

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



MARVYN HOUSES
497 AND 499 ADELAIDE STREET WEST, TORONTO

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

February 2015

1. DESCRIPTION



Above: view of the north (left) and west (right) elevations of the Marvyn Houses at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West; cover: view of the principal (north) elevations of the houses (Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)

497 and 499 Adelaide Street West: Marvyn Houses	
ADDRESS	497 and 499 Adelaide Street West (south side, west of Portland Street)
WARD	20 (Trinity-Spadina)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Military Reserve, Section G, Part Lot 8
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	King-Spadina
HISTORICAL NAME	Marvyn Houses ¹
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1890
ORIGINAL OWNER	John and Felix Marvyn, brick layers
ORIGINAL USE	Residential (semi-detached house form buildings)
CURRENT USE*	Residential * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	John and Felix Marvyn (attribution) ²
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Brick cladding with brick, stone and wood trim
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Gothic Revival
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 2
CRITERIA	Design/Physical and Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Cultural Heritage Evaluation
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	February 2015

¹ The family's name is sometimes spelled "Marvin" in archival documents, but family sources and land records use "Marvyn"

² John Marvyn and his extended family were identified as brick layers in archival records; no building permit was located for the site and it was not referenced in the Globe's tender calls

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West, and applies evaluation criteria to determine whether they merit inclusion on the City of Toronto’s Heritage Register and 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
1843	The patent for Lot 8 in the Military Reserve is issued to John Costello
1858	The subject properties remain vacant when Boulton’s Atlas is published
1862	John Marvyn acquires the east half of Lot 8
1876	A bird’s eye view of the area shows the first modest houses Marvyn built on the properties
1890 Jan	John Marvyn conveys part of Lot 8 (comprising 18 feet on the south side of Adelaide Street West) to his son, Felix Marvyn
1890 Sept	The tax assessment roll for 1891 (with information compiled the previous year) documents two “unfinished houses” owned by John and Felix Marvyn, respectively on the subject sites ³
1891 Sept	John Zork, a diamond seller is the first in John Marvyn’s series of tenants at 497 Adelaide, while Felix Marvyn’s property at 499 Adelaide remains vacant (according to the assessment rolls for 1892)
1894	The property at 499 Adelaide Street West is first tenanted
1900-1910	Felix Marvyn occupies the house at 499 Adelaide according to the City Directories
1911	The Marvyn family sells the properties with the semi-detached houses
1912	Goad’s Atlas for 1910 updated to 1912 illustrates the houses ⁴

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

King-Spadina Neighbourhood

The properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West are located in the King-Spadina neighbourhood. Historical maps and atlases, including those found in Section 6 of this report, trace the development of the area. The origins of the community dated to the founding of Toronto as the Town of York in 1793 when the area west of the townsite was set aside as the Garrison Common or Military Reserve. Almost immediately, the municipality was extended westward into the Military Reserve as "New Town" where the land adjoining present-day King and Simcoe Streets was the first location of Upper Canada College and Government House (the Lieutenant Governor's residence, located directly north of the Third Parliament Buildings). This institutional enclave attracted residential housing along King Street West and the adjoining streets. However, when the first railway lines extended their tracks across the Military Reserve in the 1850s, the

³ No building permit was located for the properties at the City of Toronto Archives

⁴ This section of the neighbourhood was not updated in earlier plates

adjacent land was acquired for industrial purposes. After the Great Fire of 1904 destroyed Toronto's original manufacturing district at Front and Bay Streets, the sector relocated to the neighbourhood adjoining the major cross-streets of King Street West and Spadina Avenue.

King-Spadina remained the city's predominant industrial area through the first half of the 20th century. After World War II when many manufacturers moved to the suburbs, numerous industrial buildings in King-Spadina stood vacant or underutilized. In 1996, the City of Toronto adopted the King-Spadina Secondary Plan, which removed the restrictive zoning and encouraged the adaptive reuse of the existing properties. Twenty years later, the transformation of King-Spadina continues as Toronto's Entertainment District and a sought-after residential community.

497 and 499 Adelaide Street West

The area northwest of present-day King Street West and Portland Street was first subdivided as Section G of the Military Reserve (Image 2). Lot 8 on the south side of Adelaide Street West, west of Portland Street was patented in 1843 to Michael Costello, who began subdividing the parcel in the 1850s. The subject property remained vacant when Boulton's Atlas was published in 1858 (Image 4). Four years later, John Marvyn (ca. 1812-95), an Irish immigrant and bricklayer, purchased the east half of Lot 8. Marvyn owned additional lands in the block where he and members of his extended family completed a series of modest houses along King, Portland and Adelaide Streets, which were described as either frame or rough cast (stucco) in archival records and illustrated on maps and atlases (Images 6-7). While most of the dwellings were tenanted, John Marvyn occupied one of the houses on Portland Street.

In January 1890, John Marvyn conveyed part of Lot 8 to his eldest son, Felix Marvyn, who was a brick layer active in the family business. By September of that year, the father and son were listed as the owners of the pair of semi-detached houses at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West, which was described as unfinished in the tax assessment rolls. A year later, John Marvyn's property at 497 Adelaide was occupied by John Zack, a diamond cutter, while the adjoining house at 499 Adelaide remained vacant until 1894. Felix Marvyn resided at 499 Adelaide Street West between 1900 and 1910. The Marvyn Houses were illustrated on the 1912 updates to Goad's Atlas (Image 8). While members of the Marvyn family sold the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide in 1911, they retained other residential properties on Portland Street until the post-World War II era.⁵

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

⁵ These included the properties at present-day 98-106 Portland, which contain houses dating to the 1880s (according to the assessment rolls) that have been significantly altered over time

Current photographs of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West are found on the cover and in Sections 2 and 6 of this report. The Marvyn Houses display architectural features of the Gothic Revival style, which was popularized for residential buildings in the mid- to late 19th century through builders' guides, including those produced by American practitioners A. J. Davis and A. J. Downing. In Toronto, "Gothic Revival houses are typically symmetrical 1½-storey cottages with (a) centre gable or asymmetric two-storey L-shaped structures."⁶ The Marvyn Houses follow the latter model, incorporating steeply pointed gables on the principal (north) elevations that are indicative of the later 19th century, with the decorative wood bargeboard that is a hallmark of Gothic Revival styling.

Rising 2½ stories on rectangular-shaped plans, the Marvyn Houses are covered by cross-gable roofs with chimneys at the east and west ends. The structures are clad with red brick (the north elevation of 497 Adelaide is currently painted and the west wall of 499 Adelaide Street concealed by cladding). The principal (north) elevations of the houses are organized as mirror images, with the main entrances raised and placed side-by-side in the centre bays. The segmental-arched door surrounds incorporate transoms (on 497 Adelaide, the transom has been changed to a flat-headed shape, but the brick flat arch remains above). A flat-headed window opening is placed over each entry in the second storey. The outer bays contain 2½-storey bay windows with segmental-arched openings in the first (ground) and attic floors and flat-headed versions in the second storey. The window openings have stone sills, while the door and window openings display brick flat arches. Corbelled brickwork decorates the bay windows between the first and second-storey openings.

The side walls (east and west) are visible from Adelaide Street, and the houses are extended to the rear (south) by two-storey gable-roofed brick-clad wings.

iv. CONTEXT

The location of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West is shown in Image 1. The Marvyn Houses are placed on the south side of the street, west of Portland Street. They are adjoined to the east by low-rise 20th century industrial buildings. To the west, a laneway separates them from the group of 2½-storey residential buildings at 501 (1886) and 505-511 Adelaide Street West (1883). Directly southwest, a group of six-part row houses (1889) is located on Adelaide Place. This collection of residential buildings reflects the late 19th century character of this block adjoining King, Portland and Adelaide Streets before the evolution of the King-Spadina neighbourhood as Toronto's manufacturing district after the Great Fire of 1904.

⁶ McHugh, 16

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 Marvyn Houses have cultural heritage value as a pair of surviving semi-detached houses on Adelaide Street West, which display features of the Gothic Revival style popular for residential buildings in the late 19th century. Designed as mirror images, the houses are distinguished by the wood detailing in the gables and the decorative brickwork on the bay windows.

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 value of the Marvyn Houses is also associated with their role in providing information about the historical evolution of the community, which began as a residential neighbourhood on land formerly allocated for the Military Reserve. The pair of semi-detached houses was among the series of dwellings constructed along King, Portland and Adelaide Streets by John Marvyn and members of his family, who remained land owners in the area until the World War II era. The Marvyn Houses at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West survived after the community was transformed as the King-Spadina industrial district following the Great Fire of 1904, which resulted in the removal of most of the residential buildings.

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

Character and Surroundings – Contextually, the Marvyn Houses contribute to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood as surviving house form buildings that represent the initial development of the Military Reserve as a residential neighbourhood in the mid to late 19th century where they remain historically and visually linked to their settings on Adelaide Street West.

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West have design, associative and contextual values. The Marvyn Houses are surviving examples of late 19th century semi-detached houses with Gothic Revival detailing that retain their integrity, provide an understanding of the historical development of this area as a residential community in the 19th century, and contribute to the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood to which they are historically and visually linked.

The buildings have undergone minor alterations to the principal (north) elevations, but retain their integrity while continuing to exhibit their heritage values and attributes.

5. SOURCES

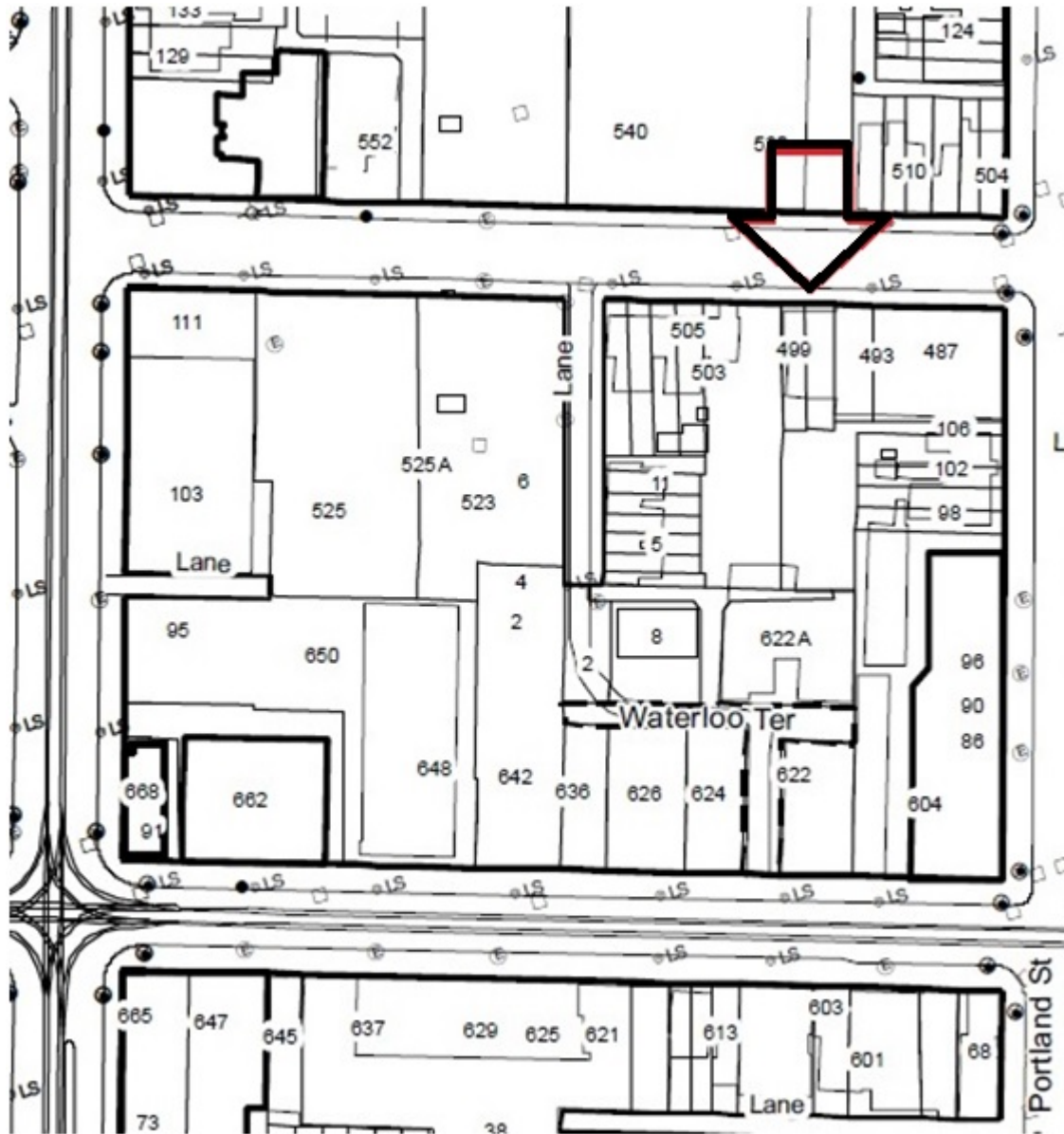
Archival Sources

Abstract Indices of Deeds, Military Reserve, Section G, Lot 8
Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives, Fonds, 2043, Series 1587, File 3
Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto, St. Andrew's Ward, 1872-1892, and Ward 4, Division 1, 1893 ff.
Boulton, Atlas of Toronto, 1858
Building Records, City of Toronto, Toronto and East York, 1980
Cane, Topographical Map of the City and Liberties of Toronto, 1842
City of Toronto Directories, 1880 ff.
Decennial Censuses of Canada, 1871-1901
Goad's Atlases, 1884-1923
Gross, Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876
Hawkins, Toronto Military Reserve, 1837
Wadsworth and Unwin, Map of the City of Toronto, 1872

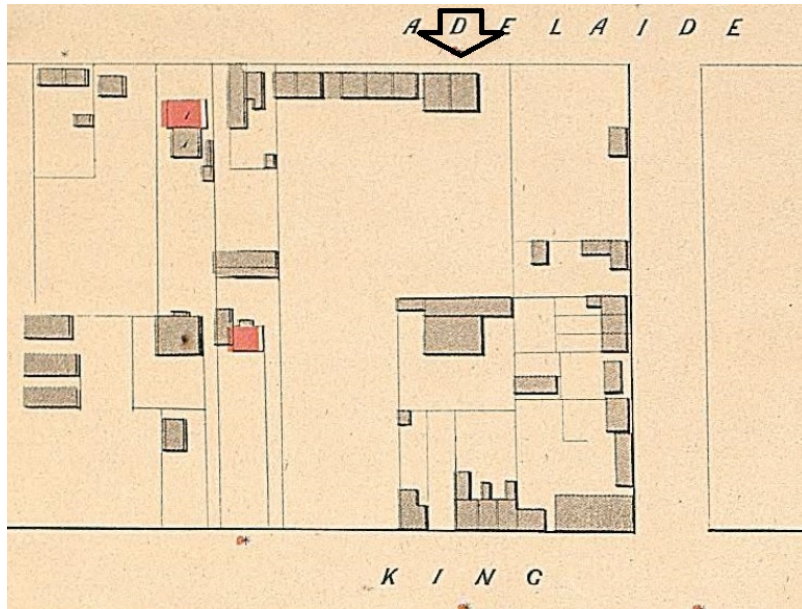
Secondary Sources

Arthur, Eric, Toronto: no mean city, 3rd ed., revised by Stephen A. Otto, 1986
Dendy, William, Lost Toronto, 2nd ed., 1993
Marvyn Family Records, www.ancestry.ca
McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2nd ed., 1989

6. IMAGES – the **arrows** mark the location of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West



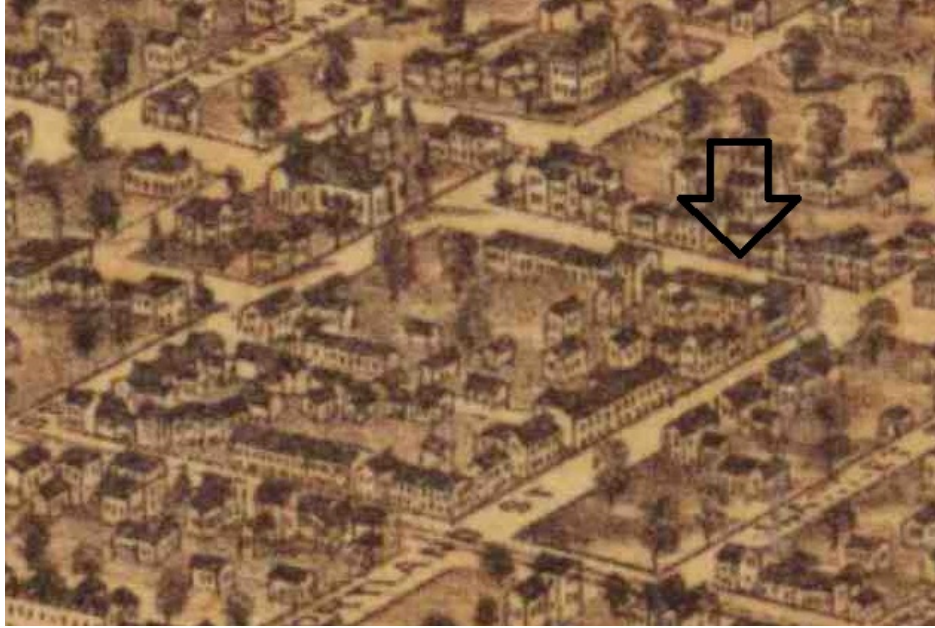
1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West on the south side of the street between Portland Street (right) and Bathurst Street (left)



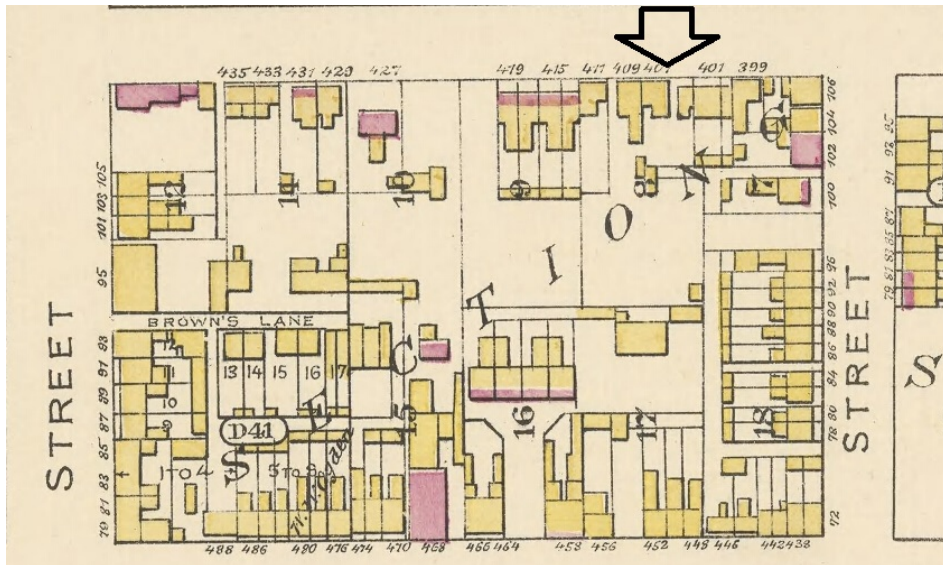
4. Boulton's Atlas, 1858: showing the residential buildings developed on King, Portland and Adelaide Streets by John Marvyn and members of this family, including the wood clad structures that were later replaced by the subject buildings



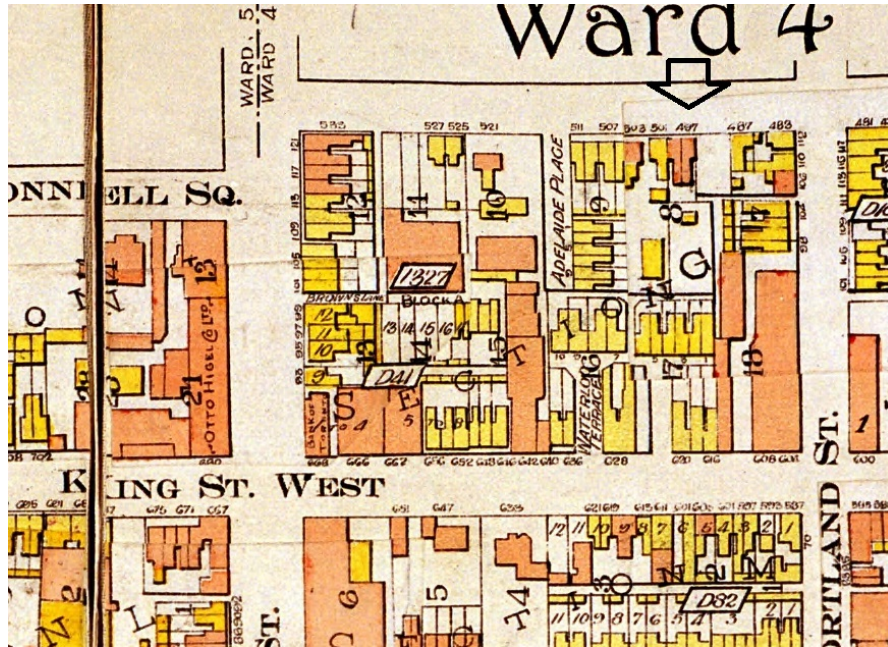
5. Wadsworth and Unwin's Map of the City of Toronto, 1872: showing the status of the area where the southwest corner of the subject block has been subdivided under Plan D41



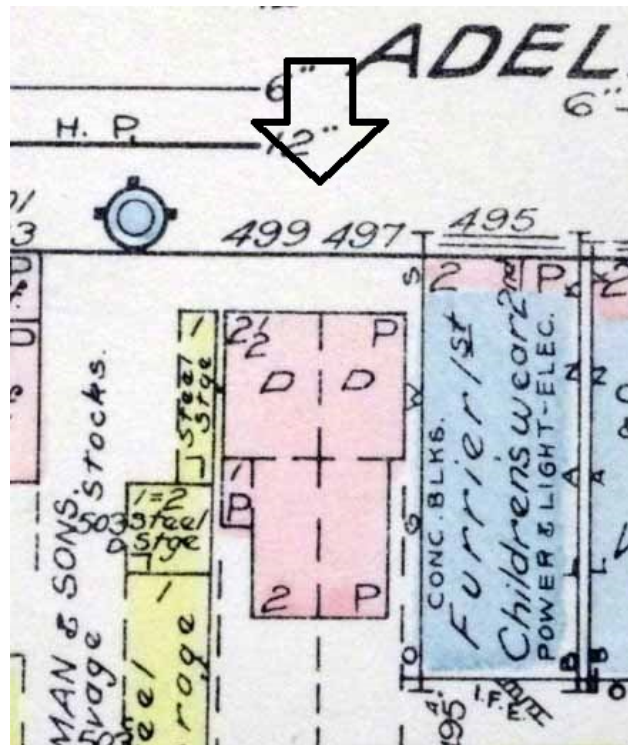
6. Gross's Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876: showing the development of the block where the modest houses on Adelaide Street West were later replaced by the Marvyn Houses



7. Goad's Atlas, 1884: the first Goad's covering the area shows Adelaide Street West before the existing buildings were replaced by the Marvyn Houses (the plate was not updated until the 1912 revisions to the 1910 Goad's Atlas)



7. Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1912: showing the semi-detached brick houses at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West



9. Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas, 1954: showing the status of the properties at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West



10. Archival Photographs, 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West, 1973: showing the Marvyn Houses (above) and the west elevation of the house at 499 Adelaide (below, left) (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 2043, Series 1587, File 3)



11. Archival Photographs, 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West, 1973: showing the Marvyn Houses in their context on the south side of Adelaide, west of Portland Street (above) and east of Bathurst Street (below) (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 2043, Series 1587, File 3)



12. Current Photograph, 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West, 2015: showing the principal (north) elevation on Adelaide (above) and the west and rear (south) walls (below) (Heritage Preservation Services)



13. Aerial Photograph, King, Portland and Adelaide Streets, 2015: looking south and showing the location of the Marvyn Houses at 497 and 499 Adelaide Street West and their context in relation to the neighbouring residential properties on Adelaide Street and Adelaide Place to the right (www.bing.com/maps)