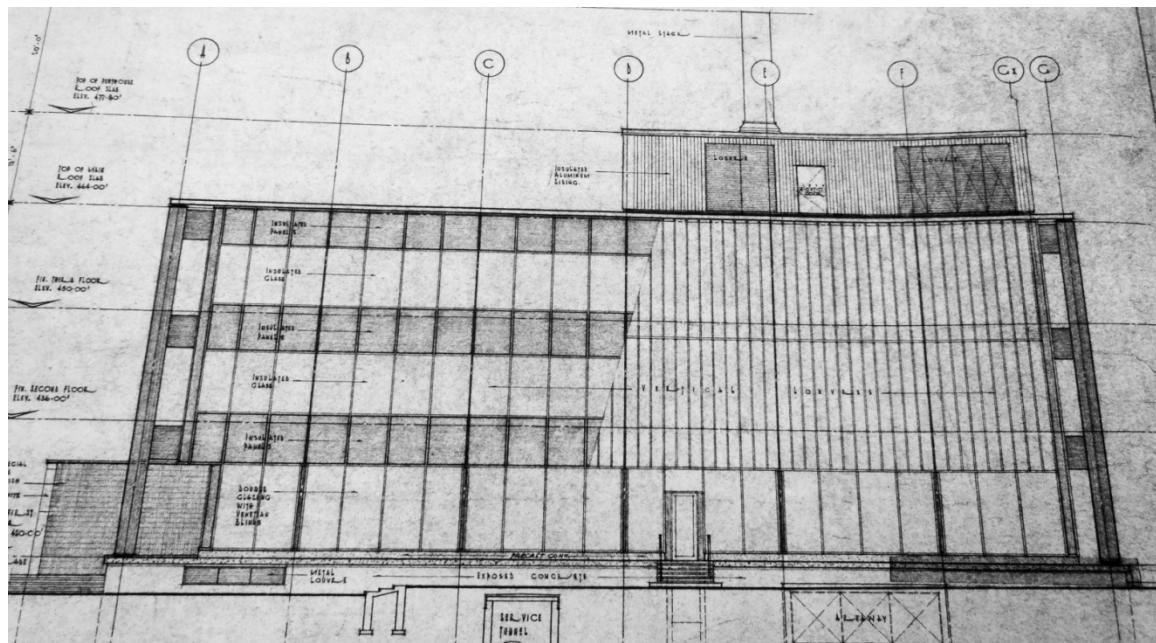
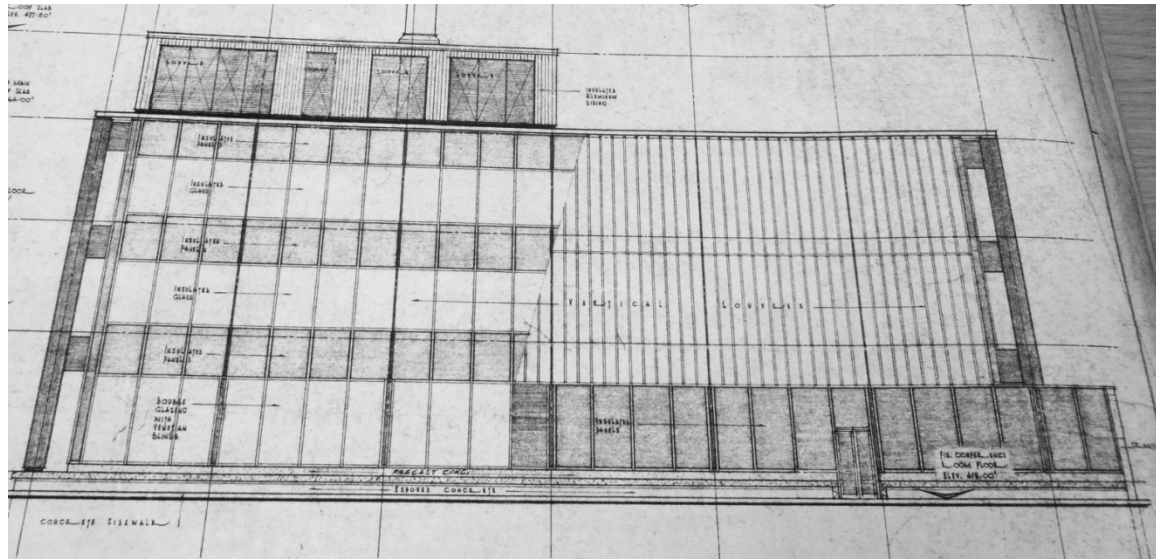
4. Archival Photograph, Thorncliffe Racetrack, 1928: the racetrack operated on the site from 1920-52 and was replaced by the planned community of Thorncliffe Park (City of Toronto Archives, Series 71, Item 5883)



5. Aerial Photograph, 1942: showing the area then dominated by the Thorncliffe Racetrack and its facilities (City of Toronto Archives)



6. Atlas, Underwriters' Survey Bureau, Volume 7, March 1959 updated to August 1961: showing the street pattern in Thorncliffe Park with Overlea Boulevard as the main east-west corridor (the subject property was not illustrated in a specific plate in the atlas)



8. Architectural Drawings, Coca-Cola Building, 19--: showing the west (above) and east (below) elevations (Archives of Ontario, Mathers and Haldenby Fonds, Item 315-1-4)



11. Aerial Photograph, Thorncliffe Park: showing the industrial (north) and residential (south) components of Thorncliffe Park with the current East York Town Centre (originally the Thorncliffe Park Market Plaza) opposite the property at 42-46 Overlea Boulevard (where the Coca-Cola Building is marked by the blue dot) (<http://www.bing.com>)



12. 42-46 Overlea Boulevard, 2014: showing the demolition of the bottling plant adjoining the courtyard with the "Coca-Cola" sculpture, which was removed from the site in July 2015 (<http://www.bayview-news.com/>)



13. Photographs: showing the west (left) and south (right) elevations (above) with the south (left) and east (right) elevations (below) prior to the demolition of the bottling plant (right) (Heritage Preservation Services)



14. Photographs: showing the wing at the west end of the south facade (above) with a close-up of the geometrical detailing (below) (Heritage Preservation Services)



15. Photographs: showing the setback of Coca-Cola Building on north side of Overlea Boulevard before the demolition of the neighbouring bottling plant (above), and the adjoining courtyard with the "Coca-Cola" sculpture by Walter Yarwood that was removed from the property in July 2015 (Heritage Preservation Services)



16. Photographs: looking west (above) and east (below) on Overlea Boulevard and showing the Coca-Cola Building in relation to the adjoining bottling plant (right) that was demolished in 2014 (Heritage Preservation Services)