

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SUMMARY:
2490-2506 YONGE STREET
The Capitol Theatre Building



2490-2506 Yonge Street, 1926 (Archives of Ontario, F 1125-2-0-0-236)

Prepared by:
Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

September 2016

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Key Date	Historical Event
1798	Lot 2, Concession 1WYS, within Township of York, was granted to James Ruggles whose family retained it as a farmland until 1835.
1878	York County Atlas illustrates George Ward's farm on the subject lot.
1889	Villages of Davisville and Eglinton were incorporated into the village of North Toronto which became a town a year later.
1890	The block between Castlefield and St Clements Avenues was first depicted on Goads Atlas, subdivided into three lots with frontage on Yonge Street.
1912, Dec 15	North Toronto Annexation
1913	According to assessment rolls and fire insurance map, the frontage of subject properties were vacant, except for an unfinished building on SE part lot 2.
1914	Assessment rolls indicate that the building on 2282 Yonge Street was finished, recorded as York Theatre and occupied by Donald McClelland. The theatre was operational until early 1920, identified as 2494 and 2496 Yonge Street since 1915.
1920 Aug	A building permit was granted to R. McClelland for building an addition to the existing theatre (permit no. 44610).
1920 Sep	Assessment rolls note construction on 2490-2496 Yonge Street.
1921 Sep	The Dominion store and William G Simpson, real estate broker occupied the subject properties. The building on 2492 Yonge Street were still unfinished.
1921 Nov	An archival photograph shows the real estate store at the corner of Castlefield Avenue, the two storey theatre entrance on Yonge Street and the auditorium at rear.
1922	Capitol Theatre was completed, owned by Ronald McClelland. ¹ The stores on 2496, 2498, 2494 and 2504 Yonge Street were still unfinished.
1923	Building records indicate alterations to the theatre stage, by Murray Brown Architect.
1924	All the buildings on the subject properties were finished. Building records show that Murray Brown designed a new balcony for the theatre.
1926	An archival photo shows the subject properties including the original auditorium with a new three-storey building on Yonge Street frontage.
1929	Alterations made to the projection room and the theatre started screening movies by 1930.
1945	Alterations made to the public hall on third floor of office building
1999-2000	The theatre ceased operation. Interior renovations to accommodate an event theatre.

¹ The assessment rolls of 1922, 1923 and 1924, recorded the theatre as Paramount Theatre Ltd., the Famous Players; while the directories (1922, 1924) of the City of Toronto noted Capitol Theatre.

The property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street) are located on the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Castlefield Avenue, in Yonge-Eglinton neighbourhood. Historically, they comprise parts of Lot 2, Concession 1WYS, within Township of York, County of York, which was granted to James Ruggles in 1798, later purchased by James Price and then George Ward (Image 2 and 3). By 1890 the block north of Castlefield Avenue was subdivided and registered as Plan 734, Range IV, with three lots on Yonge Street that remained unchanged by early 20th century (Image 4). By 1913, there were five lots between St. Clements and Castlefield Avenues, with frontage on Yonge Street. Subject properties fall within lot 1,2 and 2290 Yonge Street, owned by William Holding and Alice Endeen, later purchased by Herman Antipitzky (Image 5). The assessment rolls indicate that in September 1913, the frontage of subject properties were vacant, except for one unfinished building on SE part lot 2. The following year the building was completed, recorded as 2282 Yonge Street, York Theatre, owned by Antipitzky and Samuel Mendelson, and occupied by Donald McClelland, age 40. The street numbering changed in 1915 and 2282 Yonge Street was changed to 2494 and 2496 Yonge Street. The Directories for the City of Toronto (1915-1920) record that the York Theatre, also known as York Eglinton Theatre, was operational until early 1920, when the rear auditorium was preserved and a new building with series of commercial storefronts was built, known as Capitol Theatre .

On August 24, 1920, a building permit (no. 44610) was granted to R. McClelland to build addition to a moving picture theatre on northwest corner of Yonge Street and Castlefield Avenue (Image 7). The following year, two new stores at 2490 and 2494 Yonge Street were finished and occupied by William G Simpson, real estate broker, and the Dominion Store Ltd., grocer, while the theatre building was still under construction (Image 8). Assessment rolls recorded in September 1922, note that the Capitol Theatre building was finished and owned by Ronald McClelland whose family retained the subject properties until 2015.

The directories for the City of Toronto, since 1922 onwards, record a pattern of small businesses on the ground floor included real state, bakery, grocery, shoe stores and furniture stores. The upper floors of the three-storey complex, historically known as the Capitol Theatre Building, comprised offices of several dentistry, chiropractor, surveyors, music studios and dancing academy. The Capitol Theatre continued its operation until 1998 when it was closed for interior alterations. Afterward, it was reopened as Capitol Event Theatre, started serving the community as an event hall.

The City of Toronto Building Records indicate that several alterations were undertaken between 1922 and 1998 including addition of new stores (1924, Murray Brown) and storefront alterations (multiple times between 1933-1984). Further alterations to the Capitol Theatre were done with the stage alterations and addition of a new balcony (1923-1924, Murray Brown), the alterations to the projection room (1929), the new lounge (1967), and the most recent interior alterations to accommodate an event theatre (1999).

The Capitol Theatre building has features from the Late Classical Revival style that was popular between the wars. These include plain walls of dark red brick, stone quoins, arched windows with fanlight detailing and double pilasters along their sides. The building with its large scale, chamfered corner and classical architectural detailing has a prominent visual presence at the

corner of Castlefield Avenue, and contains a significant portion of the 1920s streetwall on Yonge Street.

The archival documents including building permit and drawings, reviewed by staff, did not reveal the architect of the building. However, the drawings for alterations to the building (1923 - 1929) was stamped by Murray Brown and it is likely that he is the architect of the subject properties (Image 9). Brown designed several theatres for the Capitol Theatre company across Canada. He also designed Belsize Theatre (1926) and Bedford Theatre (1927) in Yonge-Eglinton area.

Contextually, the properties at 2490-2506 Yonge Street anchor the northwest corner on the Castlefield Avenue and Yonge Street, with its distinguished scale, prominent setting and architectural detailing. The subject properties contributed to the evolution of the Yonge-Eglinton area after the annexation of the village of North Toronto (1912) and to the later development of main street character of Yonge Street in 1920s. The Goads Atlas, 1924, illustrates that the Capitol Theatre Building is one of the earliest building on the west side of Yonge Street forming the streetwall (Image 6).

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

The property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street), have design value as a three-storey complex distinguished by its large scale which is elegantly proportioned by architectural features from the Late Classical Revival style. The building covers half of the block between Castlefield and St. Clements Avenues, west of Yonge Street. It displays the plain walls of dark red brick, stone quoins, arched windows with fanlight detailing and double pilasters along their sides.

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 associative value of the property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street), is linked to their role in development of main street character of Yonge Street in 1920s after the annexation of the village of North Toronto by the City of Toronto. The Capitol Theatre Building is one of the earliest building on the west side of Yonge Street contributing to the formation of a streetwall. The historical value of the subject properties is also linked to their role as a local landmark and contribution to the social history of the area as a local theatre and later an event theatre.

The property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street) have value for their connection to the notable Toronto architect Murray Brown, who designed the alterations to the subject properties between 1923 and 1929. Murray Brown (1885-1958) began practise in early 1920s. He designed several residential and commercial buildings but focused especially on theatre and bank design. His projects included several theatres for Capitol Theatre Company in Ontario, Saskatoon and Halifax. Murray is also the architect of two theatres in the Yonge-Eglinton area including Belsize Theatre (1926) and Bedford Theatre (1927).

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	X

Contextually, the property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street) are valued for their contribution to the commercial main street character of Yonge Street, north of Roselawn Avenue which is typified by surviving two-, and three-storey buildings with stores at grade, that began in the early 20th century. The contextual value of the three storey complex is also related to its historical, visual and physical links to the surroundings on Yonge Street, as a prominent local feature anchoring the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Castlefield Avenue with its chamfered corner, distinctive scale and decorative detailing.

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that The property at 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of the property at 2506 Yonge Street (including entrance address 2510 Yonge Street) have design, associative and contextual values.

Located at the corner of Castlefield Avenue, west of Yonge Street, the subject properties contain a three storey complex that includes the Capitol Theatre (1922), former York (Eglinton) Theatre (1914). The complex is visually distinctive through its large scale, elegantly proportioned by architectural features from Late Classical Revival style. It is also valued through its contribution to the Yonge Street character in the area of Yonge and Eglinton in early 20th century, its role as a local landmark, and association with Murray Brown Architect.

SOURCES

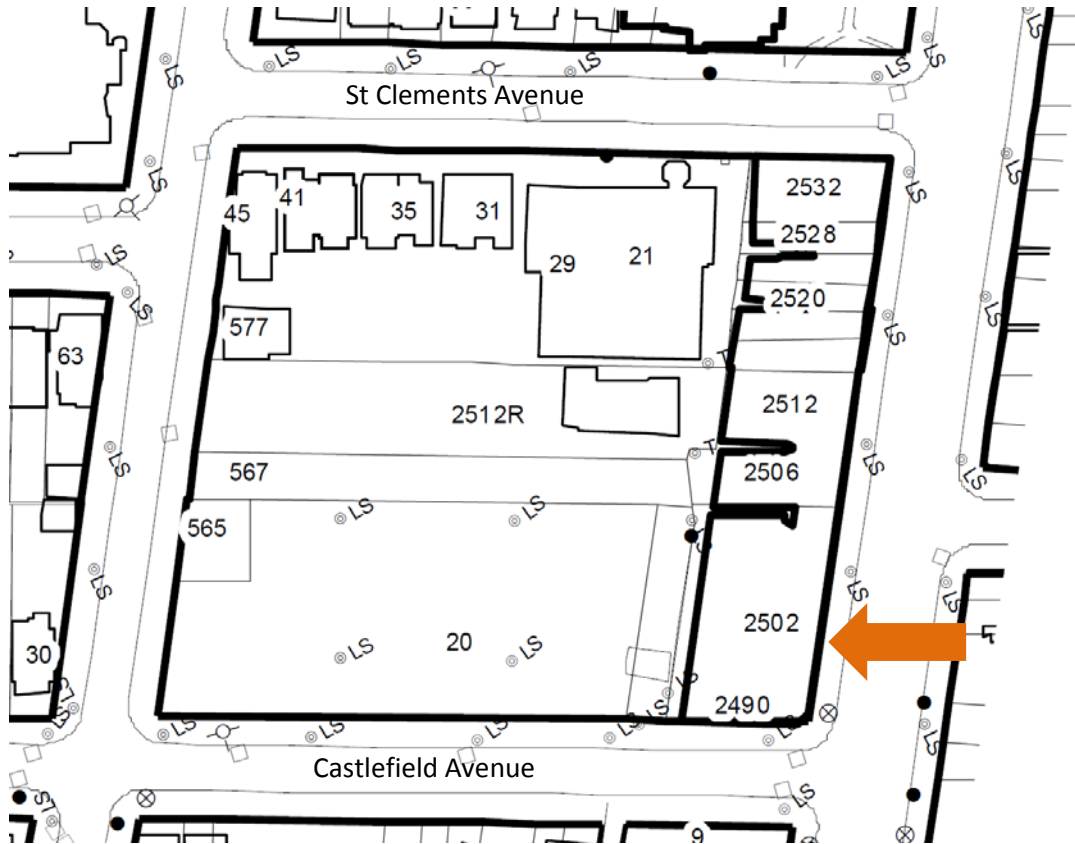
Archival Sources

- Archival Photographs, Toronto Public Library
- Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives
- Assessment Rolls, Ward 3, Division 8, 1909-1925
- Building Records, City of Toronto, 1923 ff.
- Building Permit #44610, August 24, 1920, City of Toronto Archives
- City of Toronto Directories, 1913 ff.
- Goad, Charles E. Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs. 1890, 1899, 1903, 1913, 1924. (CTA)
- Miles & Co. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of County of York*. 1878.

Secondary Sources

- Capitol Event Theatre Website: thecapitoleventtheatre.com
- Historic Toronto Website: <https://tayloronhistory.com>
- “Murray Brown,” entry in Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1674>
- Ritchie, Don. *North Toronto*. 1992.
- Taylor, Doug. *Toronto Theatres and the Golden Age of the Silver Screen*. The History Press and Dundurn Press 2014

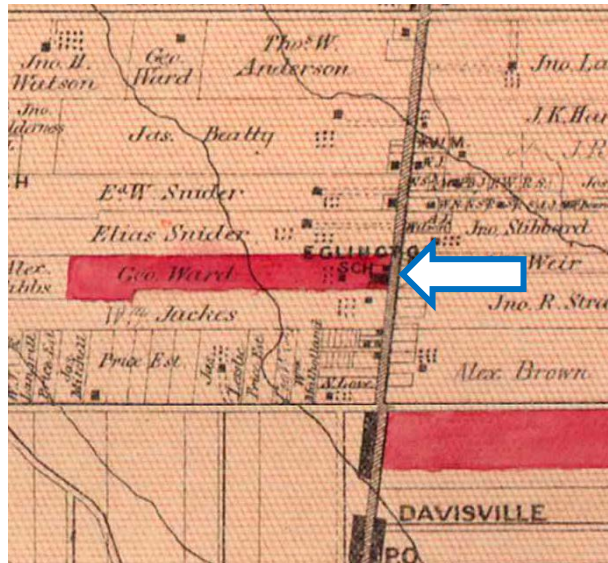
IMAGES - The **arrows** mark the subject property. All maps are oriented with north on the top.



1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the subject property on the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Castlefield Avenue.



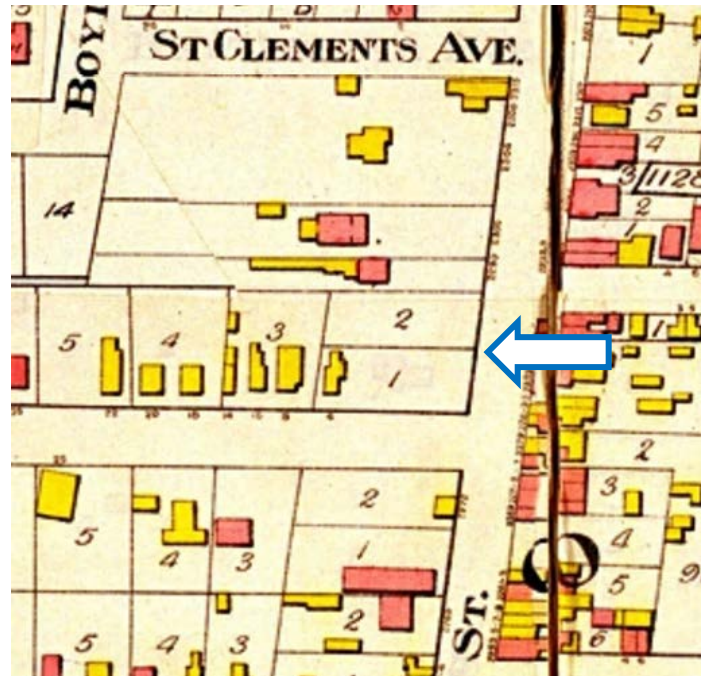
2. 1870's Map, Lots showing the original land grants in North Toronto. Parts of Lot 2, Concession 1WYS, Township of York, where the subject property was later developed, patented by James Ruggles in 1798 and acquired afterward by James price and George Ward. (Ritchie, 1992)



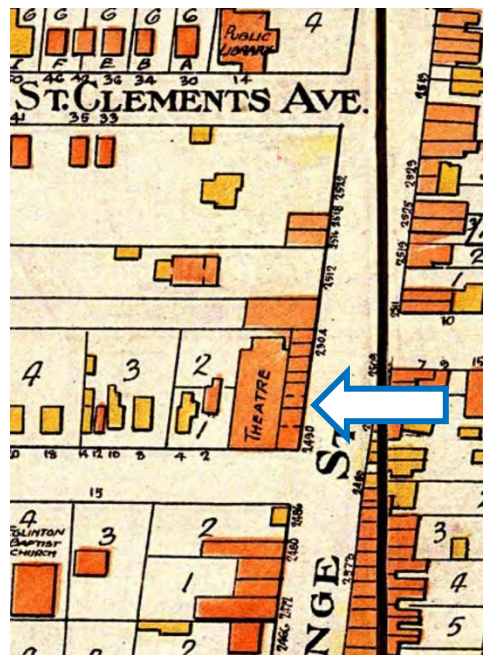
3. Miles & Co. Illustrated Historical Atlas of County of York (detail), 1878: The map shows the George Ward's farmland, located west of Yonge Street.



4. Goad's Atlas, 1890 (left) and 1903 (right) showing the historic subdivisions on the block west of Yonge Street, between Castlefield Avenue and St Clements Avenue. There are two structure on the subject properties that later were demolished.



5. Goad's Atlases, 1910 revised to 1913: the update to the atlas shows new buildings on east side of Yonge Street creating a streetwall while the subject properties are vacant on Yonge Street frontage.



6. Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1924: the atlas illustrates the Capitol Theatre and new stores along Yonge Street north of Castlefield Avenue, as one of the early buildings forming streetwall on west side of Yonge Street.

BUILDING PERMIT

Department of City Architect and Superintendent of Building

File No. 33027 Permit No. 44610

Permission is hereby granted to R. M. McClelland Toronto, Aug 24 1920

Address 2490 Yonge & Castlefield to Build

on North Side of Yonge Near Castlefield Ave

in accordance with terms of application under file number above mentioned on file in this department.

This permit is granted on the express condition that the said building, etc., shall in all respects conform to the provisions of By-Law 6401 of the City of Toronto, regulating the construction of buildings, etc.

This permit lapses on the expiry of six months from the date of issue unless active work under it is sooner commenced.

If there is no permanent sidewalk or pavement obtain the street grade from the Roadways Section of the Works Dept. before commencing building operation. No charge.

This permit does not include any openings in the sidewalk or encroachment past the line of the street.

To obtain permission to occupy the street or sidewalk during construction, present this permit at the office of the Commissioner of Works.

Consent to the removal of street trees in the way of proposed entrances must be obtained from the Commissioner of Parks before such entrances are established.

Probable Cost of Building \$ 10000
 Permit Fee (Received) \$ 11.00
 Water Fee " \$ 4.20
 Total Amount " \$ 15.20

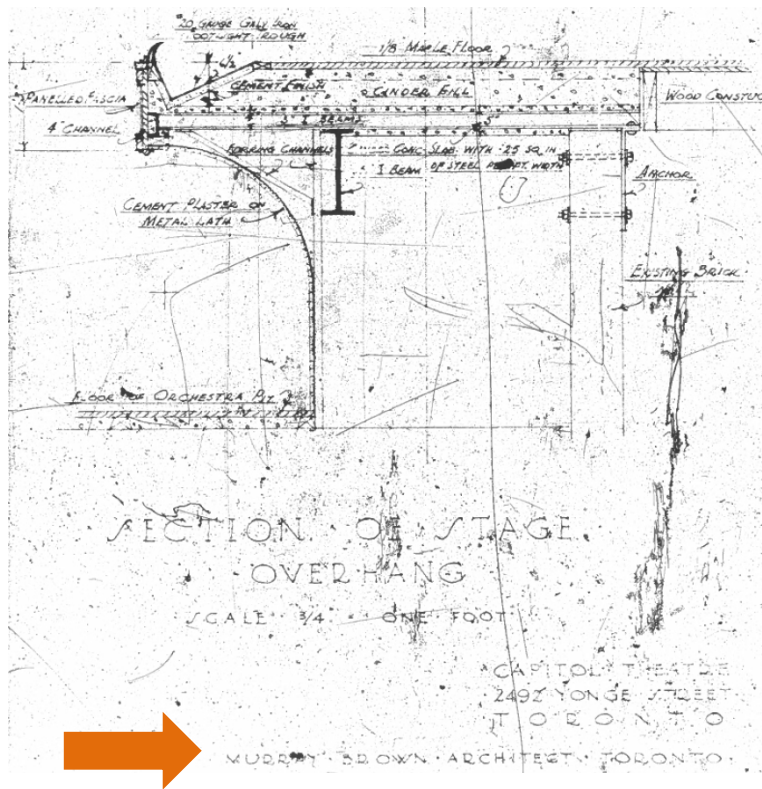
G. F. W. Price
 City Architect and Supt. of Building.
 Per H. J.

7. Building Permit 44610, August 24, 1920: issued to R. McClelland to for "addition to moving picture theatre". The permits does not identify the architects for the project (City of Toronto Archives)

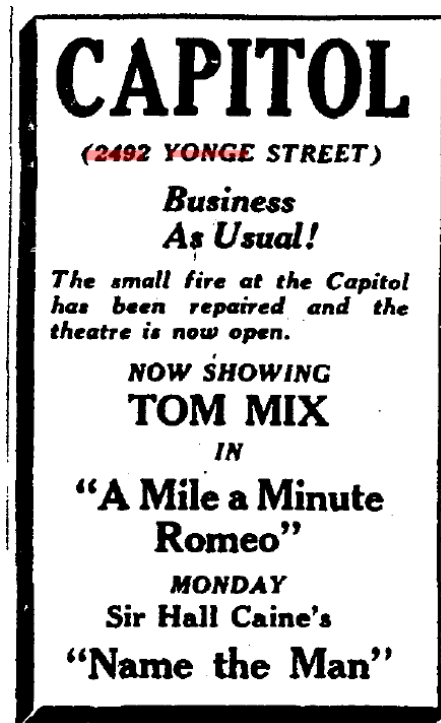


City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_t0724

8. Archival Photograph, 2490 Yonge Street, 1921: showing the theatre auditorium and its entrance on Yonge Street, prior to the 1920's construction (City of Toronto Archives, fonds 1231)



- 9. Drawings for Capitol Theatre, stage alterations by Murray Brown, dated 1923 (City of Toronto, Building Records)

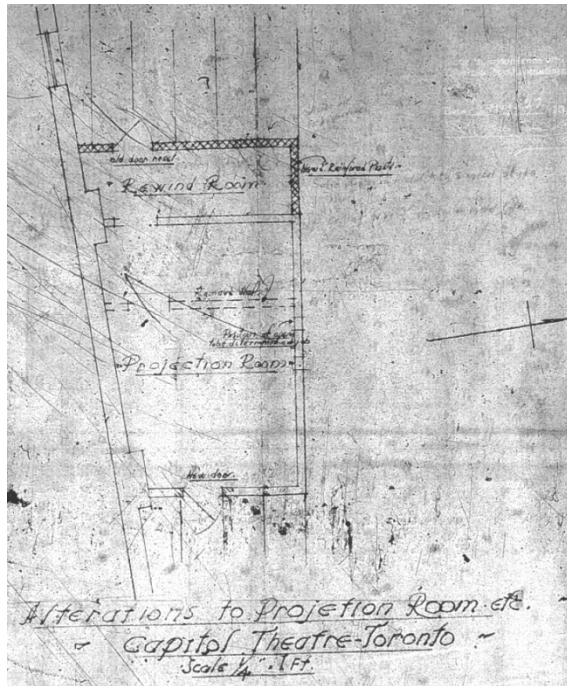


- 10. A newspaper advertisement noting the reopening of the Capitol Theatre in 1924 after small fire (Toronto Star, Feb 29, 1924)



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231-1t1485

11. Archival Photographs, 2490-2506 Yonge Street, 1926 (above) and 1933 (below): showing the 1922's three-storey building on Yonge Street at the corner of Castlefield Avenue, with the 1914's auditorium at rear of the property (Archives of Ontario, RG 2-71, COT-139 and City of Toronto Archives, fonds 1231)



TO-DAY
THE PICK OF SOUND AND TALKING PICTURES

PALACE Mat. Daily Danforth at Pape
 "Ladies of Leisure."
 with Barbara Stanwyck

COLLEGE 960 College Lombard 6533
 "Women Everywhere"
 with J. Harold Murray

BEACH 1969 Queen E. Howard 9295
 "Safety in Numbers"
 with Buddy Rogers

CAPITOL 2492 Yonge St. Parking for 100 Cars
 "In Gay Madrid"
 with Ramon Novarro

RUNNYMEDE Junction 2709 Mats. Wed. & Sat.
 "Ladies of Leisure" with Barbara Stanwyck

12. By summer of 1930, the Capitol Theatre started screening movies: on left a drawing by Murray Brown, 1929, illustrating the alterations to projection room (City of Toronto, Building Records) and on right a newspaper advertisement for a movie in Capitol Theatre (Toronto Star, August 8, 1930)

What a Difference!

Now regardless of what the temperature is, you'll always find it comfortably cool inside the

CAPITOL THEATRE 2492 YONGE ST. at CASTLEFIELD

Because we have just installed a giant cooling, air conditioning and ventilating system... the most modern and efficient in any Canadian Theatre

It's the best... because it was designed, fabricated and installed by

SHELDON'S LIMITED OF TORONTO AND GALT
 THE IMPERIAL, UPTOWN, TIVOLI and SHEA'S are also "SHELDON COOLED"

Weather is actually manufactured... no drafts... no chills... no uneven temperature... just cool... ALWAYS!

Enjoy a perfect entertainment in perfect comfort at the

CAPITOL 2492 YONGE ST. at CASTLEFIELD RD.

UNTIL THURSDAY
GEORGE ARLISS in "THE HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD"

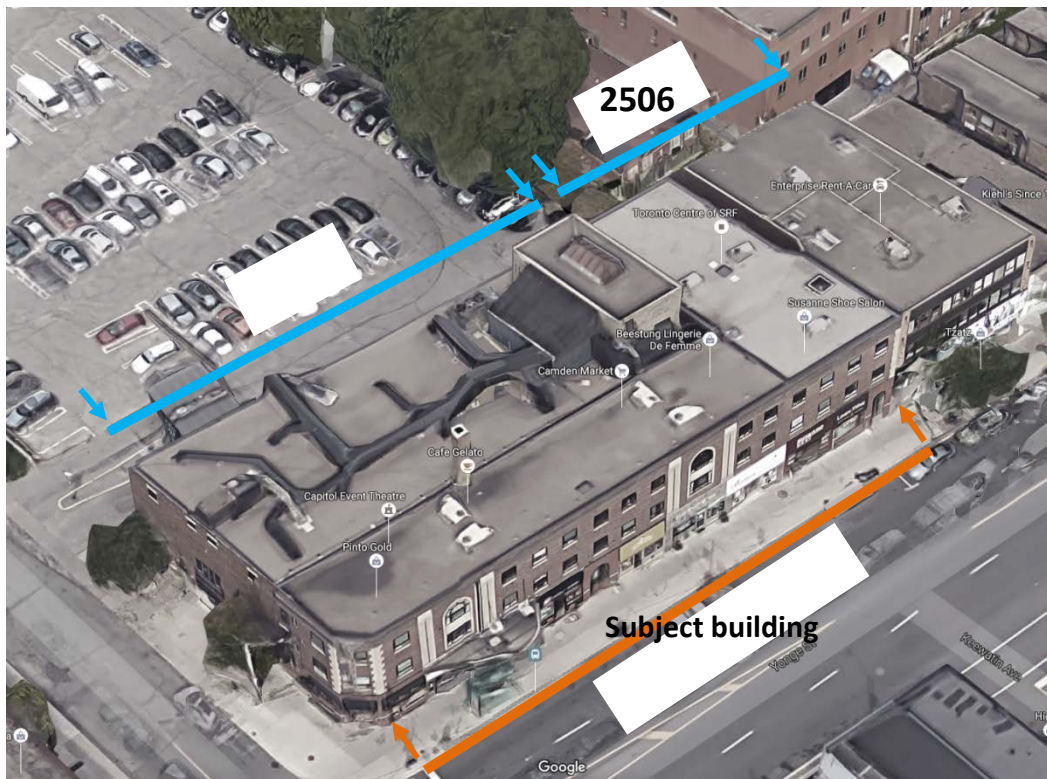
13. A newspaper advertisement, 1934, noting the installation of central air conditioning (Toronto Star, July 3, 1934)



14. Archival Photographs, 2490-2506 Yonge Street, 1981: showing the marquee and box office with stainless steel and glass (Toronto Public Library)



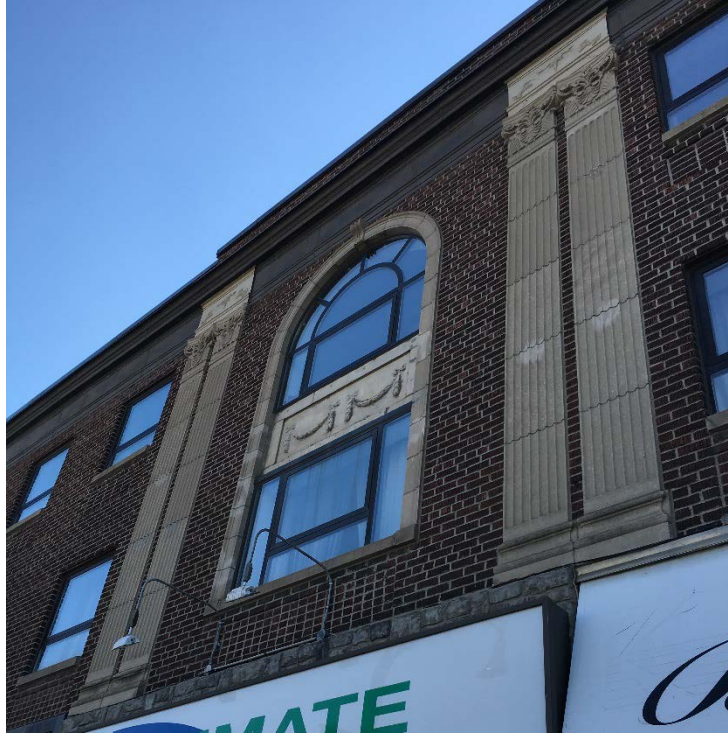
15. Archival photographs: View of the stage from the theatre balcony (above, dated 1947) and the entrance lobby (below, dated 1933) (City of Toronto Archives, Series 1278, File 38)



16. Aerial photograph of 2490 and 2506 Yonge Street from the west: showing the subject building located on 2490 Yonge Street and a portion of 2506 Yonge Street, known as 2510 Yonge Street for convenience purposes. (Google Maps, April 2016)



17. Current Photographs, 2490 and 2506 Yonge Street, 2016: showing the northwest corner of Castledfield Avenue and Yonge Street (above), the east elevation (below left), and the south and west elevations (below right) (Heritage Preservation Services).



18. Current Photograph, 2490 and 2506 Yonge Street, 2016: showing the two-storey arched window flanked by pilasters, the stone banding and cornice on the east elevation (above) and the entrance to the theatre and box office with glass and stainless steel (below) (Heritage Preservation Services).



19. Current Photograph, 2490 and 2506 Yonge Street, 2016: showing the three storey complex, east of the York Theatre auditorium at the corner of Castledfield Avenue (above). Please note the different color of bricks. (Heritage Preservation Services).



20. Interior Photograph, Capitol Theatre: showing the auditorium with the proscenium arch surrounding the stage, flanked by pedimented grills (Capitol Event Theatre Website, 2016).