

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SUMMARY: 685 QUEEN STREET EAST**

Dr. John B. Fraser House, 1903-4, 685 Queen Street East (*Heritage Preservation Services [HPS]*)

**HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY**

<b>Key Date</b>	<b>Historical Event</b>
1793	John Scadding arrives with John Graves Simcoe at the site for the town of York. Scadding is granted Lot 15 in the first concession.
1796	Simcoe returns to England, and Scadding, his estate manager, goes with him.
1818	Scadding returns to York and sells the portion of his estate south of Queen Street to William Smith Jr.
1857	By this date, Lot 15, south of Queen, has been divided on its north-south axis with Pioneer Avenue later known as Baseball Place. The property to the east is subdivided under Plan 105 which is further subdivided with a street named Smith.
1884	Riverdale is annexed to the City of Toronto. Kingston Road is renamed Queen Street East and properties are renumbered.
1897	John B Fraser, physician, occupies both the ground floor commercial unit and the residential unit at 655 Queen St. E.

1903	Building Permit 1383 dated 3 July 1903 is granted Dr. J. B. Fraser to construct a brick dwelling on the south side of Queen St. E. near Broadview Avenue. The architect is C. F. Wagner.
1904	Dr. John B. Fraser occupies the house using it a residence and consulting room for his medical practise.
1906	Dr. W Ambrose Fish, physician is listed at this address.
1919	By this year the house has been converted to function as the Washington Fleury Burial Company, undertakers.
1929	The property is now occupied by the Fleury Burial Company.
1949	By this year the building has been converted into 7 apartments known as the Wilma Apartments.
1976	By this date the house is owned by Riverdale Cooperative Houses and has multiple dwellings.
2013	The Queen Street East Heritage Conservation District Study commences.
2016	The property is owned by Riverdale Co-operative Houses.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Don Mount - Riverdale Neighbourhood

The property at 685 Queen Street East (originally known as the Dr. John B. Fraser house) is located on the south side of Queen Street East between the East Don Roadway and Broadview Avenue, in the neighbourhood originally identified as Don Mount and now known as Riverdale. (Image 1) The property is part of Lot 15, one of the many parcels of land subdivided following the establishment of the Town of York in 1793 that were granted to reward loyalty and encourage settlement. Lot 15 included 270 acres that stretched along the east side of the Don River from the Ashbridges Bay to the first concession known as Lot Street/the Kingston Road (now Queen Street East) and beyond to the second concession now identified as Danforth Avenue. (Image 2)

Lot 15 was granted to John Scadding (1754-1824), Lieutenant Governor Simcoe's Devonshire estate manager, who had joined Simcoe in his migration from England to Canada in 1792, arriving at York in 1793. Scadding returned to England with Simcoe in 1796. In 1819, following his move back to York, Scadding sold the property south of the Kingston Road to William Smith Jr. (1781-1839) who also owned Lot 14 to the east. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Smith family were one of the most influential, contributing to the development of the town of York and the Don Mount/Riverdale village. Smith's father had built the Scadding Cabin<sup>1</sup> as well as the 1803 bridge that crossed the Don River connecting Lot and King Streets with Kingston Road providing a significant east-west route across the province.

The location along the route to Kingston rendered the property ripe for development. After William's death, his son John (1811-1890) subdivided his portion of Lot 15, retaining the western half along the banks of the Don and Ashbridge's Bay for his family.

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<sup>1</sup> William's son John Smith gave it to the York Pioneer Society in 1879 and they relocated it to the Canadian National Exhibition.

The portion of the eastern half which fronted on to Queen Street and extended from Pioneer Avenue (later Baseball Place) to Scadding Avenue (previously known as South Mill Road and later as Broadview Avenue) was sold in smaller lots to various interests. This would be the future location of 685 Queen Street East. South of the lots along Queen Street, Smith subdivided the remainder of the Lot as Plan 105. The subdivision was bisected by Smith Avenue. (Image 3)

By 1878, the Don Mount post office was located at the north east corner of Smith's portion of Lot 15 at the intersection currently known as Queen Street East and Broadview Avenue. (Image 4) In 1884, Riverdale was annexed to the City of Toronto, bringing streetcars and municipal services to the neighbourhood and providing new impetus for development. By 1886, a grand stand was built for Toronto's first Baseball Grounds on the property known as Plan 105. (Image 5)

In 1889, Smith engaged the architect brothers, John Wesley Mallory and Frank Scott Mallory Sr.<sup>2</sup> to design the three-storey, eight-unit commercial Smith Block at the south-west corner of Queen Street East and Baseball Place. Dr. John B. Fraser is recorded as a tenant of the Smith Block, occupying the unit at 655 Queen Street East from 1897 until 1903.<sup>3</sup> The Assessment Rolls indicate that he occupied both the ground floor commercial unit as well as the upper levels and it is therefore likely that he operated his medical practise and lived at this address.

In 1902, Dr. Fraser is recorded as owning 685 Queen Street East but the property is rented to a labourer, William Perryman. The site had previously been the residence of James Bright and his son Christopher who operated Bright & Son Blacksmiths next door at 689 Queen Street East from the 1880s until the property at 685 Queen Street East was sold to Fraser in 1902. The blacksmith shop at 687-9 Queen Street East continued to operate under new ownership of Jesse Ham.

On July 3, 1903, a building permit was granted to Dr. J. B. Fraser "to erect a two-storey + attic brick dwelling near Broadview Ave., on s.s Queen St." The architect was identified as Charles Frederick Wagner and the builder Saunders & Son.<sup>4</sup> The assessment rolls indicate the house was not completed and occupied by Fraser until 1904. The design of the house and the directories and assessment rolls indicate that Fraser used it both as an office for his medical practise and as his residence.<sup>5</sup> (Image 6) The city directory for 1905 identifies Fraser as an "M.D. Physician and Surgeon." Fraser was born in the town of Mill Creek, near Kingston Ontario in 1853. He obtained degrees from Queen's University and Trinity College followed by post-graduate work in England. He married Frances McLean and they had four daughters. When he moved in to his new house at 685 Queen Street, he was 49 years old and his household included 7 members, 3 of whom were between the ages of 3 and 21. Dr. Fraser's two daughters, Maude and Bata, assisted

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<sup>2</sup> This information was found in John Smith's account books for 1889 and provided by Barbara Myrvold of the Toronto Reference Library on November 24, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> City of Toronto Directories.

<sup>4</sup> Building Permit 1383, 3 July 1903, City of Toronto Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Assessment Rolls, Ward 1, Division 1, 1904 for 1905.

him with medical experiments regarding vaccination.<sup>6</sup> Fraser only occupied the house until 1905. He moved to 414 Sherbourne St where he lived until his death.

The 1906 Directory indicates that Dr. W. Ambrose Fish (1865-1929) was the new occupant. William Ambrose Fish was born in Kingston Ontario, trained at the Medical Faculty of Trinity University, Toronto, graduating in 1887. He married Ada Bella Fish (1871-1955) and moved into 685 Queen Street East in 1906 where he lived and practised until at least 1914. Dr. Fish was known for giving his professional services to the "inmates," that is, girls and women who had been in trouble with the law, at the Bellamy Home, on Queen St. E.<sup>7</sup> After leaving 685 Queen St., he lived at 678 Broadview Avenue.

By 1919, the building was occupied by the Washington Fleury Burial Company, undertakers. By 1929, it was known only as the Fleury Burial Company Funeral Directors. After the Second World War, the building was converted to seven apartments and was known as the Wilma Apartments. In 1976, it was owned by Riverdale Cooperative Houses, who continue to be the owners today. Riverdale Cooperative Houses is a non-profit organization which was incorporated in 1974 with the aim of maintaining the availability of affordable housing in the Riverdale neighbourhood.

#### Architect: Charles Frederick Wagner

Charles Frederick Wagner (1862-1934) was the son of German parents, who emigrated to the United States in 1838 and then moved to Toronto in 1855. His father, Jacob P. Wagner, was a builder and was also elected Alderman for St. Patrick's Ward. Charles attended Upper Canada College and then apprenticed from 1883-7 with architects Gordon & Helliwell. He opened his own practise in 1888, securing an early commission in 1889 to alter the Old City Hall, now a part of the St. Lawrence Market. Apart from a brief partnership with Robert J. Edwards from 1898-1901, Wagner practised on his own. In 1907, Alexander Fraser wrote, "He is recognized as one of the leading architects and contractors of the city and has erected many important structures, including the billiard factory of Charles May at the Junction."<sup>8</sup> His commissions included a wide range of types: factories, churches, residences and a Masonic hall. Wagner contributed to Queen Street East with another house for a doctor, that of Dr. John W. Ronan near Saulter Street and La Plaza Theatre, (now known as the Opera House) both built in 1909.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

In writing of Wagner's work, the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada states, "Much of his design work is unpretentious; his residential commissions in the Beaches neighbourhood of Toronto which survived can be identified by their eclectic Edwardian

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<sup>6</sup> "Fraser and Daughters Imbibe Million Germs," Toronto Daily Star, July 15, 1919, p 2.

<sup>7</sup> "A Physician Defends the Matron of Bellamy House," Toronto Daily Star, July 6, 1907., pp 1, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Fraser, p 757.

residential style combining picturesque verandah, roofs and walls clad entirely in wood shingles."<sup>9</sup> The general qualities of this statement would apply to the Fraser House.

Stylistically, and in terms of the date of design and construction, 1903-4, the Fraser house may be classified as Edwardian but it retains many elements characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The Edwardian style refers to the English king, Edward VII who ruled from 1901-1910. The style was typically classical but when applied to residential architecture would often retrieve elements associated with a more picturesque historic English architecture including half timbering which is featured in the gables.

The Richardsonian Romanesque style was popular in Toronto in the 1880s and 1890s. Named after the American architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) who reinterpreted the Romanesque style originally built in Europe between 1000 and 1150. Richardson's Boston Trinity Church (1872-7) and Allegheny Court House (1884-8) would be much admired by architects of his generation resulting in widespread adaptation of the style for a variety of building types. In Toronto these included not only government buildings, such as the Old City Hall and the Legislature Building, but religious, commercial and institutional buildings, as well as private residences. In the late 1880s the style provided a fresh alternative to the previous hundred years of repeated revivals of the Gothic and Classic styles. In contrast to these styles which had typically relied on a combination of red and/or buff brick with pale stone trim, Toronto's Richardsonian Romanesque was characterized by a preference for materials with contrasting textures and colour, including sandstone, granite, brick and terracotta. In contrast to classical order, symmetry and regularity, Richardsonian Romanesque featured variety and diverse rhythms of elements. In terms of composition, its most distinctive features were a general sense of mass and heaviness, irregular plans and massing, great broad arched openings contrasting with rows of smaller arched openings all terminated by steeply-pitched hipped roofs punctuated by with dormers, tall chimneys, finials and towers. Following the annexation of the Riverdale to the City in 1884, the style was chosen for many local landmarks including the Smith Block (1889) and Dingman's Hall (1890).

The Richardsonian Romanesque style is evident in Fraser house in the picturesque complexity and variety as well as the boxy massing which retains a heavy quality. Essentially a two-and-a-half storey cube with a raised basement and hipped roof, the house has an additional two storey projecting bay on the front, north elevation. (Image 7) This bay is carved away at on one corner to provide a covered porch for the front door. A small classical column with a composite capital supports the cantilevered corner and gives a nod to the Edwardian era. (Image 8) The bay is terminated with a steeply pitched gable roof with two supporting curved wood brackets. (Image 9) On the east side elevation, a single-storey bay projects with a second ground floor entrance, likely to provide access to the doctor's consulting rooms. (Images 7 and 10) A lower, two-storey wing, projected at the rear, south side. (Image 11) Further complexity is achieved in the

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<sup>9</sup> BDAC, <http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/286>

roof with the additional dormers with steeply pitched gables on the north, east and west elevations, all of which feature the half-timbering associated with the Edwardian style. A shed-roofed dormer, on the west side, would appear to be a later addition. (Image 12 – west elevation)

The windows feature the characteristic great arch and clusters of smaller arched openings associated with the Richardsonian Romanesque. The flat-headed windows in various combinations, singles, pairs, triplets complement with contrast. Stone lug sills are included. A semi-circular stained glass panel survives in the first floor, arched window on the north, front elevation. (Images 13 and 14) The original glazing has been replaced with aluminum sliding windows.

Apart from the half-timbering in the gables, the building is clad in a red brick characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. On the principal, north elevation facing the street, the brick is a particularly fine gauged brick which in combination with the careful application of the mortar, achieves a uniform smooth surface texture with precise edges. (Images 15 and 16) The building rests on a base of rusticated sandstone. Above this a raised panel of brick which terminates in a 45 degree angle, creates a transition between the stone base and brick walls and marks the first floor level. A broad entablature, painted white, on the bay above the column and a projecting brick course at the first floor sill level, and the raised brick profiles around the arched window heads further add to the enrichment of the wall surface.

## CONTEXT

The Dr. John B. Fraser house sits on the south side of Queen Street East, just west of Broadview Avenue and is within the boundaries of the area identified for study as the Queen Street East Heritage Conservation District. The house is set back from the sidewalk with a small front yard which has a lawn and a variety of small bushes. A paved walkway leads to the stairs and front door. (Images 17 and 18) A driveway to the east meets a walkway leading to the second door, likely originally providing access to the doctor's rooms. The house is flanked on either side by commercial properties. To the east are a collection of two-storey buildings containing a stone-fronted bank and a series of stores which maintain a consistent scale established for over a hundred years, by height, recessed entrances and glazing patterns and their immediate relationship with the sidewalk. (Images 19 and 20) This pattern is repeated on the north side of the street, but is occasionally modified by a three-storey building and the four storey Dingman's Hall with its tower marking the intersection of Queen Street East and Broadview Avenue. To the west is the more recent Toyota service and sales outlet which maintains a height consistent with its neighbours although the scale and set-backs disrupts the established pattern that characterizes Queen Street East.

The house maintains the nineteenth century character of the street. It was built 20 years after Riverdale was annexed to the City of Toronto and streetcar service was extended to the neighbourhood. This was followed in 1896 by the addition of the CPR's Don Station

and the Grand Trunk Railway's Degrossi Street station which made the area increasingly accessible. The doctor's house reveals the character of Queen Street East at the time, when the buildings were largely commercial with residential accommodation above. The Fraser house, like Dr. John Rowan's house at 791-3 Queen Street East (demolished) and the pattern by combining residential and commercial functions side-by-side, at grade and set back with a front yard.

The Dr. John B. Fraser house not only maintains the scale of nineteenth century, but also the pattern of mixed use and type. Its distinctive house form and the quality of its massing and details make it a fine contributor the character of the neighbourhood. Its current use as social housing extends that important mix.

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

The Dr. John B. Fraser house has cultural heritage value as an early 20th century, mixed-use property combining medical and residential functions and representing the Edwardian Style of the new century while maintaining strong ties to the Richardsonian Romanesque Style popular in Toronto from the late 1880s. The Edwardian elements are present in the half-timbered gables and the classical column in the front porch while the Romanesque persists in the overall composition of massing and steeply pitched hipped roof with numerous dormers and especially in the combinations of large and small arched windows.

<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>

The Fraser house is valued for its association with the medical community, particularly Dr. John B. Fraser and Dr. W Ambrose Fish, as it represents late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century combination of a doctor's residence and consulting rooms. It is also valued as a representative of the work of the architect Charles F. Wagner, who was considered to be one of Toronto's leading architects, at the time the house was constructed, and who contributed other buildings on Riverdale's Queen Street including the Plaza Theatre and the Dr. J. W. Rowan house.

<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 property has cultural heritage value as it maintains and supports the historic character of Riverdale. Situated on the south side of Queen Street just west of Broadview Avenue, it was an important contributor as it maintains the typical two-three storey scale of the street, the late 19<sup>th</sup> –early 20<sup>th</sup> century character in its materials and details and also combines commercial and residential use. Its set-back from the street with a small front garden and its house form character add to the variety and quality of the urban design and architectural character of the area currently under study and defined as the Queen Street East Heritage Conservation District.

## SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at the Dr. John B. Fraser House at 685 Queen Street East, has design, associative and contextual values.

The design values of the property are present in its representation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Edwardian style which here exhibits the persistent influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque style predominant in Toronto in the 1880s and 1890s. The property has associative value as it represents sole medical practitioners, such as Dr. Fraser and Dr. Fish, who lived and practiced in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Riverdale. It is also valued for its association with the architect Charles F. Wagner, a well-respected Toronto architect, who designed two other buildings on Queen Street East including the Plaza Theatre (now known as the Opera House). Located on the south side of Queen Street East, the property contributes architecturally as well as typologically to the eclectic mix of late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial and residential properties, as well as maintaining the scale and character which define the historic and architectural quality of the area identified for study as the Queen Street East HCD.



## SOURCES

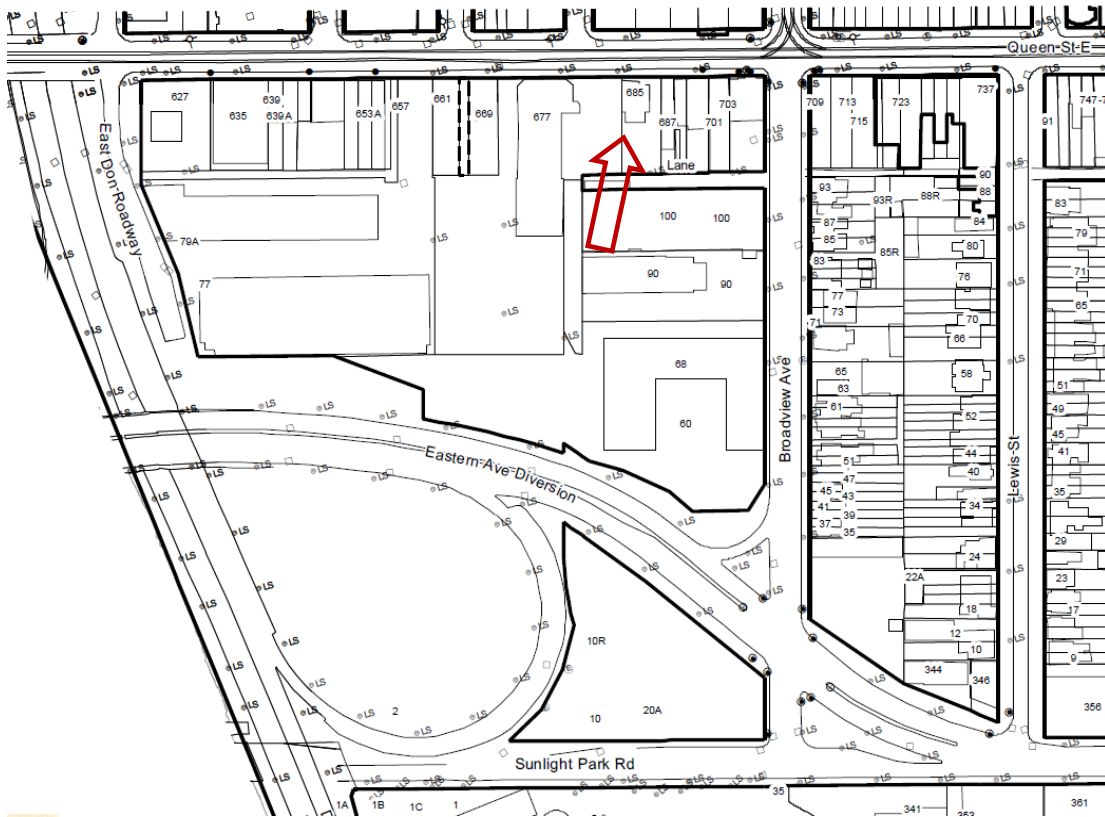
### Primary Sources

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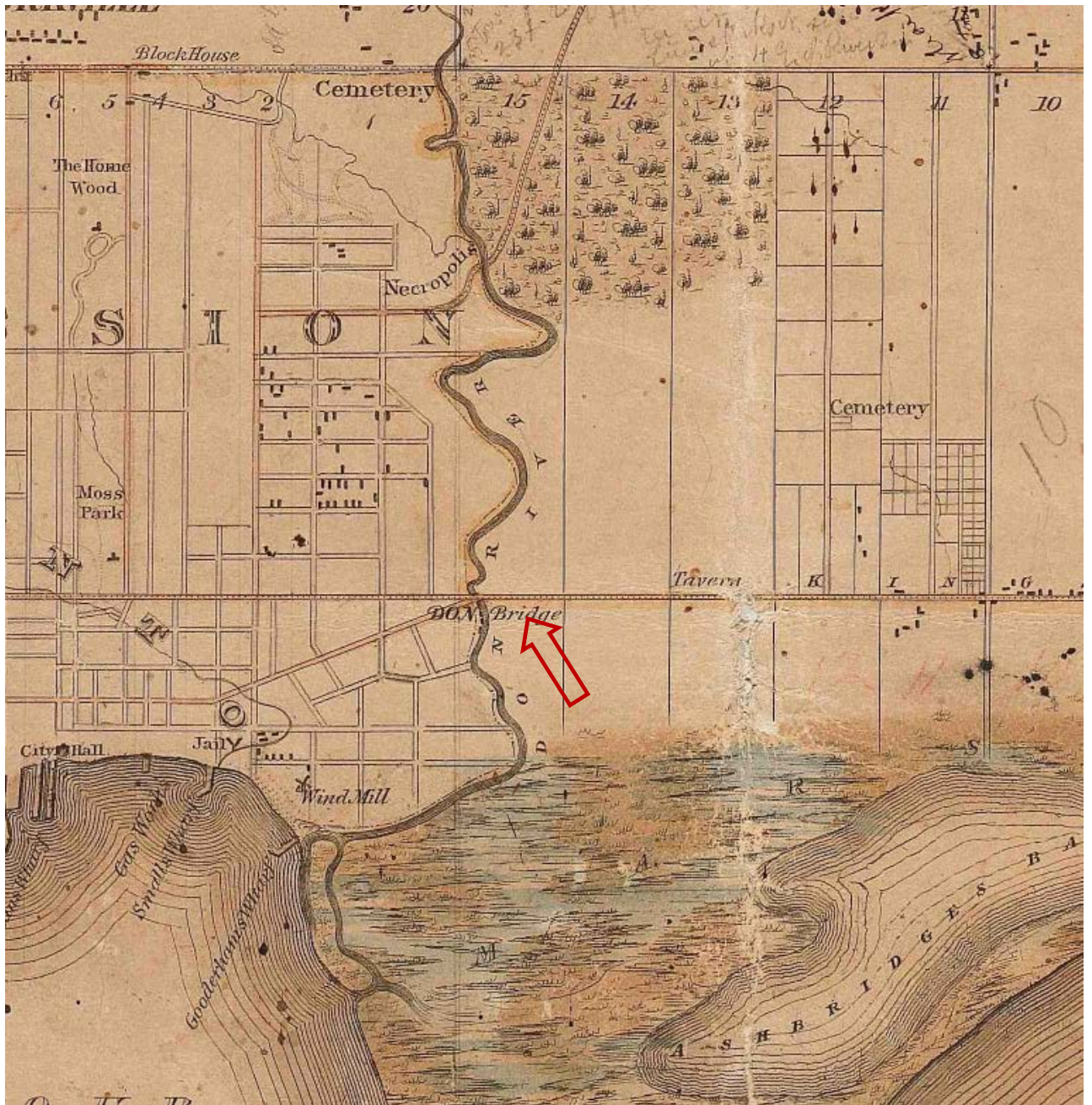
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IMAGES: the **arrows** mark the location of the subject property unless otherwise indicated. *Unless otherwise indicated north is always at the top of the image.*

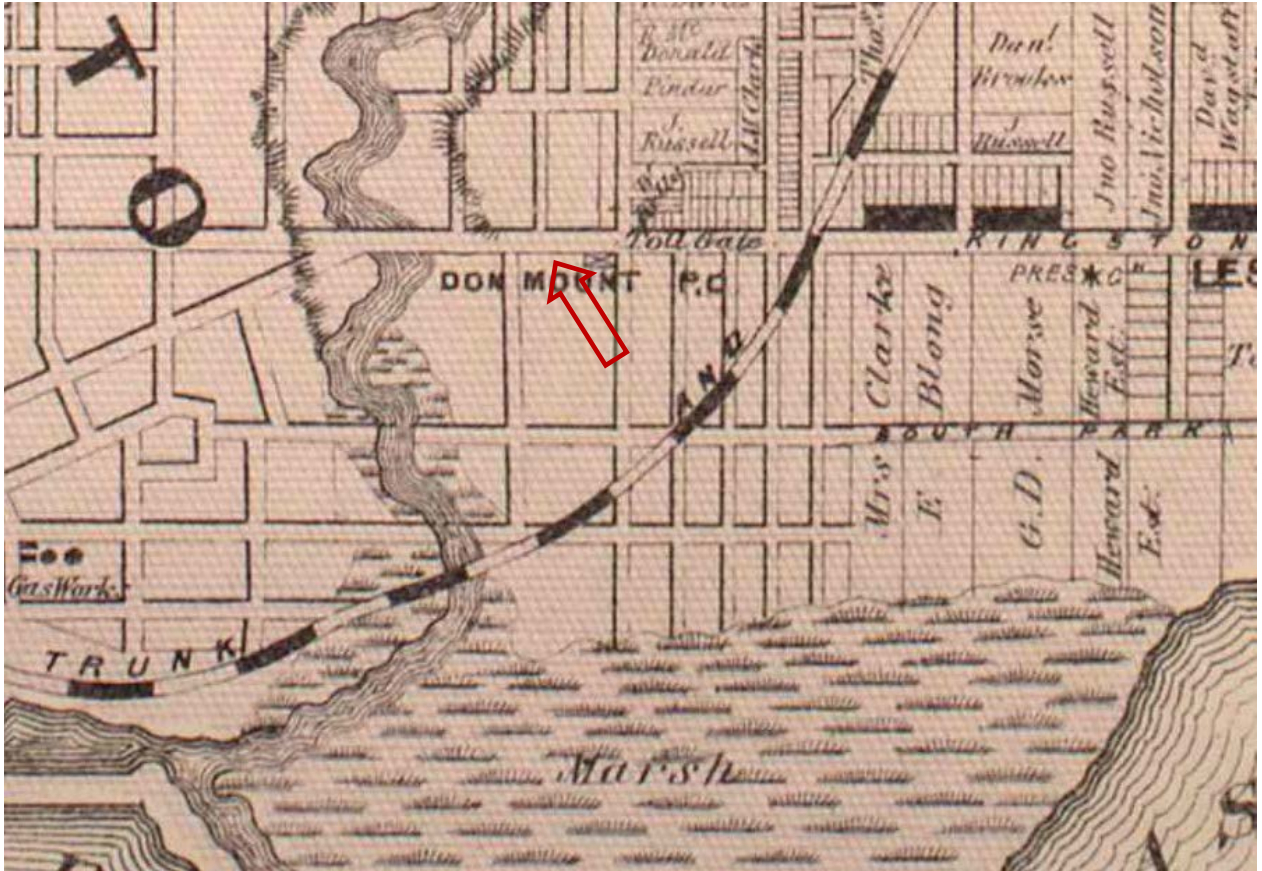


1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the subject property on the south side of Queen Street East between East Don Roadway and Broadview Avenue.

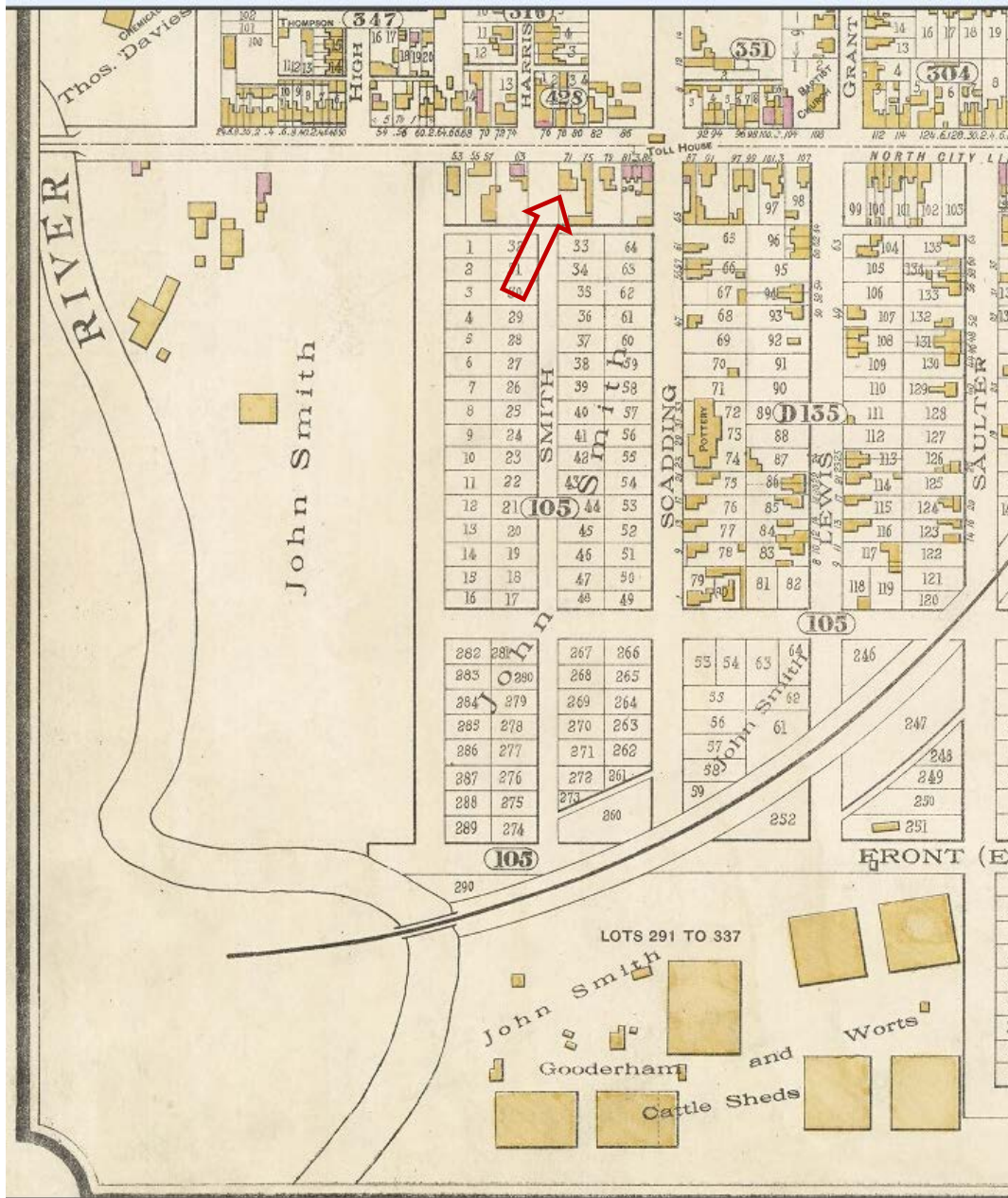


2. Map of the Township of York, J. O Browne, 1851: showing Lot 15 on the east side of the Don River and stretching from the bay north to Concession 1 (Lot Street/Kingston Road) and beyond to Concession 2 (Danforth Avenue) south. King Street and Queen are shown converging on the west side of the Don Bridge. Today's Broadview Avenue today marks the boundary between Lots 14 and 15. The arrow indicates the approximate future location of the Dr. John B. Fraser house at 685 Queen Street East just to the west of Broadview Avenue. (Ng)



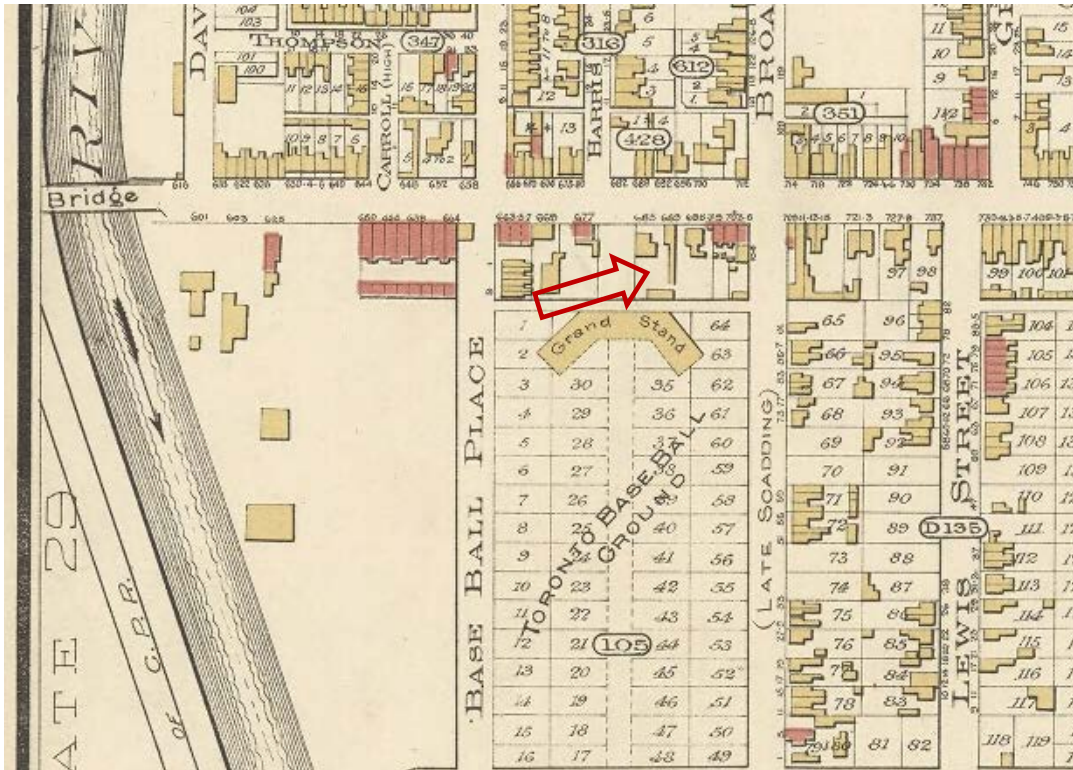


3. Miles & Co. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878: showing the subdivision of Smith's portion of Lot 15, south of Kingston Road with the Don Mount post office at the south-west intersection of what is now Queen Street East and Broadview Avenue.

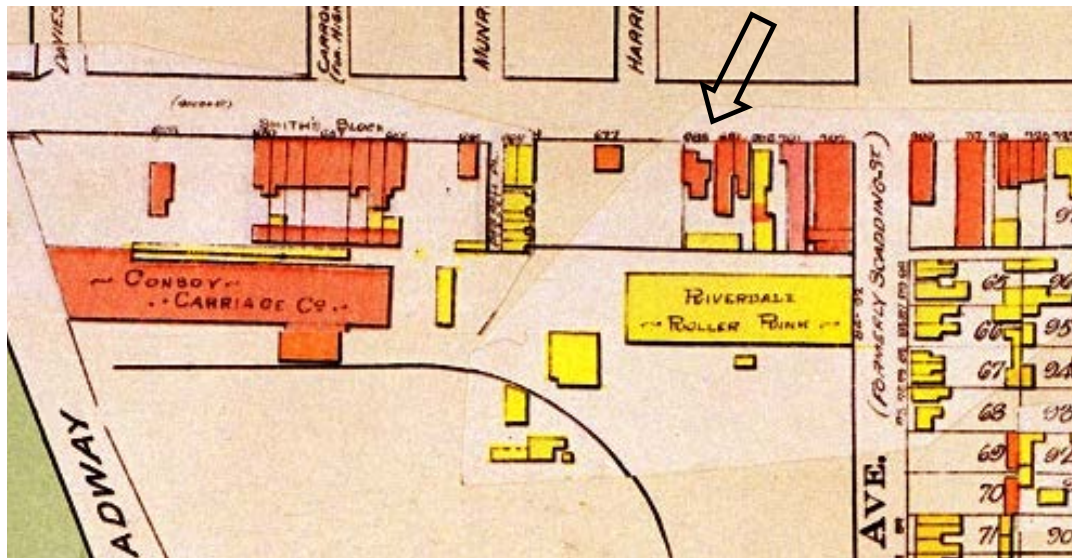


4. Goad's Atlas (detail) 1884: showing the landholdings of John Smith and the naming of the Streets – Scadding Avenue (Broadview) and Lewis and Smith avenues. The un-named street between Smith's holdings on the west and Plan 105 to the east is Pioneer Avenue which was later known as Baseball Place. The future 685 Queen Street is currently addressed as 71 and 75 Kingston Road and is the property of the James Bright and his son Christopher who owned a one-storey frame house (71) and a black smith's shop (75). (*City of Toronto Archives [CTA]*)





5. Goad's Atlas (detail) 1890: Following the Annexation of Riverdale to the City of Toronto, Kingston Road is now known as Queen Street East and new street numbers allocated to the Bright property which is now known as 685 and 689 Queen St. E. Toronto's first Baseball Grounds (1886) are shown south of the subject property on Plan 105. Scadding Avenue is now known as Broadview. (CTA)



6. Goad's Atlas (detail) 1913: showing the Fraser house complete at 685 Queen Street East. Note the removal of Baseball Place and the demolition of the Toronto Baseball Grounds stadium and the introduction of the Riverdale Roller Rink. (CTA)



7. 685 Queen Street East: showing the principal, north, elevation and the east, side, elevation of the Dr. John B. Fraser house. (HPS, 2015)

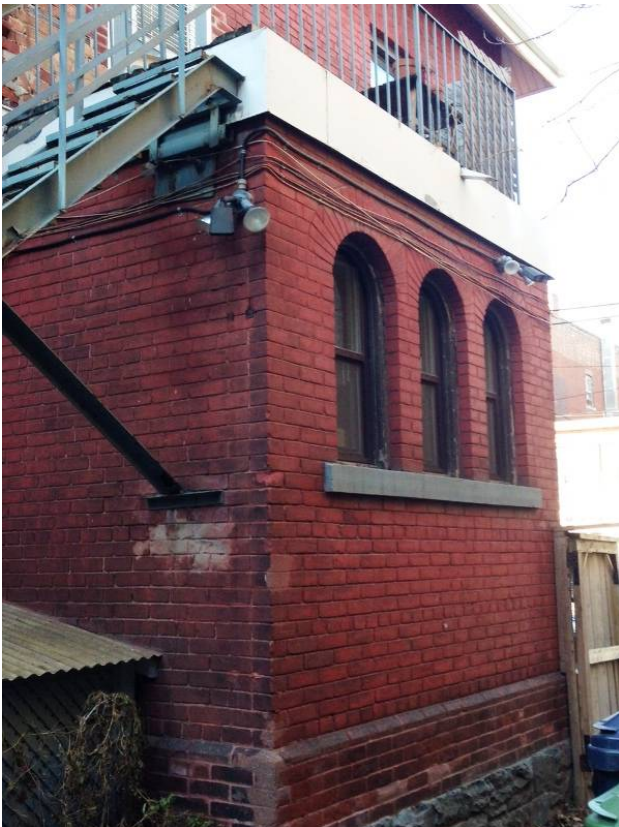


8. 685 Queen Street East: Photograph showing the single, composite column supporting the projecting bay above the front entry loggia. (HPS, 2015)





9. 685 Queen Street East: Photograph showing the detail of the decorative profiles of one of two brackets supporting the projecting overhang of the roof. (HPS, 2015)



10. 685 Queen Street East, consulting room entry porch, east elevation: Photograph showing the triple arched windows and continuous sill of the side entry porch. (HPS, 2015)





11. 685 Queen Street East, south elevation with rear wing: Photograph showing the south side of the house with the rear lower wing and the modern addition of a screened fire escape. (HPS, 2015)



12. 685 Queen Street East: Photograph showing the west elevation and roof top dormer windows. (HPS, 2015)



13. 685 Queen Street East: Photograph showing the various windows with large arched opening, tripled arched openings, paired and single flat-headed openings. Note the pattern of the stained glass lunette in the large, arched windows (*HPS, 2015*)



14. 685 Queen Street East: Photograph showing the stained glass fanlight in the first floor window. (*HPS, 2015*)





15. 685 Queen Street East, North Elevation, Detail of the stone foundation and the brick work: Photograph showing the details of the stone foundation and the brickwork on the principal, north elevation. The stone has been painted but was originally a deep reddish colour. Note the careful patterning and mortar joints of the paired basement windows (HPS, 2015)

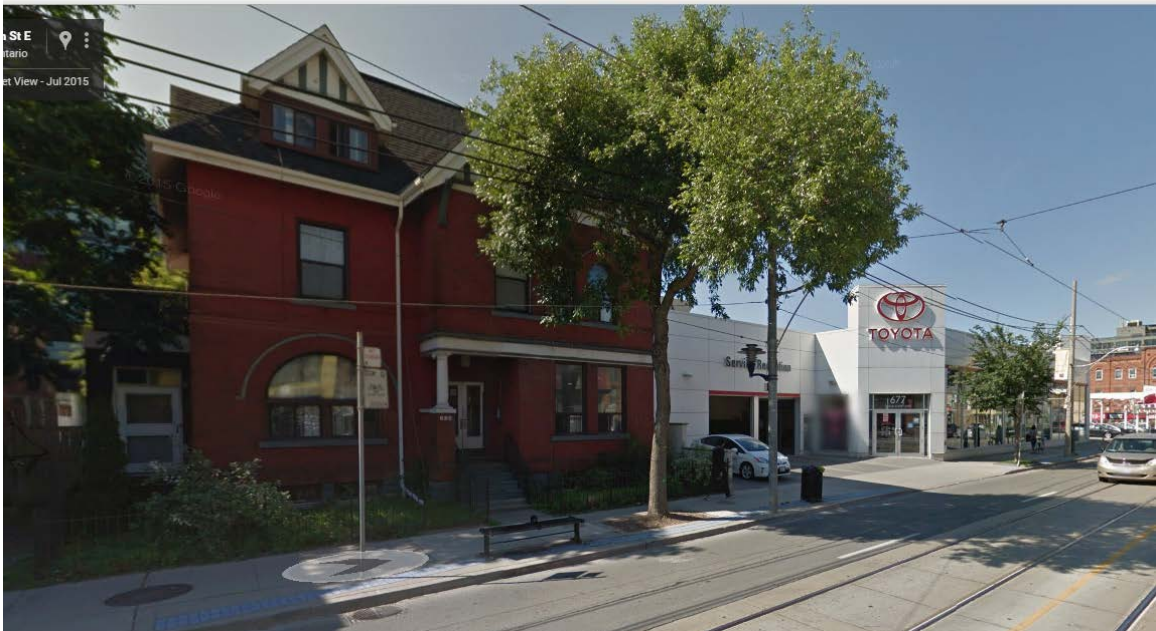


16. 685 Queen Street East, Detail of the stone foundation and the brick work: Photograph showing the brick detail where the finely gauged bricks and precise mortar joints of the north elevation meet those of the west. (HPS, 2015)





17. 685 Queen Street East, Context: showing the immediate context of the Doctor's house and consulting rooms with the historic bank and late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century shop fronts on the left (east) side and the Toyota service/showroom facility on the right (west side) (HPS)



18. 685 Queen Street East, Context: showing the immediate context of the Doctor's house and consulting rooms and the Toyota service/showroom facility on the right (west side) (*Google Maps, 8 December 2015*)





19. Context, 685 Queen Street East: looking west showing on the south side of Queen St., the stone elevation of the former bank building, and beyond 685 Queen St. E., the Toyota showroom and service complex. On the north side of Queen St., the late 19<sup>th</sup> century two-three storey brick, mixed commercial and residential properties on the north side of Queen St on the right. (Google maps, 8 December 2015)



20. Context, 685 Queen Street East: looking east and showing the two-three storey context of mixed commercial and residential buildings, dating from the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, originally clad in brick and stone, with the original Dingman's Hotel (as it was originally known) with its 5-storey tower at the north-west corner of Broadview and Queen St. E. in the distance (Google maps, 8 December 2015)