

HERITAGE PROPERTY RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORT



JAMES GILES BUILDING
834 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 (left) and showing the location of the James Giles Building in the block (identified by the **arrow**); cover: east elevation, 834 Yonge Street (Heritage Preservation Services, 2015)

834 Yonge Street: James Giles Building	
ADDRESS	834 Yonge Street (west side, north of Cumberland Street)
WARD	Ward 27 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale)
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Plan 355, Lot 1
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Yorkville
HISTORICAL NAME	James Giles Building
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1876 (completed)
ORIGINAL OWNER	James Giles, merchant
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 ¹
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION	Brick cladding with brick, stone and wood detailing
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	See Section 2.ii
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 No architect or builder is identified at the time of the writing of this report. Building permits do not survive for this era and no reference to the site 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 834 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
1852	Robert A. Parker acquires a large parcel of land on the west side of Yonge Street, south of William Street (present-day Yorkville Avenue)
1853	The Village of Yorkville is incorporated
1856	Enoch Leak, a saddler, is Parker's tenant in a building a present-day 834 Yonge Street ²
1862 Apr	When the first surviving tax assessment roll for Yorkville is compiled, butcher Henry Smallpiece is the tenant to Parker's widow on the subject property
1874 Jan	Plan 355 is registered by the Parker Estate where the subject property is located on Lot 1
1874 May	A plan of subdivision prepared specifically for the sale of the Parker Estate outlines a building on the subject property, which is described in a newspaper advertisement as a "wooden house and shop"
1875 June	The subject property is valued at \$1500 on the assessment roll, which is now owned by James Giles and the location of his grocery store
1876 June	James Giles and his son, Francis (Frank) Giles co-own the subject property, where the value has increased to \$3400, indicating that the current brick building is in place
1876	A bird's eye view of Toronto shows Giles's building on the west side of Yonge Street in Yorkville
1883 Feb	The City of Toronto annexes Yorkville
1883 Sept	In the first tax assessment roll for St. Paul's Ward (incorporating Yorkville), J. S. Giles and Son continues to operate a grocery and liquor store at the renumbered "734" Yonge ³
1884	The first Goad's Atlas to include Yorkville shows James Giles's store
1926	Francis Giles's executors sell the property at 834 Yonge
1974 Mar	The property at 834 Yonge Street is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Yorkville

The property at 834 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.

² Archival records indicate that this was the original building on the subject property (south of Parker's own residence), which was specifically described and illustrated in 1874, prior to its demolition (Images)

³ The property was renumbered as 834 Yonge in 1889

Nearly a century earlier in 1793 when Toronto was founded 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).⁴ 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.⁵

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". 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 Fire Hall #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 the James Giles Building at 834 Yonge Street, all of which were associated with the 19th century Village of Yorkville.

⁴ As shown on historical maps and atlases, Yorkville's boundaries encompassed parts of today's South Rosedale and the East Annex

⁵ 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 found in Section 6 of this report illustrate the development of the community and the subject property at 834 Yonge Street.

834 Yonge Street

The subject property on 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 the portion along Yonge Street in the 1820s.

In 1852, Robert A. Parker, a Yorkville merchant, purchased land on Yonge Street, south of present-day Yorkville Avenue where his residence was built.⁶ Archival sources record a "wood house and shop" directly south of Parker's dwelling on the subject property at present-day 832 Yonge Street.⁷ This site was occupied by Parker's tenant, saddler Enoch Leak in 1856. Following Parker's death, his widow continued to rent this property adjoining her dwelling until 1874. During the latter year, Parker's executors registered Plan 355 on Yonge Street, south of present-day Yorkville Avenue, where the subject property was identified as Lot 1. A separate plan was prepared specifically for the sale of the Parker Estate, which showed the existing buildings and described the "wooden house and store" on Lot 1 in a newspaper advertisement (Images 6-7).

By June 1875, the property at present-day 834 Yonge Street was valued at \$1500 in the tax assessment rolls and owned by the English-born merchant James Giles (1819-1908), who operated a grocery store in the original building.⁸ When the next assessment was conducted one year later, the sharp increase in value to \$3400 indicates that the current brick building had been constructed. James Giles co-owned the property with his son, Francis (Frank) Giles where the pair operated a grocery and liquor store under the name J. G. Giles and Son. Frank Giles continued the business after his father's death, selling the site in the 1920s. It was occupied by a range of commercial uses during the remainder of the 20th century, including a Singer Sewing Machine outlet. The property at 834 Yonge Street was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register) in 1974.

⁶ Parker bought and sold additional land in Lot 21 where he also registered plans of subdivision prior to his death in 1858. His Yonge Street property was illustrated in a photograph dated 1860 (Image 5) and, according to the Census of 1861, contained a two-storey brick house (this building is also outlined on the plan attached as Image 6)

⁷ City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 79, File 37

⁸ Gilles was first recorded as a grocer on Yonge Street in Yorkville in Irwin's Directory for 1873-74 dated May 1, 1873, but the specific location was not identified

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Current photographs of the property at 834 Yonge Street are found on the cover and in Sections 2 and 6 of this report. The James Giles Building is a three-storey commercial building with architectural detailing inspired by the Italianate and Renaissance Revival styles popular for commercial buildings during the Victorian era. With its scale, setback, cladding and decorative detailing, the James Giles 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).⁹ The flat roofline is embellished with corbelled brickwork. The principal (east) elevation is organized into three bays, with brick pilasters marking the outer edges of the wall. Above the first (ground) floor storefronts (which have been altered), the upper stories contain trios of symmetrically arranged segmental-arched window openings with brick arches and stone keystones. The structure abuts the neighbouring buildings to the north and south.

iv. CONTEXT

The location of the property at 834 Yonge Street is shown on the property data map attached as Image 1. The James Giles Building is found on the west side of Yonge Street near the centre 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 James Giles 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 James Giles 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.¹⁰ 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 2002.¹¹

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”

⁹ On the east elevation, red brick is visible along the roofline where the cornice was removed (image)

¹⁰ 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 of Mount Sinai Hospital

¹¹ http://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/city_planning/urban_design/files/pdf/hcd_yorkville_proposal.pdf

if the criterion is “not applicable” to the property or X if it is applicable, with explanatory text below.

Design or Physical Value	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	X
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

Representative and Early Example of a Style and Type - The James Giles Building has cultural heritage value for its design as a representative example of a commercial building with original decorative detailing drawn from the popular architectural styles of the late 19th century. It contributes 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	N/A
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	X
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	N/A

Community - The property at 834 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 James Giles 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 James Giles 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."

Setting - The James Giles Building is also historically, visually and physically linked to its surroundings on Yonge Street where it is 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 836 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 James Giles Building.

5. SOURCES

Archival Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds, City of Toronto (Yorkville), Plan 355, Lot 1
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, Divisions 3, 7 and 8, 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, 1861 ff.
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
Plan, Parker Estate, Yorkville, City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 79, Item 37
Underwriters' Insurance Bureau Atlas, Vol. 1, 1965

Secondary Sources

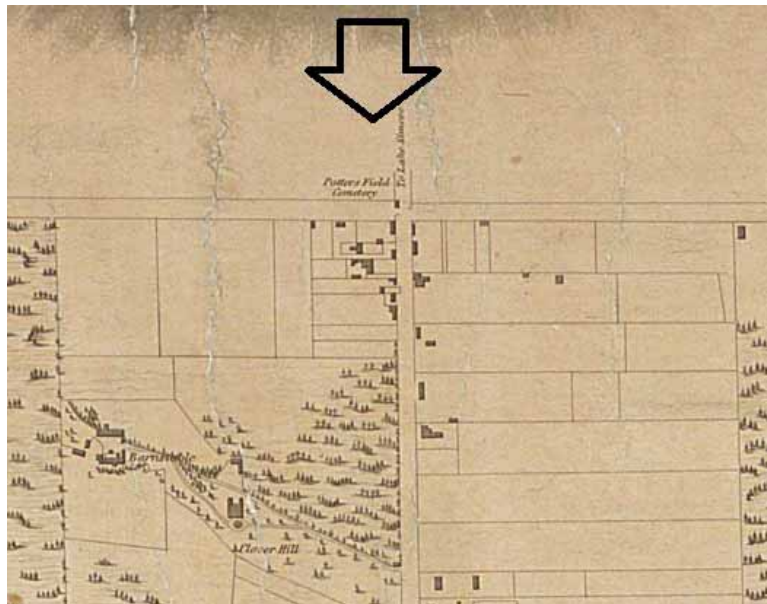
Arthur, Eric, Toronto: no mean city, 3rd ed., revised by Stephen A. Otto, 1986
Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture, 1990
Dendy, William, Lost Toronto, 2nd ed., 1998
Hutcheson, Stephanie, Yorkville in Pictures 1853-1883, 1978
McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: a city guide, 2nd ed., 1989
Mulvany, C. Pelham, Toronto: past and present, 1884
Giles Family Records, www.ancestry.ca

6. IMAGES¹² – the **arrows** mark the location of the subject property

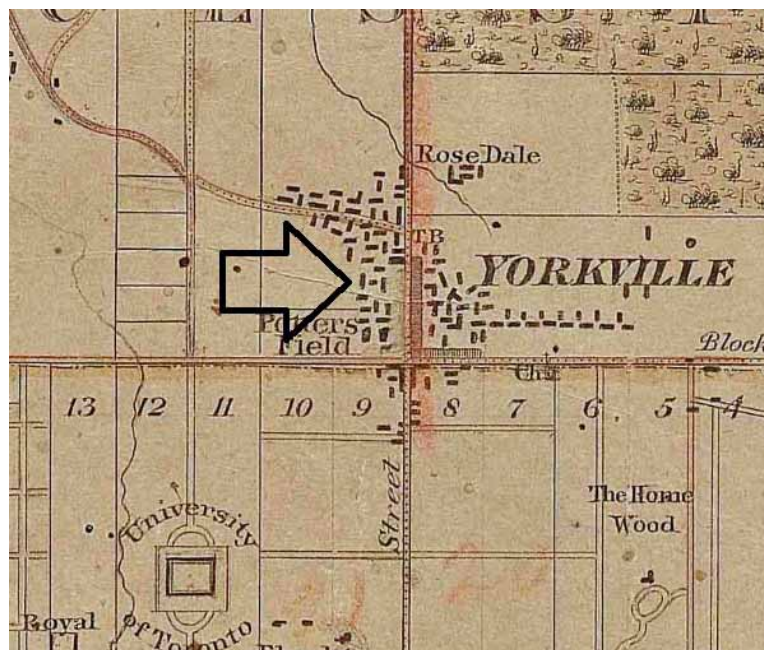


1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the block on the west side of Yonge Street between Cumberland Street (south) and Yorkville Avenue (north) where the property at 834 Yonge Street is located.

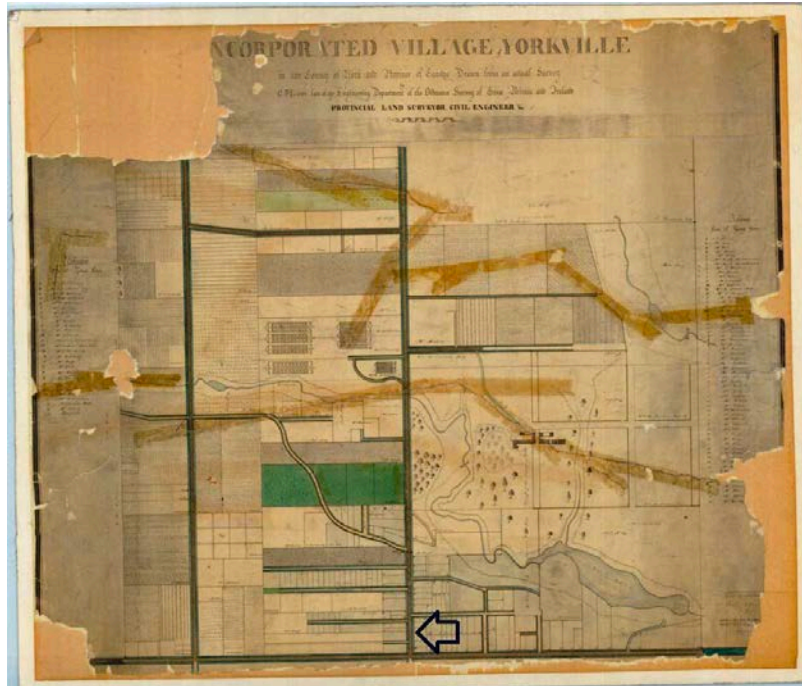
¹² Additional maps and atlases tracing the development of Yorkville (but not reproduced here) are available, including those via <http://oldtorontomaps.blogspot.ca/>



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



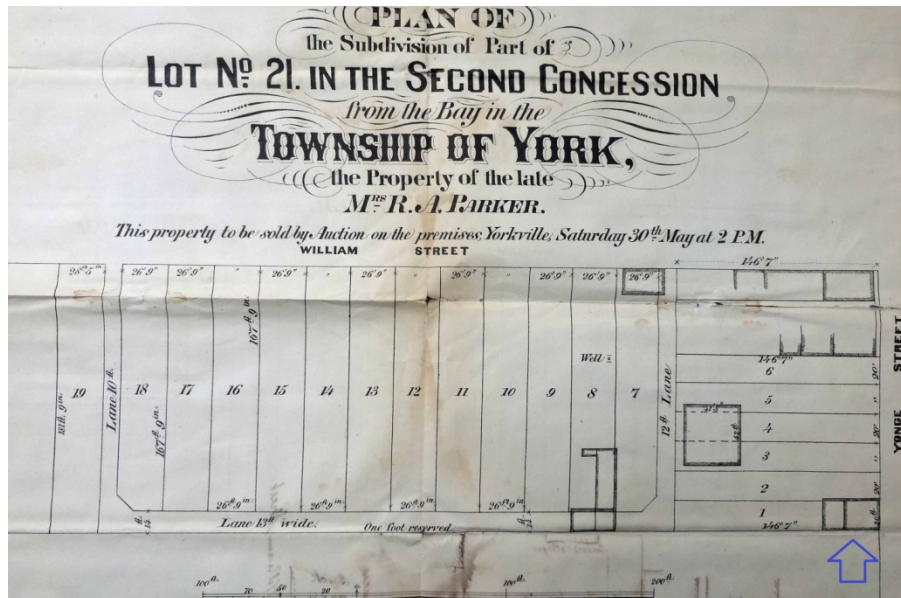
3. Browne's Plan of the City of Toronto, 1851: the development of the community at the south end of Township Lot 21 is shown, two years prior to the incorporation of the Village of Yorkville (other archival resources indicate a mixture of residential, commercial and small-scale industrial buildings along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



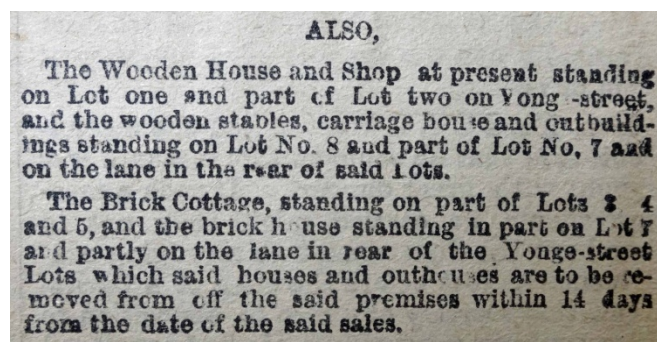
4. Liddy's Plan of the Incorporated Village of Yorkville, 1852: showing the subdivision of lands on the eve of its incorporation as a village, including those along the west side of Yonge Street where the subject property was subsequently developed



5. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street, Yorkville, 1860: the status of the block south of present-day Yorkville Avenue (where the entrance to the street is marked by the **arrow**) is shown, prior to the development of the James Giles Building on R. A. Parker's former estate, which is identified by the picket fence (Toronto Public Library, Item 1985)



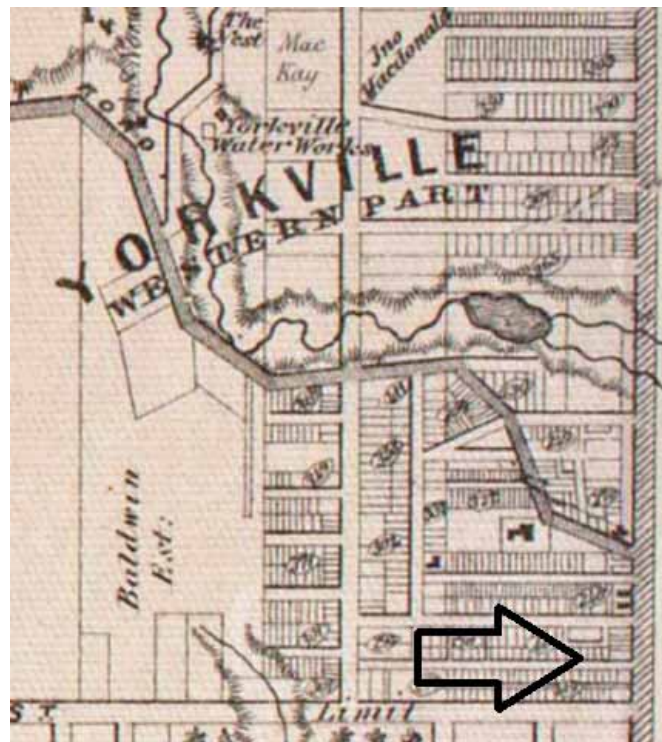
6. Plan, Parker Estate, 1874: the plan prepared for the auction of the Parker Estate shows the original building on Lot 1 before the construction of the James Giles Building (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 79, File 37)



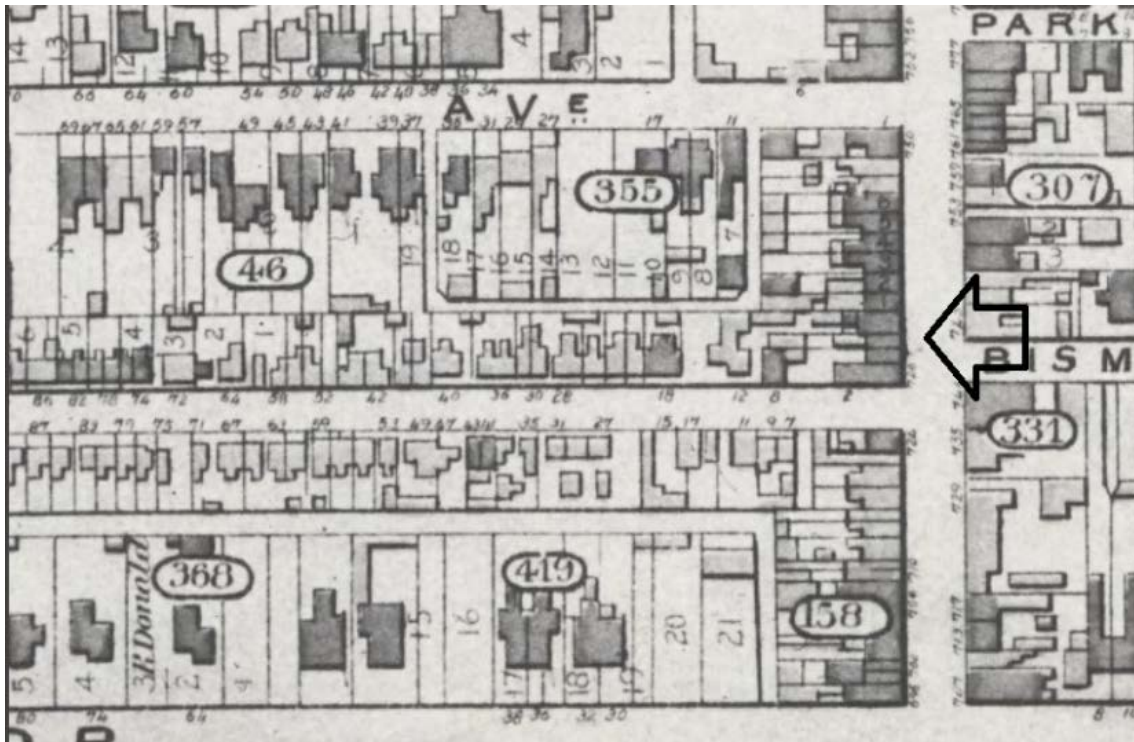
7. Newspaper Advertisement, May 1874: advertising the sale of the Parker Estate (left) and describing the subject property on Lot 1 (right) before the replacement of the original structure by the James Giles Building (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 79, File 37).



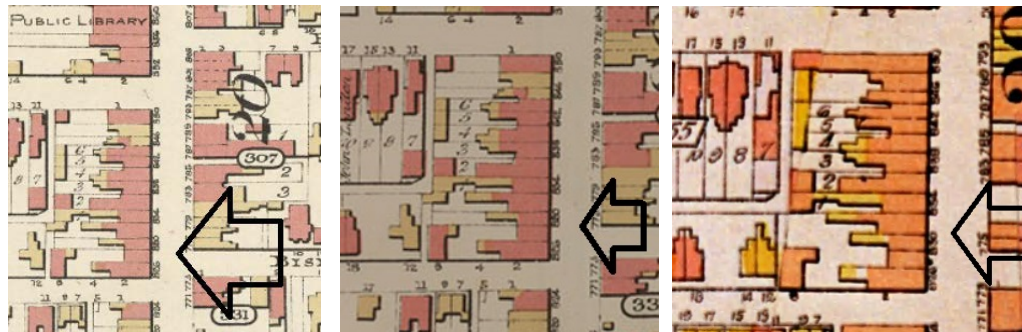
8. Gross's Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876: showing the west side of Yonge Street where parts of the block between present-day Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue were developed, including the James Giles Building at present-day 836 Yonge



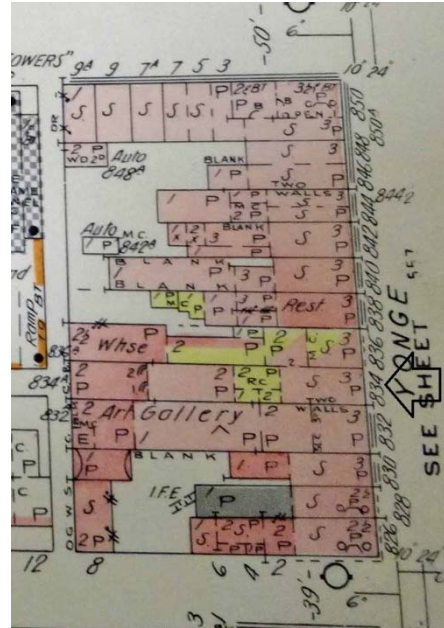
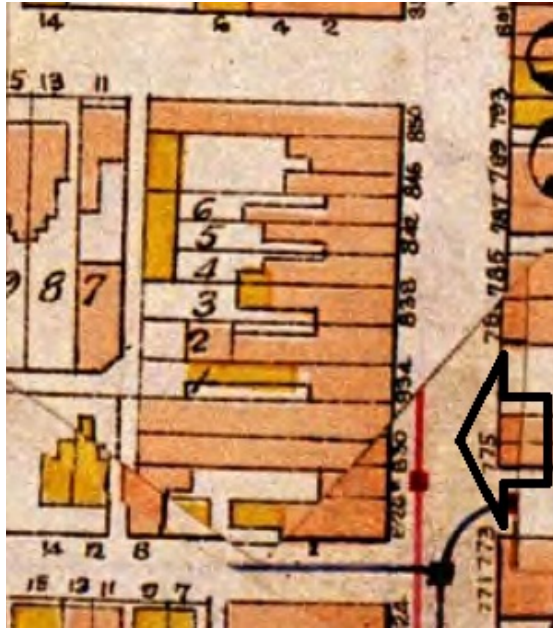
9. Miles and Company's York County Atlas, 1878: the layout of Yorkville west of Yonge Street is shown prior to its annexation by the City of Toronto (only major landmarks including the Yorkville Town Hall and St. Paul's Church on Yonge Street are marked on the map)



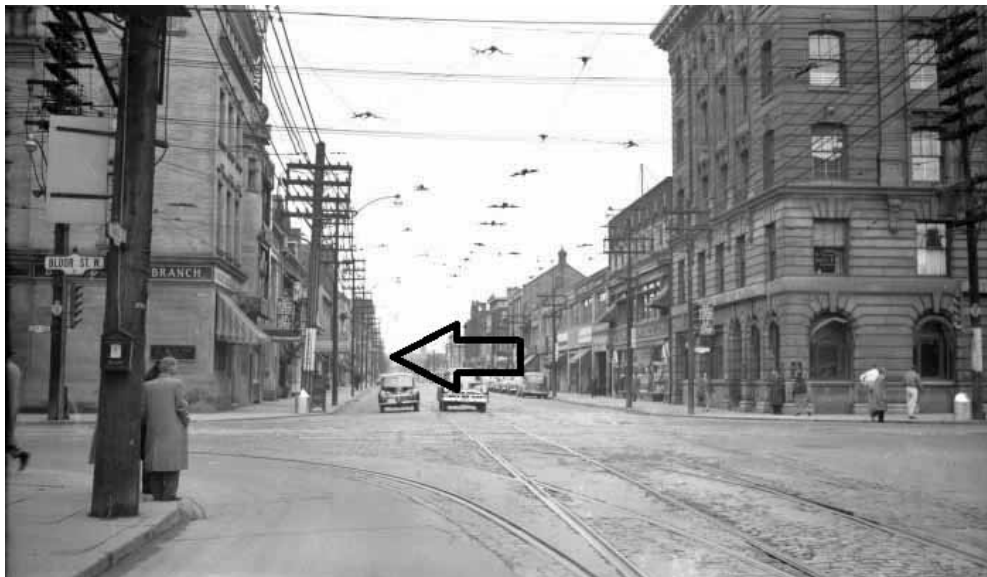
10. Goad's Atlas, 1884: showing Yorkville following annexation where the subject property is located on Lot 1 (Bloor Street extends across the bottom edge of the map).



11. Goad's Atlases, 1890-1912: the property at 834 Yonge (which was known by this street number beginning in 1890) is shown on the extracts from the fire insurance atlases for 1890 (left), 1903 (centre) and 1910 revised to 1912 (right).



12. Atlases, 1923 and 1965: the subject property is illustrated on the last Goad's Atlas updated to 1923 (left) and on Underwriters' Survey Bureau's atlas for 1965.



13. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street north of Bloor Street, 1953: showing the low-rise buildings along the street, including the block between present-day Cumberland Street and Yorkville Avenue (identified by the **arrow**) where the subject property at 834 Yonge is found (Toronto Reference Library, Item #1966).



14. Archival Photograph, 1961: showing the subject property on the west side of Yonge Street, north of Cumberland Street (left) (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 16, File 185).



15. Archival Photograph, Yonge Street south of Yorkville Avenue, 1974: the subject property at 834 Yonge is shown at the left end of the image (Toronto Historical Board).



16. Archival Photographs, 834 Yonge Street, 1980 and 1991: showing the location of the James Giles Building on Yonge Street in the block south of Yorkville Avenue in 1980 (above) and north of Cumberland Street in 1991 (below) (Toronto Historical Board).



17. Current Photographs, 834 Yonge Street, 2015: showing the context of the property within the block (top, right), in relation to the neighbouring buildings at 830 and 832 Yonge Street (centre), and the detailing along the roofline (below) (Heritage Preservation Services)