

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SUMMARY: 811 & 813 BROADVIEW AVENUE**



Principal (east) façade of 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue  
*(Heritage Preservation Services, June 2015)*

**HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY**

<b>Key Date</b>	<b>Historical Event</b>
Pre-Settlement	Broadview Avenue, as it is known today, is part of a system of trails established by Aboriginal peoples
1793	Following the Toronto Purchase in 1787, the Town of York and Fort York are established and the surrounding lands, known as York County are surveyed and subdivided into concessions with 100 and 200 acre lots
1794	On the east side of the Don River, Lot 11 in the Second Concession (the location of 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue) is granted to James Playter
1795	Brothers Isaiah and Aaron Skinner establish a saw mill on Lot 13 in the Second Concession which will be known as the Don Mills and later the Mills at Todmorden
1799	The "Mill Road" a route from the east side of the bridge at the Bay Road (Queen Street) extending northwards through the Scadding and Cox properties across the Second Concession Road (the Danforth) and up to Pottery Road is opened following an existing Aboriginal trail
1831	James Playter sells Lot 11 to his brother John.
1855	John Playter's heirs survey and put up for sale 25 acres of Lot 11 on either side of Broadview Avenue. The subdivision is known as Playter's Corners, Plan 134.
1859	Playter's Corners is now officially known as Chester. The entire 200 acres of Lot 11 is surveyed by Kivas Tully and registered as Plan 257
1884	As the City of Toronto annexes Don Mount, the area south of Danforth

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	Avenue, east of the Don, west of Greenwood Avenue and north of Queen Street East, Mill Road, south of Danforth is renamed Broadview Avenue. North of Danforth, the road is referred to as Don Mills Road
1885-90	Two semi-detached houses are built on Lot 66, of Plan 257 and are known as 69-71 Mill Street
1909	Chester is annexed to the City of Toronto. Local streets are renamed including Don Mills Road now known as Broadview Avenue. The address of the properties changes to 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue
1917-1919	Construction of the Bloor Viaduct (later the Prince Edward Viaduct) increases the population and development of the Danforth
1978	Building Permit 122941 indicates two dwelling units on the ground and second floor at 811 Broadview Avenue
1980	Building Permit 128193 indicates the conversion of the ground floor dwelling to an office. Residential unit remains on the second floor
1987	Building Permit 243073 permits an internal link on the ground floor between the 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue for office use

#### Broadview Avenue: Aboriginal Trail to Mill Road

The location of the properties at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue is shown on the property data map below. (*Image 1*) The properties sit on the east side of Broadview Avenue between Erindale and Pretoria Avenues and are located within the 200-acre Lot 11 in the Second Concession from the Bay granted to the James Playter (1772-1809) in 1794.

When Lot 11 was first surveyed, the Aboriginal trail that would become Broadview Avenue already existed, cutting across the property on a north-east diagonal. This route, along with others in the city such as Davenport Road, Weston Road, Vaughan and Scarlett Roads, was first laid down by generations of Aboriginal peoples in response to topography. It followed a path of least resistance, rather than a surveyor's grid. The Aboriginal trail that Broadview Avenue first followed was part of an important network of local and regional trails, the equivalent for Aboriginal peoples of today's streets and highways.

The houses at 811 and 813 Broadview gain significance from their location on this historic route. Broadview Avenue is an important Toronto street whose physical form is reflective of a rich history created by many different factors, including the landscape of the Don River and the dramatic rise of its eastern escarpment, the adaptation of a route created over thousands of years by Aboriginal peoples to serve a rural community, and the development of the avenue in response to an increasingly dense urban environment.

Today's Broadview Avenue first moved from an Aboriginal trail to a road when it was built to connect the nascent Town of York with a new mill, the earliest on the Don River, which was established between 1793 and 1795 at today's Todmorden Mills. In 1798, instructions were given to construct a road from present day Queen Street to the mill, and

what is now Broadview Avenue was born.<sup>1</sup> By 1802, the Skinner mill was known as Don Mills.<sup>2</sup> Broadview Avenue's first names, Mill Street and Don Mill Road, reflected its important function. (*Image 2*)

As the mill site grew to include a brewery, distillery, fulling mill, carding mill, and paper mill, so grew the significance of the road. The village that grew up around this important early industrial site was named Todmorden, and between 1821 and 1849, the road was "regarded chiefly as an approach to (these) multifarious works."<sup>3</sup>

#### Playter's Corners and the Village of Chester

The properties located at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue stand on Lot 11, in the Second Concession, a 200-acre portion of land that ran along the north side of today's Danforth Avenue, stretching east from the river. Held by the Playter family since its original survey in 1794, Lot 11 was subdivided for sale in 1855 by John Jr. Playter and his brother Richard Ellerbeck Playter after their father's death. Significantly, the brothers chose to develop the land on either side of today's Broadview Avenue. The plot was advertised in the *Globe* as "25 acres of valuable land joining the northern limit of the city of Toronto."<sup>4</sup> (*Image 3*)

A surveyor, J. O. Browne, prepared Plan 134 which included 87 lots on either side of 'Mill Street' (Broadview Avenue) with an intersecting street named John after the brothers' father, and two parallel streets named Sarah and Ellerbeck for their mother and her family. Browne's survey indicates that Mill Road was renamed Mill Street north of today's Danforth, where it ran through the new community.<sup>5</sup> (*Image 4*)

To encourage sale of the lots and settlement of a community, the Playter brothers had a church built at the corner of Ellerbeck and John which became St. Barnabas Church. In 1859, the architect and surveyor Kivas Tully completed and registered Plan 257 which provided subdivision of the remainder of the Playter's original Lot 11. Settlement grew slowly. In 1869, the new crossroads community was selected as the site of the Doncaster Post Office which would serve the surrounding area.

The name of the post office created confusion around the name of the community. Originally known as Playter's Corners, the cluster of buildings was within a few years renamed Chester (for the old Roman city of Chester in Cheshire).<sup>6</sup> After the Doncaster Post Office was established, the names Doncaster and Chester vied for dominance until, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chester had won.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Myrvold (2015), p 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Scadding, p 156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Myrvold, p. 15

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See Myrvold for a detailed discussion, pp 18-20.

The Playter families influence in the development of the community remains recognized in streets named Ellerbeck Street, Playter Boulevard and Playter Crescent. A Playter family home, the Playter Farmhouse, survives at 28 Playter Crescent and was included on the City of Toronto Heritage Register in 1981. (*Image 10*)

### The Development of the Community and the Construction of 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue

The properties at 811 and 813 Broadview are the only semi-detached houses that survive from the 19<sup>th</sup> century community of Chester. Their construction was likely tied to increased access to the community, and better services, as today's Broadview Avenue was gradually improved and joined by new transportation corridors, and as the area was annexed by the City of Toronto.

In 1878, the lot (#66) at the south-east corner of Mill and John streets on which 811 and 813 Broadview would be built was still vacant. (*Image 5*) In 1884, the area south of the Danforth and east of the Don extending as far as Greenwood Avenue was annexed by the City of Toronto. Mill Road was renamed Broadview Avenue. More importantly, in 1889, the Toronto Street Railway Commission Company opened a streetcar line on Broadview Avenue making the villages on the Don Mills Road more accessible to the city. A comparison of the Goad's Atlases of 1884 and 1890 shows the resulting development on Mill Street. The semi-detached homes at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue first appear on the Atlas of 1890, indicating their construction between 1884 and 1890. At this time the properties were addressed as 69-71 Mill Street, though Mill Street was also referred to as Don Mills Road. (*Images 6 and 7*)

### Annexation of Chester and Street Name Changes

The 1884 annexation of the area south of today's Danforth Avenue had left the villagers of Chester just beyond the city limits, and without valued City services. Chester villagers petitioned to be annexed in 1889 and 1890, but had to wait until 1909 for the City of Toronto to include all of the original Lot 11 within the city limits. Following annexation, much changed. The name Broadview Avenue was extended up to the new North City Limit. (*Image 8*) To avoid confusion with existing Toronto streets, John Street was renamed Pretoria Avenue, Sarah Street was renamed Cambridge Avenue, and Cherry Street was renamed Erindale Avenue. In 1923, the name Broadview Avenue was finally extended up to the road's terminus at O'Connor Drive. (*Image 9*)

Although the village of Chester ceased to exist in 1909, it is still represented by the names Chester Avenue, Chester Hill Road, the Chester TTC subway station and until 1959 by the Chester School House which is now known as the Estonian House at 958 Broadview Avenue. Estonian House was included on the Heritage Register in 2006. (*Image 11*)

The development and ultimate intensification of the village of Chester was increased with the supply of water and electricity by the City. Better transportation access came with the addition of a streetcar line on the Danforth in 1912, the construction of the Bloor Viaduct in 1918 and the 1920s Leaside Bridge. The construction of low-rise apartment buildings in the former village of Chester followed. Office buildings with commercial components at grade and underground parking would appear in the community after WWII.

811 and 813 Broadview Avenue evolved in their usage as their context changed. City of Toronto Directories indicate that by the 1920s, 813 Broadview Avenue was adapted to serve as two dwellings with two separate occupants recorded, the second at 813A. By the 1950s two separate residents were also identified at 811 Broadview with a third person recorded as living at the rear. In 1980, the ground floor at 813 was adapted for office use and this extended to 811 in 1987. The ground floors of both properties continue to be used for office purposes and the second floors as residential units.

### Architectural Description

The properties at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue together contain a pair of two-storey, semi-detached houses. (*Image 12*) They have a typical Toronto 19<sup>th</sup> century urban house plan which is based on a T with the top of the T representing the main body of the house and the stem of the T the wing at the rear which was typically occupied by the kitchen. (*Image 13*) The main body of the house has a gable roof with a sloping flat roof over the rear wing.

The principal, west elevation facing Broadview Avenue, is symmetrical with the main entries paired together with windows above. To either side, a second set of windows on both floors is capped by a steeply-pitched gable end with a decorative turned finial. (*Image 14*) They are clad in red brick on the west-facing Broadview façade and the side elevation with yellow brick cladding, then considered to be a more economical material, on the rear east elevation and the wing. Yellow brick is also featured as decorative headers over the windows on the west façade. (*Image 15*)

In 1978, building permits indicate that the properties were converted to provide an apartment on the ground and second floor of the two houses. In 1980 the lower floor at 813 Broadview was converted for office use. In 1987 building permits indicate that the ground floor of the two properties were linked through a passage to function as a single business premises.<sup>8</sup>

The houses are mirror images of one another and represent the Victorian Style typical in Toronto in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is evident in the preference for red brick facades associated with both the Queen Anne Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque styles popular in the 1880s which contrasted with the taste for yellow brick

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<sup>8</sup> Building Permits 122941, 1978, 128193, 1980 and 243073, 1987.

that had been typical from the 1850s through the 1870s in Toronto. It is also evident in the use of yellow brick trim in the window headers which with their shallow arc, suggestion of a keystone at the centre and ornamental bracket-like forms at the sides indicate the influence of a Renaissance Classicism. The steeply pitched gables and finials in the gable ends, on the other hand, allude to the Gothic Revival Style that was prevalent throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Together these elements are typical of the eclecticism that typified Victorian architecture in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Setting and Context

The setting of the houses represents a typical pattern for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century development that occurred on Broadview Avenue. The street was mixed in its combination of commercial and residential development, but from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards it became typical for commercial buildings, most often stores to be set right on the edge of the lot. Houses, in contrast, were typically set back, providing a front garden on the street as well as having side setbacks which allowed a view from the avenue to the open space behind. (*Images 16, 17 and 18*)

Today, situated on the east side of Broadview Avenue just south of Pretoria Avenue, 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue are located between two post-World War II commercial buildings: to the north, a low-rise, two-storey building with stores at grade and residential accommodation above and to the south a more recent five-storey office building with stores at grade. (*Images 19 and 20*) The office building is an imposing block set right on the edge of the sidewalk, as does the store to the north on the corner with Pretoria Avenue. Pretoria and Broadview avenues (originally John Street and the Don mill road) represent the original intersection of the 1850s village of Chester. To the north and south of the intersection there is a consistent range of periods of buildings with 811 and 813 Broadview being one of the earliest dating from 1885-90. 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue are significant within this mix as they are the only semi-detached pair of houses dating from the 1880s with this form with a gable front. They are an important and rare surviving connection to the early history of village of Chester. 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue remains an important witness to this chapter in Toronto's history. As a rare pair of Victorian semi-detached houses their two-storey scale and paired-gable form and set back within a small landscaped space contributes to the character of the neighbourhood preserving in situ its history.

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.

<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>

The pair of semi-detached house-form buildings at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue has design value as fine representatives of the typical Toronto late Victorian-style semi-detached house-type which are rare on Broadview Avenue. The elements of the style are evident in the paired, gable-roofed house form, the gables with their decorative turned finials, and the combination of red brick cladding with decorative yellow brick details.

<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>X</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>N/A</b>

The properties have associative value as the only remaining pair of 1880s semi-detached houses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century village of Chester, which had been established by the Playter family in 1855, at the intersection of Broadview and Pretoria avenues. They are also valued as they contribute to an understanding of the history of Broadview Avenue in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally an Aboriginal trail along the Don River, which was part of the Toronto Passage, it was the primary route connecting the earliest mills with the newly established town of York, continuing this function through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Known as Mill Road, Don Mills Road and Mill Street, Broadview Avenue became the main thoroughfare of the villages of Chester and Todmorden and continues to be an important north-south artery for Toronto and East York on the east side of the Don.

<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>X</b>

Contextually, the properties at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue maintain and support the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, historic character of this portion of Broadview Avenue retaining the low-rise residential scale and set-back associated with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chester village. Their location just south of the original intersection of Chester and distinctive 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian, semi-detached house form and details make them an important historic landmark within the continually evolving context of Broadview Avenue.

## SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the properties at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue have design value as the rare example of Victorian-style, gable-fronted, semi-detached house-form buildings on Broadview Avenue. They have associative value as the only surviving pair of 19<sup>th</sup>

century, semi-detached houses in the former village of Chester, established by the Playter family in 1855 at the intersection of Broadview and Pretoria avenues. They have further associative value as they are linked with the history and development of Broadview Avenue from an ancient Aboriginal trail to a 1790s road connecting the original Don mills with the town of York, to the main street of the Victorian village of Chester, to the modern city artery known as Broadview Avenue. Contextually these two properties assist in defining, maintaining and supporting the historic character of Broadview Avenue. The front-yard set-back from the street continues the typical pattern for domestic properties on the avenue. Unique amongst the later commercial blocks surrounding them, these Victorian style, semi-detached houses, dating from 130 years ago, are important landmarks within the constantly evolving context of Broadview Avenue.



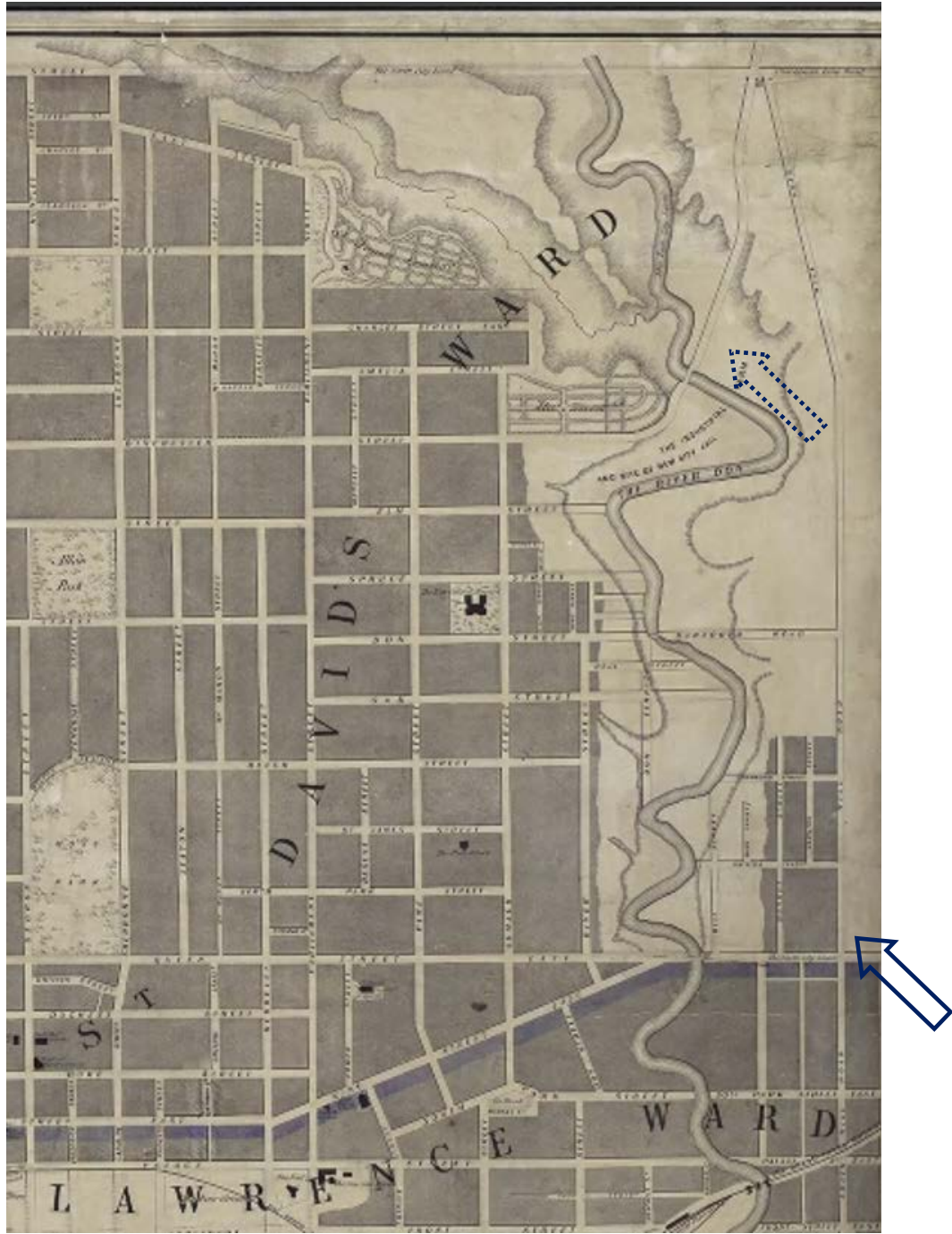
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IMAGES: the **arrows** mark the location of the subject properties unless otherwise indicated. *Unless otherwise indicated north is always at the top of the image.*

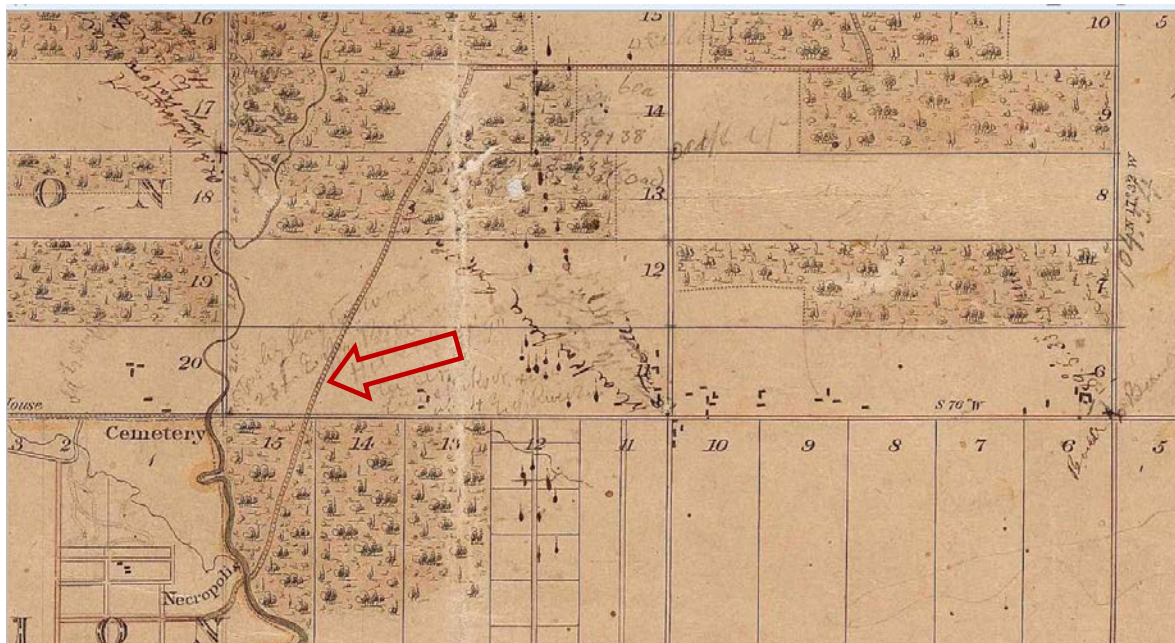


1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the properties at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue. *(Please note: all maps are oriented with north at the top)*

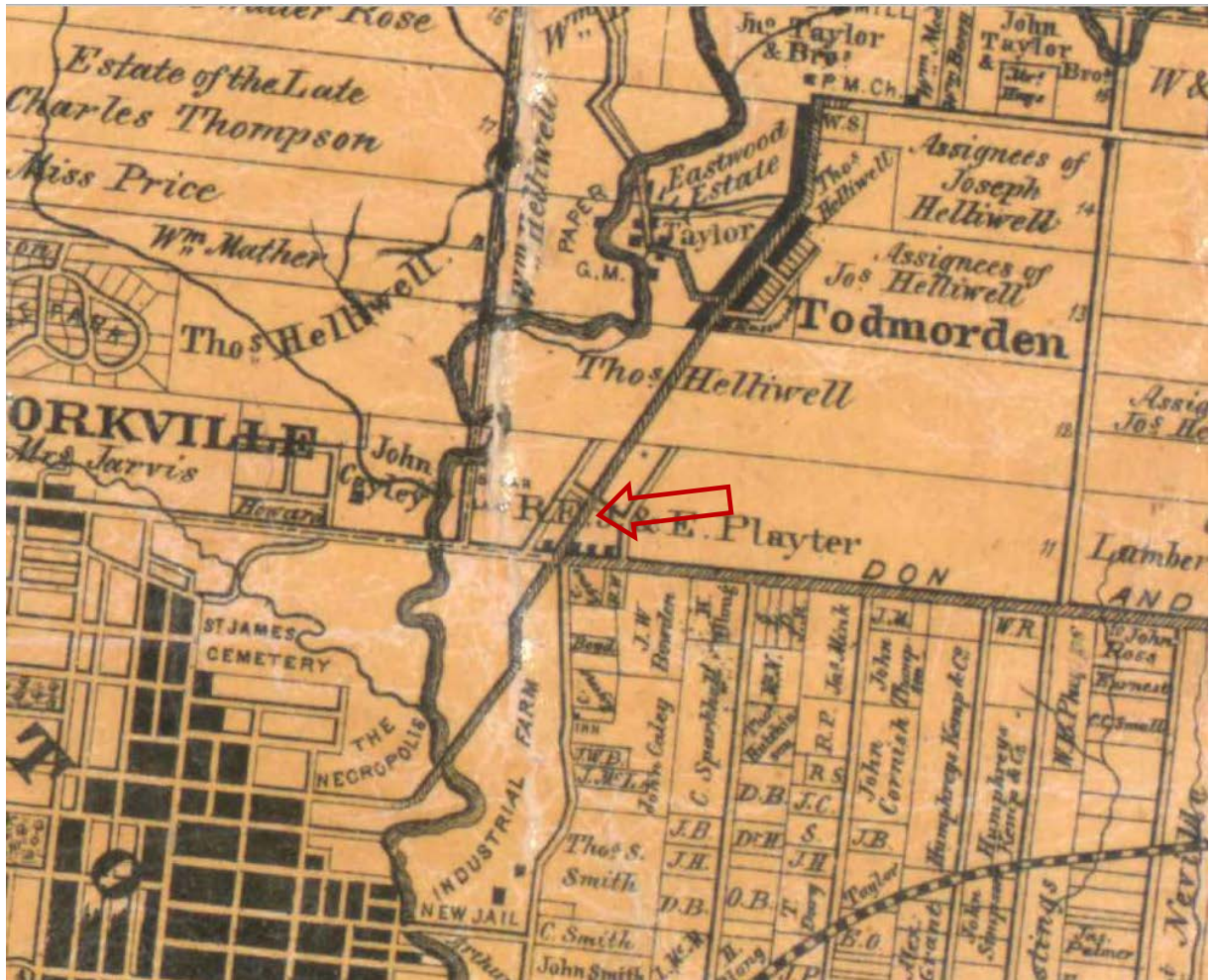


2. Fleming Ridout and Schreiber, *Plan of the City of Toronto* (detail), 1857: showing the Mill Road, (marked by the blue arrow) heading north from Queen Street East. Note the map terminates at the Second Concession so the subject properties are not indicated. A second route from Winchester Street and originally known as Don Road joins the Mill Road (dashed arrow) (*City of Toronto Archives*)

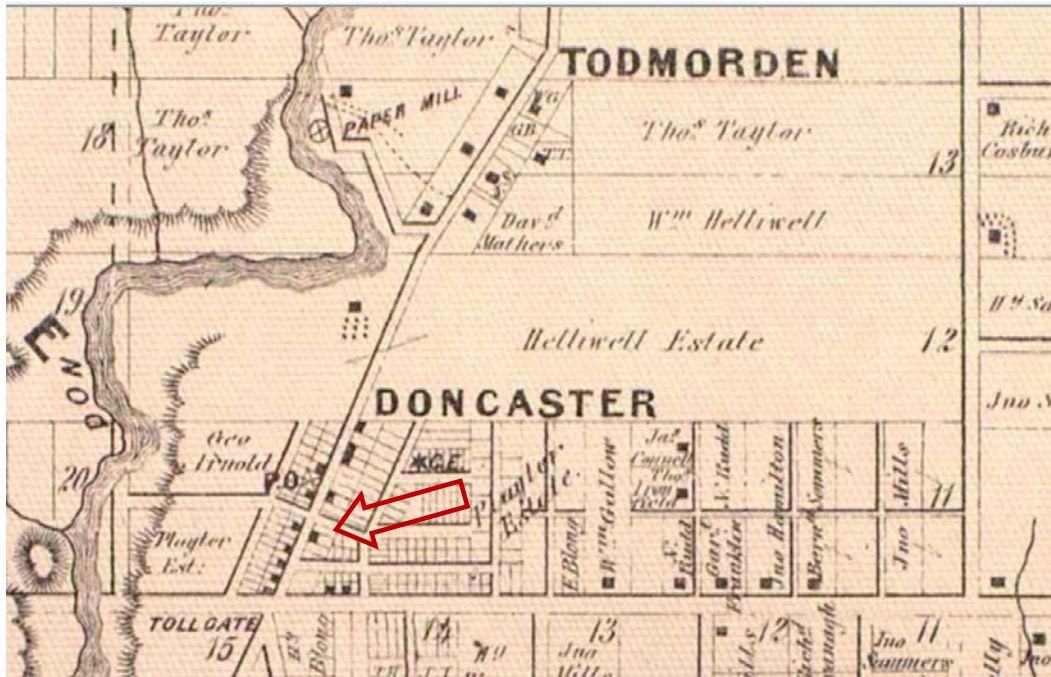
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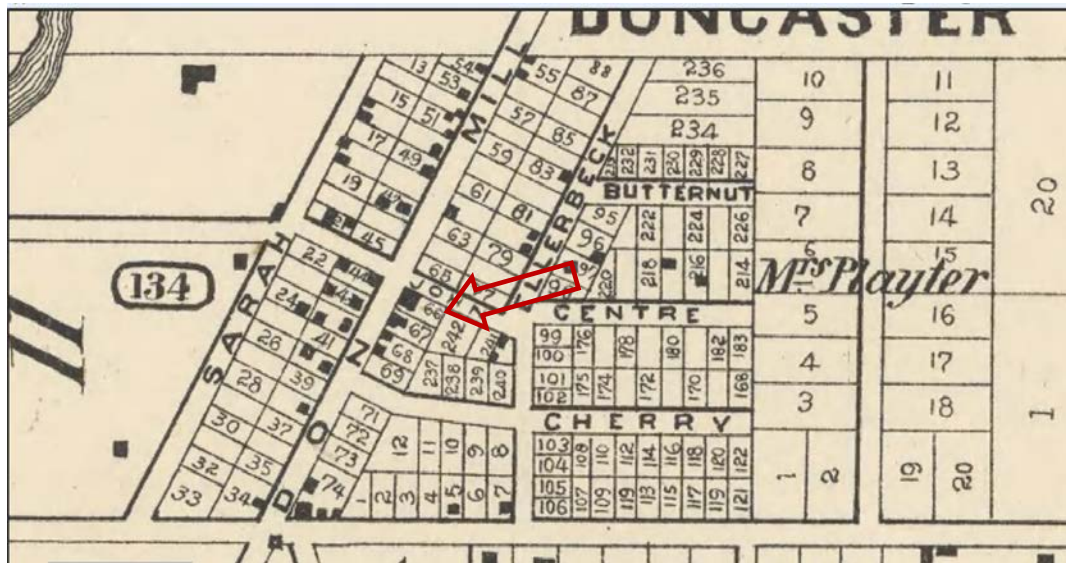
3. J. O. Browne, *Map of the Township of York in Upper Canada, 1851*(detail): showing the Don Mills Road Company 1844 plank road (seen in Image 2 above) as it extended from Winchester Street on the west side of the Don northwards through Scadding's Lot 15, across the Second Concession Road and Lots 11-14 where it turns east (at O'Connor Drive) and continues to the Third Concession (St. Clair Avenue). Lot 13 is the location of the village of Todmorden. The arrow marks the approximate location of 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue. (*City of Toronto Archives*)



4. Tremaine, George, *Map of the County of York, Canada West* (detail) 1860: showing Lot 11, the Playter property with the initials of the heirs Richard Ellerbeck, John and Emanuel, subdivided with the newly surveyed streets. Although Playter's Corners was officially known as Chester as of 1859, this is not yet reflected on this map. Note the development of Todmorden with the mills, the roads and subdivision, as well as the Don and Danforth Plank Road. (City of Toronto Archives)

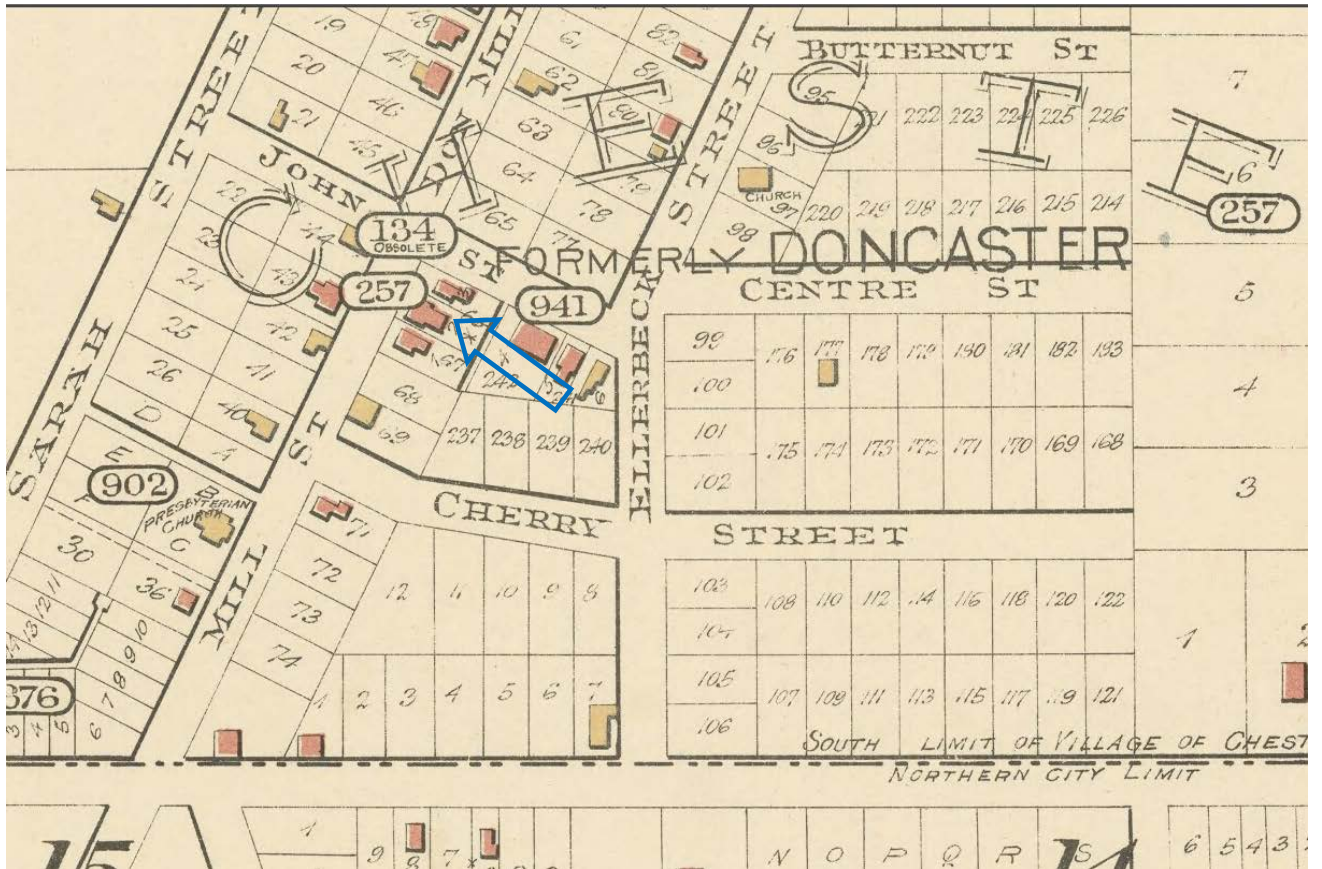


5. Miles & Co. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, (detail) 1878: showing the unoccupied property lot at the corner of Mill Street and John Street. The Map also shows the development of Lot 11 and the subsequent survey and layout of streets as well the identification of the village as Doncaster. The post office is marked by the x next to P.O. and the star with C.E locates St. Barnabas' church. (Ng)

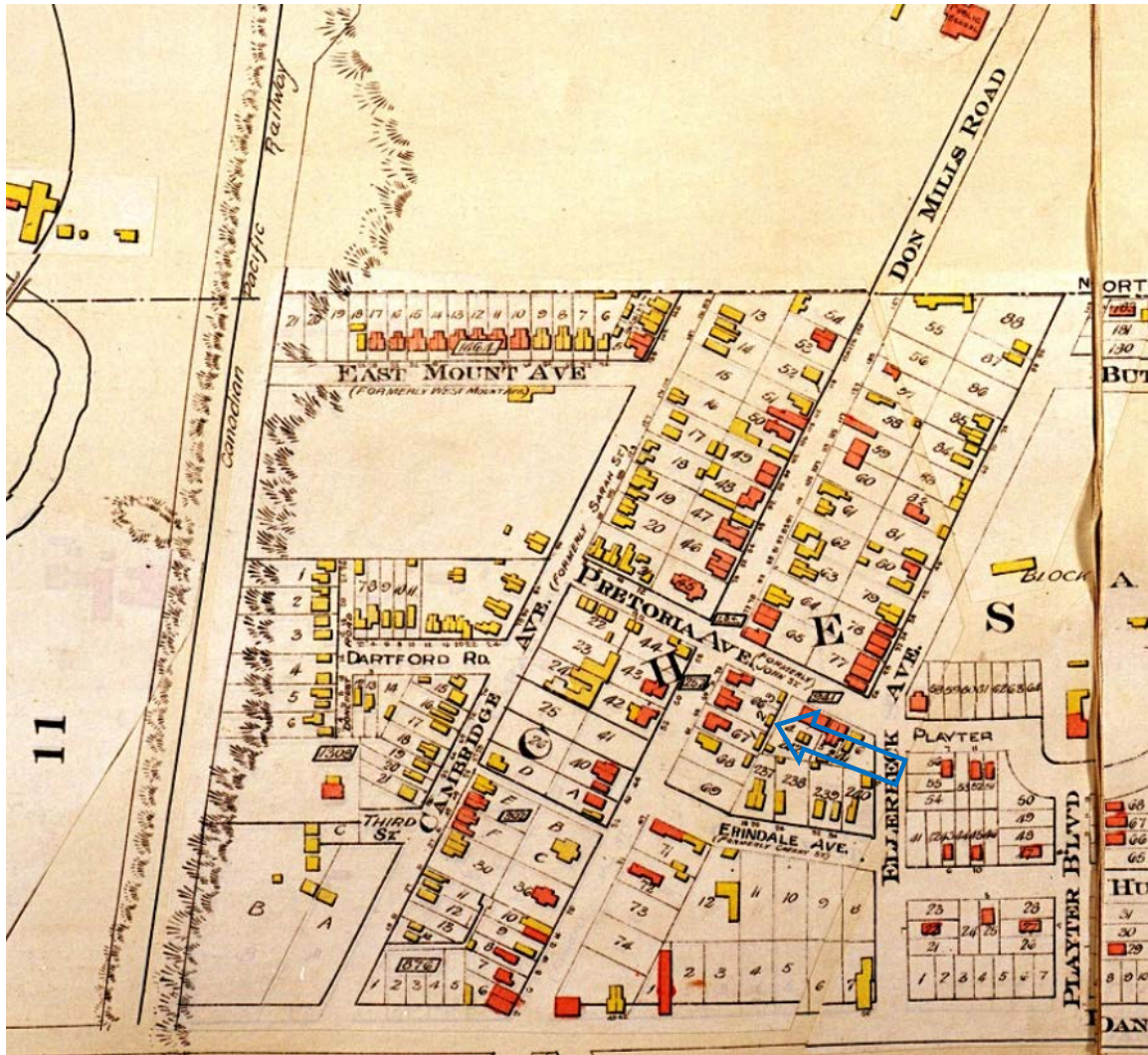


6. Goad, Charles E. Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs, (detail) 1884: showing the Lot 66 of Plan 134, at the south-east corner of Don Mill Road and John Street occupied by a single building. (City of Toronto Archives)

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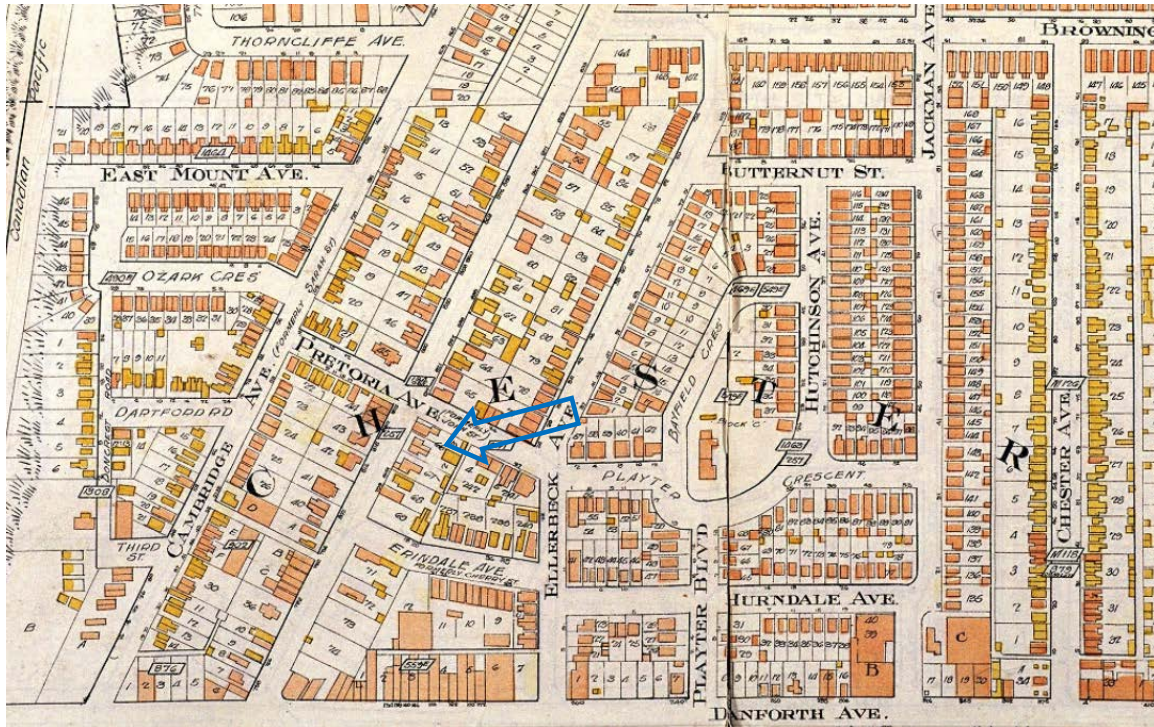


7. Goad, Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs, (detail) 1890: The map shows that Lot 66 is now occupied by two properties, one with a single building on the corner of Mill St and John St. and to the south a T-shaped plan that represents the semi-detached houses at 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue. Note that Mill Street is indicated with Don Mill Road being shown just to the north of John St. Tully's Plan No. 257 is now noted with the original Plan No. 134 being marked as obsolete. The name CHESTER is prominently displayed with the note "formerly Doncaster" underneath. (City of Toronto Archives)



8. Goad, Charles E. Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs, (detail) 1913: showing Lot 66 retains the two semis and corner building. The numbers in front of the houses appear to be 69 and 71 which refers to their Mill Street addresses rather than Broadview Avenue. The changes to the street names are indicated. Note Don Mills Road is still in use just north of the City Limits and the Chester Public School is the brick building on the west side at the edge of the map. The Playter family home is indicated on the property at the termination of Playter Blvd. (City of Toronto Archives)





9. Goad, Charles E. Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs, (detail) 1913: showing the substantial development of the former village following the completion of the Bloor Viaduct in 1918. The mill road is now identified as Broadview Avenue. Although the subject properties are not provided with a street number, the number of the property at the north-east corner of the avenue and Pretoria Avenue is 817. Those to the south on lot 66 would be 815, 813 and 811. Lot 68 has two buildings which are identified as 799 and 803. The access lane behind the three properties at lots 66 and 67 still exists today. (*City of Toronto Archives*)



10. Playter Family Home, 28 Playter Crescent. (*Pellerin*)

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11. Chester Public School, 1890-1, Broadview Avenue between Chester Hill Rd. & Helliwell St., 1905. (Toronto Public Library )



12. 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue, 1885-1890: showing the principal west elevation on Broadview Avenue (Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)

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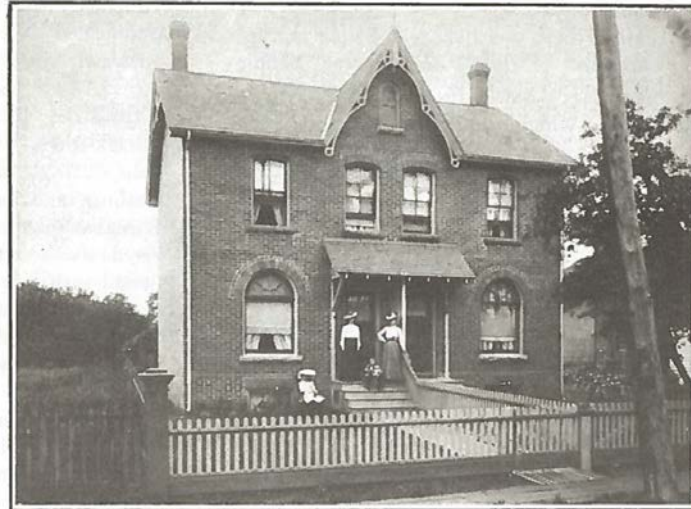
13. 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue, rear wing: showing the rear wing clad in yellow stock brick with a sloping flat roof. On the right, the side wall of the main house of 813 Broadview Avenue, clad in red brick with a gable roof. Note the later additions at ground and upper floors at 811 Broadview Avenue on the left (*Heritage Preservation Services, 2015*)



14. 813 Broadview Avenue: showing the turned finial in the gable (*Heritage Preservation Services, 2015*)



15. 813 Broadview Avenue: showing the decorative yellow brick window headers  
(*Heritage Preservation Services, 2015*)



*John Diefenbaker's home between 1903 and 1910, on Don Mills Road.*

16. John Diefenbaker's home between 1903 and 1910, on Don Mills Road: showing a similar pair of semi-detached homes of the same period on Broadview Avenue (this one the childhood home of John Diefenbaker (1895-1979) future Prime Minister from 1957-1963). The houses have comparable forms with the paired entrances and windows on either side, but here only one gable. The set back from the street and side set back represent further comparison (*The Golden Years of East York*)



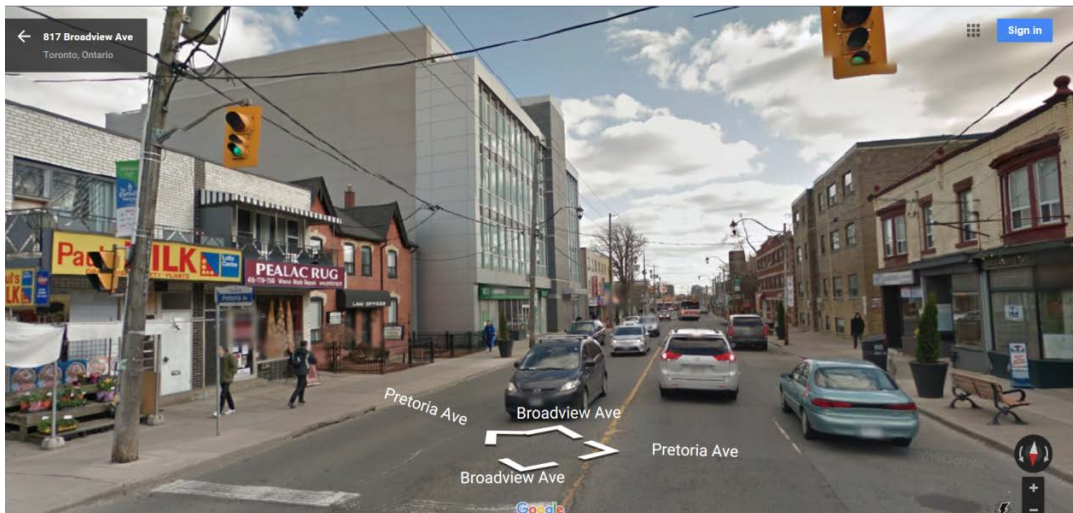
17. North Broadview Avenue from Danforth Avenue, 1908 (detail): showing the pattern of commercial buildings set on the property boundary at the edge of the sidewalk alternating with the picket fences and setbacks of house and a church. (*City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7272*)



18. Broadview Avenue looking north towards Todmorden, c1908: as above Image 17 showing the pattern of setbacks with gardens for houses (*City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 7148*)



19. 811 and 813 Broadview Avenue: showing the adjacent context with the post-war low-rise commercial building on the left and five-storey office building on the right. The set back and side-setbacks of the properties are still intact. (*Heritage Preservation Services, 2015*)



20. Broadview Avenue looking south, 2015: showing the current context with 811 and 813 on the left, east side, between post-war low-rise commercial building and 5 storey office building. On the right, west side are c1910 two-storey commercial buildings and beyond post-viaduct, low-rise apartment buildings. (*Google maps, 21 September, 2015*)