

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



**WILLIAM ROBERTSON BUILDING
830 YONGE STREET, TORONTO**

Prepared by:

Heritage Preservation Services
City Planning Division
City of Toronto

December 2015

1. DESCRIPTION



Above: view of the west side of Yonge Street, north of Cumberland Street and showing the property at 830 Yonge near the south end of the block; cover: east elevation of the William Robertson Building (Heritage Preservation Services, 2014)

830 Yonge Street: William Robertson Building	
ADDRESS	830 Yonge Street (west side between Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue)
WARD	Ward 27 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Concession C, Lot 21
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Yorkville
HISTORICAL NAME	William Robertson Building ¹
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1875 (completed)
ORIGINAL OWNER	Sleigh Estate
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial
CURRENT USE*	Commercial * This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	None identified ²
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Brick cladding with brick, stone, and wood detailing
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	See Section 2.iii
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 2. iii
CRITERIA	Design/Physical, Historical/Associative & Contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed on City of Toronto's Heritage Register
RECORDER	Heritage Preservation Services: Kathryn Anderson
REPORT DATE	December 2015

¹ The building is named for the original and long-term tenant. Archival records indicate that the property, along with the adjoining site to the south was developed by the trustees of John Sleigh's estate

² No architect or building is identified at the time of the writing of this report. Building permits do not survive for this period and no reference to the property was found in the Globe's tender calls

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 830 Yonge Street, and applies evaluation criteria to determine whether it merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The conclusions of the research and evaluation are found in Section 4 (Summary).

i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
1838 and 1843	John Sleigh purchases land in Lot 21 in Concession 2 west of Yonge Street (north of present-day Bloor Street West)
1853	The Village of Yorkville is incorporated
1861	When the 1861 Census is compiled, Sleigh occupies a single-storey rough cast (stucco) house on the subject property (it is recorded the following year in the first surviving tax assessment roll for Yorkville)
1864	Following Sleigh's death, his trustees rent the property to his son-in-law, builder William Rowsell
1873	Rowsell remains the tenant on the site when the assessment roll is compiled in May, but dies later that year
1875	The new building at present-day 830 Yonge is complete when the tax assessment roll is compiled and identifies George Fletcher, a baker, as the first tenant
1876	William Robertson, a tailor becomes the long-term tenant in the building, which is also illustrated on a bird's eye view of the area
1883 Feb	Yorkville is annexed by the City of Toronto and the subject property is renumbered as "730" Yonge (the current street number was assigned 6 years later)
1883 Sept	The first assessment roll for St. Paul's Ward indicates that Isabella Robertson, "tailoress" remains the tenant to the Sleigh Estate
1884	The subject property is shown on the first Goad's Atlas covering the area
1905	Arthur Barber succeeds the Sleigh Estate as the property owner and continues to rent the premises to a series of merchants
1984	The property at 830 Yonge Street is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register)

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Yorkville

The property at 830 Yonge Street is located in Yorkville, which originated as a suburban village prior to becoming the first municipality annexed by the City of Toronto in 1883. Nearly a century earlier when Toronto was founded in 1793 as the Town of York, the area between present-day Bloor Street and Eglinton Avenue was subdivided into 100-acre farm lots that were accessed along concession lines and side roads. Yonge Street was surveyed during the same period as the main route from York to the northern hinterland, although portions of the road remained impassible for many years. An inn

(the future Red Lion) was established on Yonge, north of the first concession line (Bloor) in the early 19th century and later became a popular hostelry for travellers passing through a toll gate near the intersection. On the northwest corner of Yonge and Bloor, York's first non-denominational cemetery opened in 1826 as the York General Burying Ground (commonly known as Potter's Field, it was marked on Cane's map of 1842, which is attached as Image 2). However, by the 1830s the first brick yards and breweries were operating in the ravine and along the watercourse that crossed Yonge Street north of Bloor, resulting in the subdivision of the adjacent lands for housing, shops and services.

By the mid 19th century, the steady development of the hamlet on Toronto's northern border was facilitated by an omnibus running directly from the Red Lion to Toronto's St. Lawrence Market (Image 3). Incorporated as the Village of Yorkville in 1853, the community's official boundaries were set at present-day Bloor Street, Sherbourne Street, Walker Avenue and a line near Bedford Road (Image 4).³ Yorkville's population doubled between 1851 and 1861 and, during the latter year the introduction of the first horse-drawn street railway offered more reliable connections to the city. Yorkville boasted 5000 residents in 1881, two years prior to its annexation by the neighbouring City of Toronto.⁴

During the 20th century as a Toronto neighbourhood, Yorkville evolved from a stable residential community to a primary cultural and commercial destination in the city. The widening of Bloor Street east and west of Yonge Street by 1929 displaced many small-scale proprietors who were drawn into the Yorkville neighbourhood where much of the residential building stock was converted to commercial uses. The decline of the area after World War II made it an affordable enclave for artists. In the 1960s (when the construction of the subway line along Bloor Street resulted in further redevelopment), Yorkville was a beacon for Toronto's music scene and "hippie culture", including the setting for Avrom Isaac's contemporary Canadian art gallery and innovative exhibits space at 830 Yonge Street. The following decade witnessed the community's transformation into a high-end shopping destination, supported by the conversion of remaining residential buildings into shops or their replacement by low-scale mixed use developments that included York Square and Hazelton Lanes.

In the 1990s, part of Yorkville was designated as one of Toronto's first heritage conservation districts. Additional properties were recognized on the City's heritage register, including the Fire Hall No. 10 (incorporating the tower from the 1876 Yorkville Fire Hall and the coat-of-arms from the 1860 town hall), the original Olivet Congregational Church (now the Heliconian Club, 1876), and William Robinson Building at 830 Yonge Street, all of which were associated with the 19th century Village of Yorkville.

³ As shown on historical maps and atlases, Yorkville's boundaries encompassed parts of today's South Rosedale and the East Annex

⁴ With Yorkville's annexation as St. Paul's Ward, two streets required new names, with Sydenham becoming Cumberland Street and William renamed Yorkville Avenue. They anchor the block where the subject property is found and remain primary commercial streets in the Yorkville neighbourhood

The historical maps and atlases, as well as other images in Section 6 of this report trace the development of Yorkville and the subject property at 830 Yonge Street.

830 Yonge Street

The property at 830 Yonge Street, north of Bloor Street West in Yorkville stands on land originally surveyed as Lot 21 in Concession 2 from the Bay, which was granted to military veteran and politician, David William Smith in 1798. The acreage was acquired by John Elmsley, the Chief Justice of Upper Canada, whose family began selling parts of the tract in the 1820s.

During the 1830s and 1840s, Toronto resident John Sleigh (1796-1864) purchased land near the northwest corner of present-day Yonge and Cumberland Streets in Yorkville. Sleigh was an English-born butcher who, in the early 19th century operated his business on York Street and was successful enough to live on Duke Street (now Adelaide Street East), which was the most fashionable residential district in the city.⁵ Sleigh was recorded on his Yorkville property in 1850, prior to the incorporation of the Village (1853) when he was chosen as one of the first municipal councillors.⁶ Sleigh resided in a single-storey roughcast (stucco) house until his death in 1864, after which it was retained by his trustees and occupied by his son-in-law, builder William Rowell (1824-1873).⁷

Sleigh's trustees subdivided the property where the subject building was completed by June 1875 when the tax assessment rolls were compiled.⁸ George Fletcher, a baker was the first tenant at present-day 830 Yonge. By the next year William Robertson, a tailor and resident of adjoining Sydenham (Cumberland) Street, operated a business on the premises that was continued by members of his family until 1890.⁹ Various commercial uses occupied the building during the 20th century when the property was recognized on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1984.

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Current photographs of the property at 830 Yonge Street are found on the cover and in Sections 2 and 6 of this report. The William Robertson Building is a three-storey commercial building with architectural detailing inspired by the Italianate and Renaissance Revival styles popular for commercial buildings during the late Victorian era. With its scale, setback, cladding and decorative detailing, the William Robinson

⁵ Sleigh's Duke Street residence is illustrated in Vol. 1 of Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto

⁶ Robinson, 41-42. However, according to Hutchinson (17) Sleigh was not among the first councillors identified on Yorkville's coat-of-arms, which was originally placed on the Yorkville Town Hall and, following that building's destruction by fire, re-erected on the extant Yorkville Fire Hall

⁷ In 1867 the sale of the Sleigh Estate was announced, but evidently did not proceed (Toronto Public Library, Item 2267718)

⁸ The replacement of the original house with the subject building at 830 Yonge, as well as the adjoining building at 832 Yonge, is confirmed by the dramatic increase in the assessed value of the property, which rose from \$3500 in 1874 to \$3225 and \$4875 (for present-day 830 and 832 Yonge, respectively) in 1875

⁹ Robertson was first listed as a "merchant tailor" on Sydenham (Cumberland) Street in Yorkville in 1872

Building complements the neighbouring structures in the block that share its late 19th century vintage. The building is clad with brick and trimmed with brick and stone (now painted). At the south end of the principal (east) elevation, a brick pier rises to the flat roofline.¹⁰ Above the ground (first) floor storefront (which has been altered), the upper two stories are symmetrically arranged into two bays with pairs of flat-headed window openings with brick flat arches and stone keystones. The north side wall is shared by the neighbouring building at 832 Yonge Street, which dates to the same era and complements the William Robertson Building in its scale, fenestration and detailing.

iv. CONTEXT

The location of 830 Yonge Street is shown on the property data map attached as Image 1. The William Robertson Building is found on the west side of Yonge Street near the south end of the block between Cumberland Street (south) and Yorkville Avenue (north). This section of Yonge Street was initially developed prior to the annexation of Yorkville by the City of Toronto and contains an intact group of late 19th century commercial buildings. The William Robertson Building and its neighbours face east toward Yonge Street where the Albert Britnell Bookstore (1928) at 765 Yonge, between Bloor Street East and Asquith Avenue, is also a recognized heritage property. The block with the William Robertson Building ends at Yorkville Avenue on the north, where the Yorkville Branch of the Toronto Public Library (1907) at 22 Yorkville and Fire Hall #10 (1889) at 34 Yorkville are proximate to the subject property and recognized on the City's heritage register.¹¹ Further west, between Bay Street and Avenue Road, parts of the former Village of Yorkville were designated as the Yorkville-Hazelton Heritage Conservation District in 2002.¹²

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.

¹⁰ A similar pier marks the north end of the adjoining building at 832 Yonge, which shares its construction date and has similar fenestration and detailing

¹¹ The fire hall incorporates the tower from the earlier village fire hall, as well as the coat-of-arms from the Yorkville Town Hall, demolished in 1941. Further west on Yorkville Avenue, several 19th century house form buildings are recognized on the City's heritage register (with some also designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act), including the property at 100 Yorkville that was converted into a private hospital and became the first location for Mount Sinai Hospital

¹² http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/city_planning/urban_design/files/pdf/hcd_yorkville_proposal.pdf

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 and Early Example of a Style and Type with a High Degree of Craftsmanship – The William Robertson Building has cultural heritage value for its design as a late 19th century commercial building that retains its decorative detailing that was inspired by the popular architectural styles of the late 19th century. They contribute to the collection of buildings on Yonge Street between Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue that reflect the popular styles of the late Victorian era and represent an intact surviving group in Yorkville that share a common scale, setback and late 19th century architectural character.

Historical or Associative Value	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	X
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 property at 830 Yonge Street is also valued for its historical association with the Village of Yorkville (1853-1883), which was an incorporated municipality prior to its annexation by the City of Toronto. When the William Robertson Building was constructed, it was part of the commercial district along Yonge Street serving the brick yards, breweries and related industries that formed the basis of the community.

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 – Contextually, the William Robertson Building contributes to the character of Yonge Street, north of Bloor Street where it reflects the late 19th century development of the area at the time it evolved from an independent village to a city neighbourhood along the important corridor known as Toronto's "main street."

Surroundings – The William Robertson Building is also historically, visually and physically linked to its surroundings on Yonge Street where it is an integral part of the intact group of contiguous late 19th century commercial buildings that extends along the entire block on the west side of the street from Cumberland Street to Yorkville Avenue and marks the east entry into the commercial heart of the former Village of Yorkville.

4. SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 830 Yonge Street has design, associative and contextual values as an important commercial building with period detailing that is historically associated with the former Village of Yorkville and supports the character and setting of the block on Yonge Street between Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue with the intact group of late 19th century structures that includes the William Robertson Building.

5. SOURCES

Archival Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds, York Township, Concession 2 from the Bay (West), Lot 21
Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives, Toronto Public Library, and
Toronto Historical Board (individual citations in Section 6)
Assessment Rolls, Village of Yorkville, 1862-83
Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto, St. Paul's Ward, 1884-92 and Ward 3, Division 3,
1893 ff.
Browne, Map of the Township of York, 1851
Building Records, City of Toronto, Toronto and East York, 1946 ff.
Cane, Topographical Plan of the City and Liberties of Toronto, 1842
City of Toronto Directories, 1851 ff.
Decennial Censuses of Canada, 1861ff.
Goad's Atlases, 1884-1923
Gross, Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876
Liddy, Plan of the Incorporated Village of Yorkville, 1882
Miles and Company, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878
Underwriters' Insurance Bureau Atlas, Vol. 1, 1965

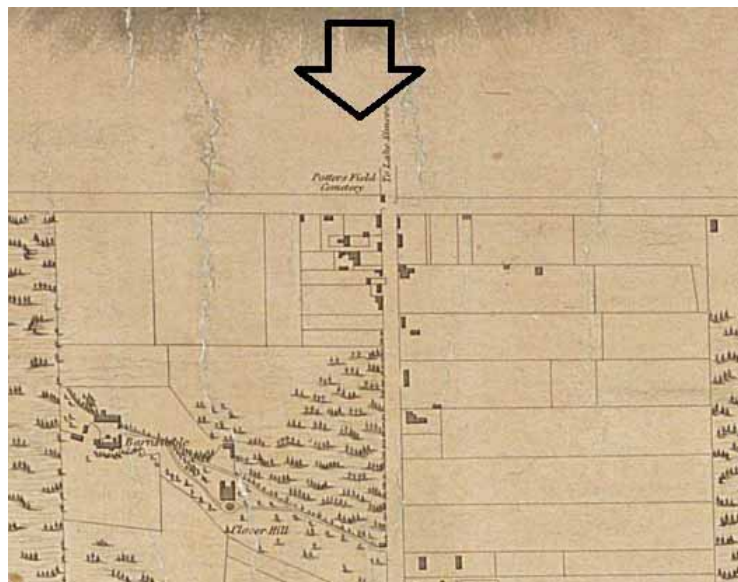
Secondary Sources

Arthur, Eric, Toronto: no mean city, 3rd ed., revised by Stephen A. Otto, 1986
Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture, 1990
Dendy, William, Lost Toronto, 2nd ed., 1998
Hutcheson, Stephanie, Yorkville in Pictures 1853-1883, 1978
McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2nd ed., 1989
Mulvany, C. Pelham, Toronto: past and present, 1884
Robertson, J. R., Landmarks of Toronto, Vol. 1, 1894
Robinson, C. Blackett, History of Toronto and the County of York, 1885
Sleigh and Rowsell Family Records, www.ancestry.ca

6. IMAGES¹³ – the **arrows** mark the location of the subject properties

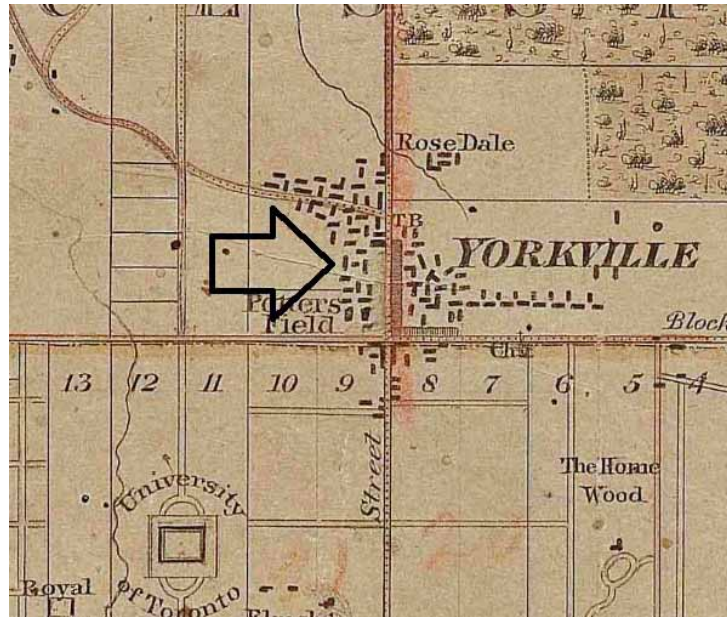


1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the block on the west side of Yonge Street between Cumberland Street (south) and Yorkville Avenue (north) where the property at 830 Yonge Street is located.



2. Cane's Topographical Map of the City of Toronto, 1842: the area where Yorkville was developed is shown adjoining Potter's Field and north of the City of Toronto boundary at the first concession line (Bloor Street).

¹³ Additional maps and atlases tracing the development of Yorkville (but not reproduced here) are available, including those via <http://oldtorontomaps.blogspot.ca/>



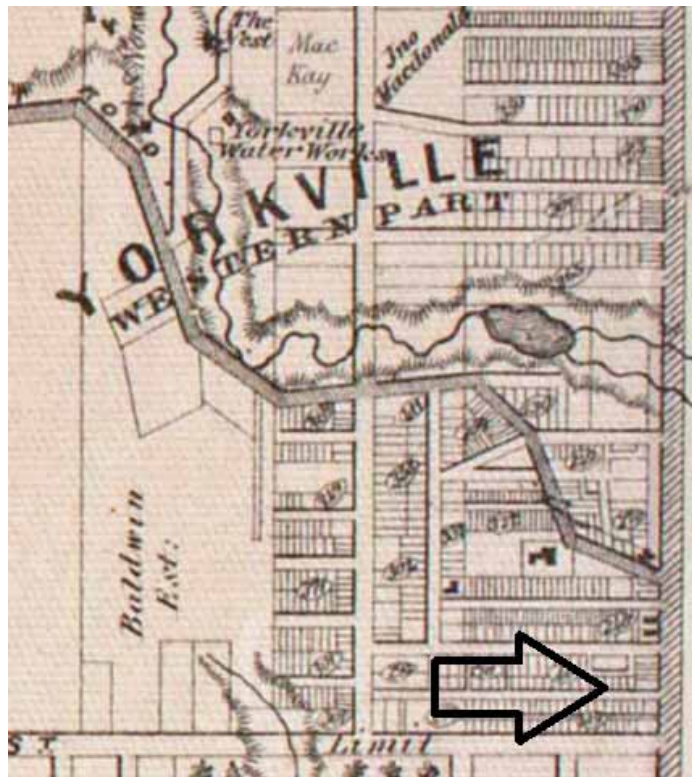
3. Browne's Plan of the City of Toronto, 1851: showing the development of the community at the south end of Township Lot 21, two years prior to the incorporation of the Village of Yorkville (other archival resources indicate a mixture of residential, commercial and small-scale industrial buildings along Yonge Street and Davenport Road).



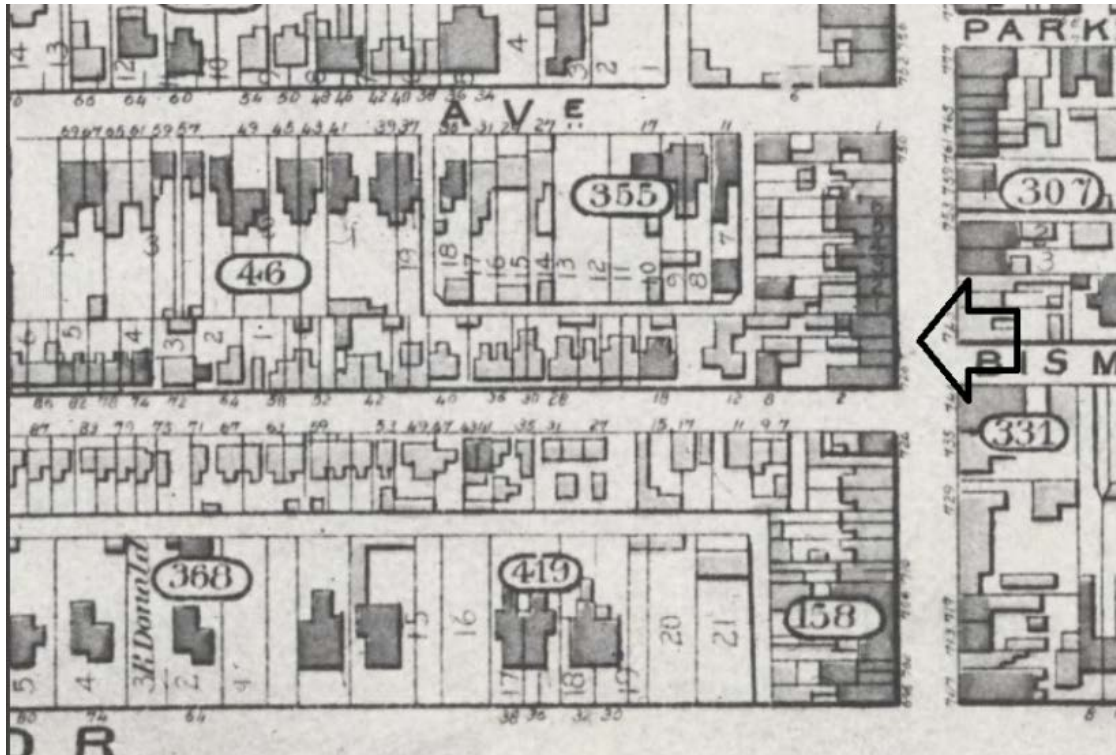
4. Liddy's Plan of the Incorporated Village of Yorkville, 1852: the subdivision of the lands is illustrated, including those along the west side of Yonge Street where the subject property was subsequently developed.



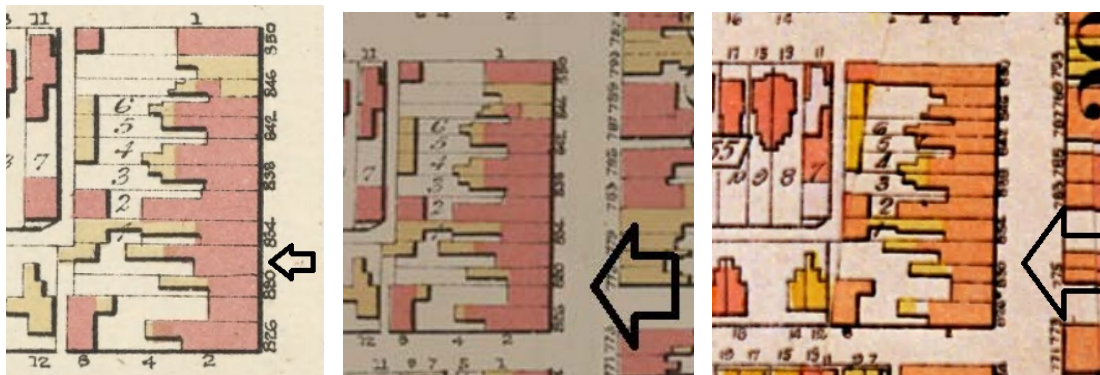
5. Gross's Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876: showing the west side of Yonge Street where parts of the block between present-day Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue contained the subject property at 830 Yonge Street.



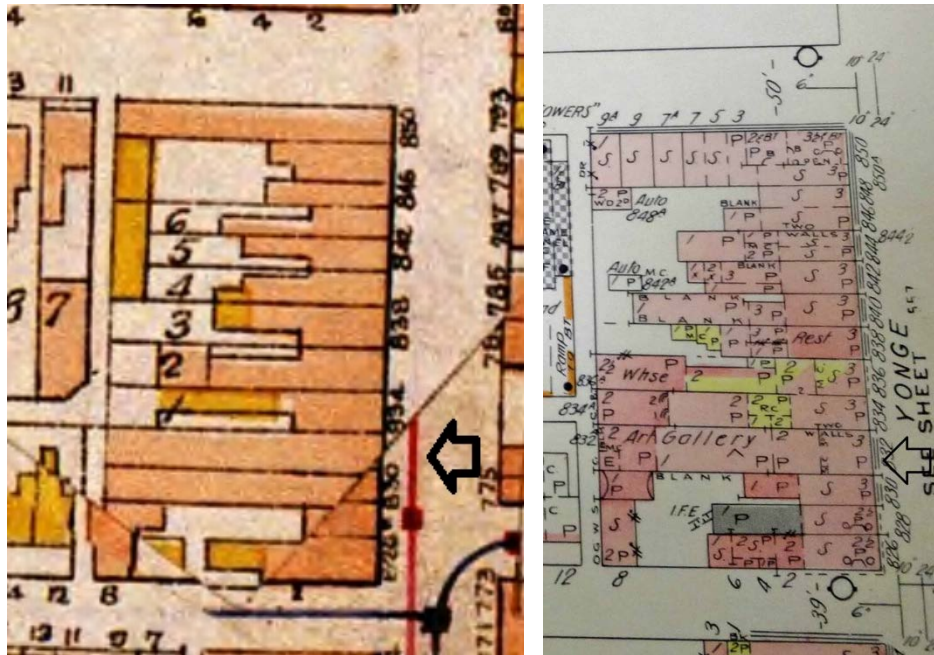
6. Miles and Company's York County Atlas, 1878: the layout of Yorkville west of Yonge Street is shown prior to its annexation by the City of Toronto (only major landmarks including the Yorkville Town Hall and St. Paul's Church on Yonge Street are marked on the map).



7. Goad's Atlas, 1884: showing Yorkville following annexation where the subject property is in place on the west side of Yonge Street.



8. Goad's Atlases, 1890 to 1912: the series of the fire insurance maps in 1890 (left), 1903 (centre) and 1910 revised to 1912 (right) show the status of the building at 830 Yonge Street over three decades.



9. Fire Insurance Atlases, 1923 and 1965: showing the William Robertson Building at 830 Yonge Street on Goad's Atlas of 1910 revised to 1923 (left) and the Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas in the mid 1960s (right).



10. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street north of Bloor Street, 1953: the low-rise buildings along the street, including the block between present-day Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue where the subject property at 830 Yonge Street is found are marked by the arrow (Toronto Reference Library, Item #1966).



11. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street near Cumberland Street, 1961: showing the property at 830 Yonge Street mid block (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 16, File 185).



12. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street north of Cumberland Street, 1974: the property at 830 Yonge Street is shown at the right (Toronto Historical Board).



13. Archival Photographs, Yonge Street north of Cumberland Street, 1985 and 1991: the William Robertson Building at 830 Yonge Street is shown near the south end of the block in 1985 (above) and 1991 (below) (Toronto Historical Board).



14. Current Photographs, 830 Yonge Street, 2015: showing the property at 830 Yonge Street (above left) beside the neighbouring buildings at 832 Yonge (centre), which complements it in vintage, scale and detailing (above centre), and its context on the west side of the street, north of Cumberland Street (below) (Heritage Preservation Services).