

## **50 Merton Street - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act**

Date: March 20, 2022

To: Toronto Preservation Board

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: Ward 12 - Toronto-St. Paul's

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 50 Merton Street under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters at 50 Merton Street was the first permanent and purpose-built national headquarters for the organization since its founding in Canada in 1910. It is a three-storey complex completed in 1962 to the design of Carmen Corneil, project architect for William J. McBain & Associates and extended in 1970-72 by the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil. The complex has been recognized as a significant and innovative work of Post-War Modern architecture and particularly represents the globally influential leadership of the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. It has also been lauded on its own terms for its innovation which was based in a meaningful interpretation of site and program and fulfilled in exceptionally fine details and selection of materials.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board has recognized the national significance of the Girl Guides of Canada through its designation of the Girl Guide Movement in Canada a National Historic Event in 2011 and installed a plaque at 50 Merton Street. Girl Guides Movement which was founded in 1909 in England and established in Canada in 1910 with the creation of several local branches including Toronto. The citation on the plaque at the property notes the importance of the Girl Guides as both a Canadian and international organization which emphasizes the "outdoors, character-building, and self-reliance... the organisation has provided Canadian girls and women with strong inspiration role models in order to nurture responsible, service-oriented citizens and community leaders.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and Park Canada plaque at 50 Merton Street

The property at 50 Merton Street was identified as having potential cultural heritage value in Official Plan Amendment 405. Following research and evaluation under Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation, staff have determined that the property at 50 Merton Street merits designation under Part IV Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its design, associative and contextual value.

A Zoning By-law Amendment application has been submitted to permit the redevelopment of the properties at 50 and 64 Merton Street with a 39-storey mixed-use building having a non-residential gross floor area of 2,342.0 square metres and a residential gross floor area of 29,326.0 square metres. A total of 443 residential dwelling units are proposed. In the original proposal the existing buildings on the site were to be demolished. Since that first submission, the applicant and their consultants have met with City Planning staff and toured the property to discuss the cultural heritage value of the Girl Guides Headquarters to further inform this report and an application resubmission.

In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The Bill 108 Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act came into force on July 1, 2021, which included a shift in Part IV designations related to certain Planning Act applications. Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act now restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days after the City Clerk gives notice of a complete application.

The City Clerk issued a complete application notice on December 17, 2021. The applicant has provided a waiver extending the 90-day timeline. This Notice of Intention to Designate report must be considered by City Council before May 31, 2022.

Designation enables the conservation of the property and allows City Council to review proposed alterations, enforce heritage property standards and maintenance, and refuse demolition.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 50 Merton Street under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, in accordance with the Statement of Significance: 50 Merton Street, (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 3 to the report, March 20, 2022, from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designations, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the bills in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On July 12, 2016, City Council adopted Item PG13.1: Midtown in Focus: Growth, Built Form and Infrastructure Review - Status Report. This report included information on the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) completed as part of the Midtown in Focus planning study. The CHRA identified properties of cultural heritage value or interest, including built heritage, archaeological resources and or cultural heritage landscapes in or adjacent to the Apartment Neighbourhoods and Mixed Use Areas within the planning study area.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PG13.1>

On July 23, 2018 City Council adopted Item PG31.7, the amended Official Plan Amendment 405, a comprehensive new planning framework for the Yonge-Eglinton area in Midtown Toronto (Midtown).

The Plan builds on the Official Plan's heritage policies as well as the recommendations in the Midtown Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment. The assessment included the identification of multiple properties with potential cultural heritage value which included the property at 50 Merton Street.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.PG31.7>

On June 5, 2019, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued his decision on the Yonge-Eglinton Official Plan Amendment (OPA 405). The Official Plan Amendment, as modified by the Minister, is now in force. OPA 405 Map 21-10 Properties with Potential Cultural Heritage Value includes 50 Merton Street.

[https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/96a5-CityPlanning\\_OPA405.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/96a5-CityPlanning_OPA405.pdf)

## **BACKGROUND**

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### **Heritage Planning Framework**

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. Cultural heritage resources are considered irreplaceable and valuable assets that must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth under the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). Heritage Conservation is enabled through the Ontario Heritage Act. The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements provincial policy regime, the Planning Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and provides policies to guide decision making within the city.

Good planning within the provincial and municipal policy framework has at its foundation an understanding and appreciation for places of historic significance, and ensures the conservation of these resources are to be balanced with other provincial interests. Heritage resources may include buildings, structures, monuments, and geographic areas that have cultural heritage value or interest to a community, including an Indigenous community.

The Planning Act establishes the foundation for land use planning in Ontario, describing how land can be controlled and by whom. Section 2 of the Planning Act identifies heritage conservation as a matter of provincial interest and directs that municipalities shall have regard to the conservation of features of significant architectural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest. Heritage conservation contributes to other matters of provincial interest, including the promotion of built form that is well-designed, and that encourages a sense of place.

The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters shall conform to the Growth Plan and shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, both of which position heritage as a key component in supporting key provincial principles and interests.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on land use planning in Ontario and is to be used by municipalities in the development of their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on planning matters, which shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement articulates how and why heritage conservation is a component of good planning, explicitly requiring the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, alongside the pursuit of other provincial interests. The Provincial Policy Statement does so by linking heritage conservation to key policy directives, including building strong healthy communities, the wise use and management of resources, and protecting health and safety.

Section 1.1 Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development states that long-term economic prosperity is supported by, among other considerations, the promotion of well-designed built form and cultural planning, and the conservation of features that help define character. Section 2.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology subsequently directs that "significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved". Through the definition of conserved, built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscape and protected heritage property, the Provincial Policy Statement identifies the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage conservation will be implemented.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/provincial-policy-statement-2020>

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) builds on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a land use planning framework that supports complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment and social equity. Section 1.2.1 Guiding Principles states that policies in the plan seek to, among other principles, "conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and

Metis communities". Cultural heritage resources are understood as being irreplaceable, and are significant features that provide people with a sense of place. Section 4.2.7 Cultural Heritage Resources directs that cultural heritage resources will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities, particularly in strategic growth areas. Strategic growth areas include the downtown urban growth centre where this property is located.

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe>

The Ontario Heritage Act is the key provincial legislation for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. It regulates, among other things, how municipal councils can identify and protect heritage resources, including archaeology, within municipal boundaries. This is largely achieved through listing on the City's Heritage Register, designation of individual properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or designation of districts under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the authority to maintain and add to a publicly accessible heritage register. The City of Toronto's Heritage Register includes individual heritage properties that have been designated under Part IV, Section 29, properties in a heritage conservation district designated under Part V, Section 41 of the Act as well as properties that have not been designated but City Council believes to be of "cultural heritage value or interest."

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

The City of Toronto's Official Plan contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. Indicating the integral role that heritage conservation plays in successful city-building, Section 3.1.5 of the Official Plan states that, "Cultural heritage is an important component of sustainable development and place making. The preservation of our cultural heritage is essential to the character of this urban and liveable City that can contribute to other social, cultural, economic and environmental goals of the City."

Policy 3.1.5.4 states that heritage resources on the City's Heritage Register "will be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, as revised from time to time and adopted by Council." Policy 3.1.5.6 encourages the adaptive re-use of heritage properties while Policy 3.1.5.26 states that, when new construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register does occur, it will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of that property and will mitigate visual and physical impacts on it.

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>  
<https://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) will be required for development applications that affect listed and designated properties. A HIA shall be considered when determining how a heritage property is to be conserved.

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit also provides guidance on designating properties of municipal significance. The Tool Kit provides direction on the purpose of designating heritage properties and explains how the Provincial Policy Statement and the Ontario Heritage Act provide a framework for how listed properties fit within the land use planning system.

[Ontario Heritage Tool Kit \(gov.on.ca\)](http://gov.on.ca)

## **Official Plan Amendment 405**

The property at 50 Merton Street is located in the Yonge Eglinton planning area in Midtown Toronto. The area is subject to Official Plan Amendment 405, a planning framework that came into force in June 2019. A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) was completed as part of the Midtown in Focus planning study. The CHRA identified 50 Merton Street as a property of potential cultural heritage value and it is identified as such on OPA 405 Map 21-10.

## **COMMENTS**

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The Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters is situated on the north side of Merton Street, east of Yonge Street within walking distance of the Davisville Subway Station. Between Yonge and Mount Pleasant Road, the context of the street is characterized by a mix of building types, heights and periods representing its evolution and history. While Merton Street presents an architectural and typological mix representing its history, the post-war development following the advent of the subway and the increased presence of social agencies is one of its strongest defining features of its history. The Girl Guides' headquarters building at 50 Merton Street is an important contributor to that particular neighbourhood character.

A Zoning By-law Amendment application has been submitted to permit the redevelopment of the properties at 50 and 64 Merton Street with a 39-storey mixed-use building having a non-residential gross floor area of 2,342.0 square metres and a residential gross floor area of 29,326.0 square metres. A total of 443 residential dwelling units are proposed. In the original proposal the existing buildings on the site were to be demolished. Since that first submission, the applicant and their consultants have met with City Planning staff and toured the property to discuss the cultural heritage value of the Girl Guides Headquarters to further inform this report and an application resubmission.

Heritage Planning staff undertook research and evaluation of the property to determine if the property merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act by applying Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the Act. Staff have determined that the property meets the criteria under all three categories of design and physical, historical associative, and contextual value. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource. The findings are outlined in the Research and Evaluation Report, below.

While the research and evaluation of the property referenced above is, in staff's determination, sufficient to support the designation of the property at 50 Merton Street, it should be noted that the City of Toronto Archives remained closed during the preparation of this report due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and that new and additional relevant information on the subject property further expanding on its heritage value may be forthcoming following public access to these archival records and may provide further information to be incorporated in the final version of a Part IV designation by-law.

## 50 MERTON STREET

Research and Evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06



Photograph of the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters, 50 Merton Street (Heritage Planning [HP], 2022)



Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters shortly after completion in 1962 without the later ramp and with the original wood "brise soleil" screen on the windows at the second floor level and showing the rear office section at its original two-story height (Canadian Architectural Archives [CAA])



## 1. DESCRIPTION

<b>50 MERTON STREET - GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA HEADQUARTERS</b>	
ADDRESS	50 Merton Street, Toronto, ON
WARD	Ward 12 - Toronto-St. Paul's
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	PLAN M5 PT LOTS 10 & 12
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Davisville
HISTORICAL NAME	Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1961-62
ORIGINAL OWNERS	Girl Guides Land Corporation
ORIGINAL USE	Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters, Ontario Provincial Offices and Metropolitan Toronto Offices
CURRENT USE	Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	William J. McBain & Associates with Carmen Corneil as design/project architect Extension by carmen corneil/ architect
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Brick and curtain wall cladding on steel structure with concrete base
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Post-War Modern
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	1970-72 Third floor extension at the rear
CRITERIA	Design, associative and contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	N/A
RECORDER	Heritage Planning: Marybeth McTeague
REPORT DATE	March 2022

## 2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 50 Merton Street and applies evaluation criteria as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06, under the headings of historical/associative, design/physical and contextual value to determine whether they merit designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest. The application of the criteria is found in Section 3 (Evaluation Checklist). The conclusions of the research and evaluation are found in the 'Conclusion' of the report.

Maps and Photographs are located in Attachment 1.

The archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Attachment 2.

The Statement of Significance is located in Attachment 3.

## I. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
	The area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands
1845	John Davis purchases part of Lot 18 in the Third Concession of York Township which becomes the Davisville neighbourhood
1885-90	Joseph Stanley Davis subdivides the southern half of Lot 18 with Plan M5 which includes the creation of Merton and Balliol Streets
1889	The Belt Line is constructed running along the southern edge of the Merton Street properties encouraging the location of industry on the south side of the street
1890	Davisville and Eglinton merge to become the Town of North Toronto
1909	The Girl Guide Movement begins in England following the foundation of the Boy Scouts by Lord Baden-Powell in 1907 and his sister, Lady Baden-Powell would ultimately become the World Chief Guide
1910	The Girl Guides are founded in Canada first at St. Catharines and then in Toronto with a first meeting to organize a corps held on May 27
1917	The Canadian Girl Guide Association is incorporated by a Special Act of Parliament
1959	The <i>Canadian Guider</i> announces the "Square Inches" building fund campaign for a new national headquarters at 10 cents per square inch
1960	Girl Guides of Canada celebrate their 50th Anniversary
1961	April - Assessment Rolls confirm that the Girl Guides Land Corporation has purchased the properties at 46-62 Merton Street
1961	April - A photograph of a model for the new headquarters building is featured on the cover of the April issue of the <i>Canadian Guider</i> and the inauguration of a building fund campaigning to raise \$500,000 under the leadership of John W Hamilton QC as chairman.
1961	Construction Permit Drawings by William J. McBain & Associates are submitted for approval for the new Girl Guides Headquarters Building Permit 67179
1962	May 31 - official opening of the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters by the Hon. Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Canada's first female federal cabinet minister. The building contains the national, provincial and Metropolitan Toronto administrative offices of the Girl Guides

1962	The Guides' name is changed to Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada
1962	The 1962 issue of the <i>Canadian Architect</i> features the new Girl Guides headquarters building
1963	The Guides headquarters is featured in <i>Architectural Design</i> , September Issue
1970	carmen corneil/ architect <sup>2</sup> submits drawings for the third floor extension of the rear section of the Girl Guides Headquarters
1981	A wheelchair ramp is added on the principal south elevation of the podium facing Merton Street
1982	The <i>OKanada!</i> exhibition held at the Akademie der Kunst in Berlin includes the Girl Guides Headquarters.
2003	The Girl Guides Headquarters is included as a representative of Toronto's modern architecture by the Toronto Society of Architects in their TSA Guide Map: Toronto Architecture 1953-2003
2008	The Girl Guides Headquarters is included in "architecture e + c: work of elin+carmen corneil, 1958-2008" a travelling exhibition of their work initiated by the Canadian Architectural Archives
2010	The Girl Guides of Canada celebrate their 100th anniversary
2011	Parks Canada recognizes the Girl Guide Movement in Canada as a National Historic Event and a Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaque is subsequently erected at 50 Merton Street
2016	The Girl Guides Headquarters is included in "True Nordic: How Scandinavia Influenced Design in Canada" catalogue for the exhibition held at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto <sup>3</sup>
2017	As part of the Midtown in Focus study, the Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment identified the property at 50 Merton Street as "being of cultural heritage value or interest"
2018	At its meeting of July 23, City Council adopts the Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan report which identifies 50 Merton Street as a property with potential cultural heritage value
2021	The Girl Guides of Canada sold the property in 2021 and continues to operate from the facility

## ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the property which are the basis for determining 'Historical and Associative Value' according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

<sup>2</sup> This is the firm's name: 'carmen corneil/ architect'

<sup>3</sup> The exhibition was held at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto in 2016, and at the New Brunswick Museum, St John and the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2017.

## Davisville Neighbourhood, North Toronto

The property at 50 Merton Street is located in the Davisville neighbourhood, centred on the intersection of Yonge Street and Davisville Avenue. The property sits within the Yonge-Eglinton Secondary Plan area and was identified as having potential cultural heritage value in 2018. The property has also been identified as a National Historic Site through its association with the Girl Guide Movement in Canada. (*Figures 1-4*)

Originally known as Davis Corners, the Davisville neighbourhood originated with the arrival in the City of Toronto of an immigrant English school teacher, John Davis (1813-1899) in 1840. Davis was "a very active man with a strong social conscience."<sup>4</sup> Trained as a school teacher, he worked as bookkeeper and then in 1845 purchased a portion of Lot 18, Third Concession on the east side of Yonge Street. He became a potter and took over John Walmsley's pottery business renaming it the Davis Pottery.<sup>5</sup> By 1851 Davis had established the Davisville Methodist Church, became the Post Master for the local post office and in 1860 donated land for York County School Section 7 serving as a trustee for 25 years. One of Davis's sons, Joseph Stanley, became the mayor of North Toronto also serving as a councillor. Davis's grandson, J. J. Davis opened a grocery store at the north-east corner of Yonge Street and Davisville Avenue, where it currently survives as a Starbucks. (*Figures 5-7*)

In 1889, Davisville and Eglinton were incorporated as the Village of North Toronto which became a town in 1890. North Toronto extended as far south as the upper border of the Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Joseph Stanley Davis owned the property, half of Lot 18, which extended along the cemetery border between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Avenue. By 1890, he had subdivided it under Plan M creating two streets leading east from Yonge Street and named Balliol and Merton, apparently after the Oxford Colleges.<sup>6</sup> (*Figure 8*)

The introduction of the Belt Line Railway which the Grand Trunk/CN railway used meant that Merton Street was an ideal location for businesses. The Davisville Pottery relocated to 377 Merton Street. Other businesses including Milnes Coal, and the Dominion Coal and Wood Company were also located on Merton Street on the south side, near the railway line, while the north side was developed with housing. A reminder of that period of industries on the south side of Merton near the railway line and Victorian housing on both the north and south sides, sometimes with a workshop behind still exists at Paul's Collision, 267 Merton Street. (*Figures 9-10 and 106*)

With the completion of the Toronto Transit Commission Yonge Street Subway line in 1954, the Davisville neighbourhood became more easily accessible prompting the redevelopment of the street with a series of low-rise, two-three storey commercial and apartment buildings constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. Health, social welfare and charitable institutions and agencies also located in Davisville including the Toronto School for the Deaf located at 43 Millwood Road, north of Davisville Road as well as The War Amps headquarters and the Visiting Homemakers Association buildings located at 140 and 170 Merton Street (respectively) to the east of the Girl Guides of

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4 Ritchie, p.74.

5 It would be known as the Davisville Pottery by the 1880s.

6 Ritchie, p. 71.

Canada Headquarters at 50 Merton Street. Other health and social welfare agencies including the Geneva Centre for Autism (112, 164 and 224 Merton Street), Moorelands Community Services (250 Merton Street), The Theresa Group (124 Merton Street) followed. The post-war development has been succeeded by mid-rise housing complexes combining town houses and apartment blocks and the Hospital Workers Housing Co-Op constructed at 100 Merton Street in 1992. More recently a high-rise condominium tower has been added at the south-east corner of Yonge and Merton Street at 1815 Yonge Street.

### **Girl Guides of Canada**

The following text, taken from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada/Parks Canada website, provides both a succinct and fulsome account of the history, historical context and significance of the Girl Guides of Canada:

"Founded in 1910, this service-oriented, non-denominational, non-political organization is one of the largest youth movements in Canada and throughout the world. The program of activities is based on the principles of scouting put forward by Lord Baden-Powell, emphasizing the outdoors, character building, good citizenship and self-reliance. Since its inception it has restricted its membership to girls and women and, by providing strong leadership and inspirational role models, has dedicated itself to help girls and young women become responsible citizens, able to give leadership and service to the community whether local, national or global. Throughout most of its history, Canadian guiding has maintained its financial independence through the sales of its famous cookies.

The Girl Guides was one of a number of youth movements founded at a time of perceived societal turmoil generated by the economic boom of the early 20th century. Adolescence was seen as a crucial time of moral and religious decision making. In response the Girl Guide movement aimed to make girls self-reliant and to develop those qualities of character to make good citizens. It stressed physical development through exercise as well as service to others and good citizenship. Open and inclusive, non-political, non-class, and non-denominational, its fundamental principles of developing girls into productive and responsible citizens have remained unchanged over the years. Since its founding it has grown into one of the largest youth movements in Canada and throughout the world.

Although the Girl Guides were inspired by Lord Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts, from its inception it has remained determinedly "girls only". While the Girl Guides to some degree practice scouting, until at least the 1970s, the aim of the organization remained to help girls become good homemakers and capable citizens. By the 1960s, however, the organization was changing to allow girls an opportunity to explore less traditional avenues in a supportive environment. Over the years, the movement has been associated with prominent women who have provided strong leadership and inspirational role models, from Lady Mary Pellat, its first Chief Commissioner, to modern figures such as Governor General Jean Sauve and astronaut Roberta Bondar.

In 1927, a Regina Girl Guide Company hit upon the idea of making and selling cookies to raise money. The idea caught on and spread across Canada and by 1929, the Girl

Guide national headquarters was selling cookies. Cookie sales remain the largest source of funding for Canadian Girl Guides. Not only does the sale of cookies provide funds for Girl Guide programs and activities, it also helps to raise the profile of the organization. The Girl Guide cookies has become so closely associated with the organization as to become a Canadian cultural icon".<sup>7</sup>

The organization known as 'Scouts' or the 'Boy Scouts' originated in England in 1907 under the leadership of Lord Baden-Powell, (Lieutenant General Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, (1857-1941). With his sister Agnes Baden-Powell (1858-1945), the Girl Guides organization was started in 1909. Lord Powell would also be assisted by Olave St. Clair Soames, whom he married in 1912. From 1930, Lady Powell would serve as the World Chief Guide. On December 31, 1909, an article in the Toronto Star announced the intention of establishing a Canadian-based Girl Guides.<sup>8</sup> The first branch was established in St. Catharines, Ontario, with a Toronto branch soon following. On May 27, 2010 a notice published in the Toronto Star invited all girls under the age of 16 to a meeting to create a Toronto corps of Girl Guides.<sup>9</sup> Soon there were branches in all provinces and in 1912, Lady Mary Pellat became the first Chief Commissioner. In 1917 by a special act of Parliament the organization was incorporated as the Canadian Girl Guide Association. At this time the primary object of the Guides was "the instructing of girls in the principles of discipline, loyalty and good citizenship."<sup>10</sup> (Figures 11-13)

New branches of the guides were soon established to accommodate different ages. The first Brownie pack was established in 1920 (7-8 year olds), Guides (9-11 years old) and Rangers companies were formed in 1922 for 15-17 year olds. The Pathfinders were introduced for girls 12-14 in 1979 and in 1989, the Sparks branch for 5-6 year olds was created. By 1930, guiding had spread world-wide and Lady Baden-Powell was acclaimed World Chief Guide.

During the World War II, Guides across Canada helped support the war effort in a variety of ways from collecting scrap metal, sewing insignia onto uniforms, and raising money for the Red Cross. A Toronto-based unit, SRS "Princess Royal" Sea Rangers was exceptional in its commitment contributing more than 7500 hours during the war, staffing a Red Cross canteen and altering military uniforms, along with the other tasks.

By 1940, it was estimated that in the first 30 years of the Canadian organization over 87,000 girls had participated in Guiding. Archival photographs provide a sense of the participants and their various activities during the first 100 years of the organization. (Figures 14-18)

In January, 1959 *The Canadian Guider* announced the decision to begin the "Square Inches for Sale" a campaign to fund the construction of a new national headquarters. Working on a broadly accessible funding model, paralleling the sale of Girl Guide

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7 <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/10/girl-guide-movement-canada.html>

8 Toronto Daily Star, December 31, 1909, p. 12

9 Toronto Daily Star, May 27, 1910, p. 10.

10 Catherine Miller-Mort, "Historical Sketch of Guiding in Canada" December 22, 2021.

cookies, the square inches were sold at 10 cents per square. At this time the national, provincial and Metropolitan Toronto offices were dispersed in various rented accommodations in the city.<sup>11</sup> A new headquarters would provide visibility and unity to the institution, accommodating the national headquarters administrative offices and their store as well as the provincial and Metropolitan Toronto administrative offices. The importance of the new headquarters for the organization was outlined in an editorial in *The Canadian Guider*: "A national Headquarters provide<sup>s</sup> a unity of purpose, unity of ideals and attitudes. In any organization there must be some form of central authority, whether it be a Council, Cabinet or Board of Directors. It is this central authority that provides a theme and unity of purpose. This is the real strength of Guiding, not only in Canada, but in the world."<sup>12</sup> (Figures 19 and 20)

William J. McBain & Associates with Carmen Corneil as the project architect and design lead were commissioned to undertake the project. By April 1961, a model was featured on the cover of *The Canadian Guider* and the June issue reported that of 2,592,000 square inches for sale, 904,833 had been purchased. Permit drawings were prepared by the architects in June and July and approved by the City in December 1961. (Figure 21)

In May 1962 the headquarters was ready to be occupied and staff were set up and working on May 14. An official opening by the Honourable Ellen L Fairclough (1905-2004), MP and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and Canada's first female Cabinet Minister was held on May 31, 1962. With the opening of the new headquarters, the organization's name also changed to Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada. Reporting on the celebrations, the Toronto Star noted that the headquarters was primarily funded through the efforts of Brownies, Guides and Rangers who had raised a total of \$125,553.49 through the Square Inches campaign.<sup>13</sup> (Figures 22-25)

In 1970-72 a third floor was added to the office section of the building at the north end of the site to the designs of Carmen Corneil Architects and a ramp was added in 1981 to make the complex universally accessible. In 2010, the Girl Guides celebrated their 100th anniversary in Canada and in 2011, Parks Canada recognized the Girl Guide Movement in Canada National Historic Event. A Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaque was subsequently erected at 50 Merton Street. By 2019, it was estimated that there were 95,000 members in Canada. "For nearly 100 years [Guiding] has provided friendship, recreation, and training, with an emphasis on personal development and community service. As a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) since its inception in 1928, Girl Guides of Canada / Guides du Canada is part of a global network of ten million Girl Guides in 145 countries."<sup>14</sup>

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11 Girl Guides Association of Canada Council and the Stores Department were located in rented accommodation at Suite 401, 1173 Bay Street. The provincial offices were located at 21 Prince Arthur Avenue and Toronto Guides Headquarters were located at Suite 314, 20 Carlton Street. The retail store was located at 548 King Street West.

12 *The Canadian Guider*, April 1961, p. 37

13 Toronto Daily Star, June 1, 1962, p. 49.

14 Catherine Miller-Mort, "Historical Sketch of Guiding in Canada" December 22, 2021.

**Architect: William J. McBain Architect with Carmen Corneil as project architect  
carmen corneil/ architect - 1970-72 extension**

The architect of record for the first phase of the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters is William J. McBain & Associates with the design undertaken by Carmen Corneil, project architect and lead designer who was working with McBain. 'carmen corneil/ architect', including Carmen Corneil and his wife and partner, Elin Corneil, undertook the third-storey extension to the building in 1970-72.

**William J. McBain Architect**

William J. McBain (1913-1985) is significant for his contributions as both architect and teacher. Born in St. Thomas, Ontario, McBain studied architecture at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1944. He then worked for two years with the architects Mathers and Haldenby before beginning his teaching career at the School of Architecture at the University of Toronto where he was a design studio teacher. McBain was also a successful and highly-regarded architect and as is common practise, students such as Hart Massey (1918-1997) and Carmen Corneil worked in his office. McBain received recognition for his 1954 Ajax Elementary School undertaken in association with Kent Barker and for his 1961 addition to the Law School Library at the historic Flavelle House, designed with Hart Massey (demolished).

Apart from the Girl Guides headquarters, McBain and Corneil collaborated on the Bradford District High School in 1959 and the Cooksville Public Library (demolished), completed in 1962 and which won a Massey Medal in 1964. In 1962, McBain, with Corneil's contribution, completed the commission for the C.C.H. Canadian offices at 6 Garamond Court, now adaptively re-used as the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. McBain entered both the Winnipeg City Hall Competition and, as part of the Massey-Elkin-McBain team, the Toronto City Hall Competition in 1958. Carmen Corneil contributed to both of these entries. In 1970, McBain joined the Canadian International Development Agency and worked in Thailand. He retired in 1978.

**carmen corneil/ architect**

Carmen Corneil and Elin Corneil have been partners in practice and through marriage since 1960. The *Canadian Encyclopedia* notes their importance for contributing "through their design and their teaching in architecture and urban design to the late Modernist movements in Canada and Norway. They were influenced by the approach of the Nordic and Dutch structuralists of the Post-World War II period, in which the design of a building or town radically accommodated and enhanced both the immediate natural environment and the human activity within it. Both architects consider teaching to be an important and complementary component of their practice."<sup>15</sup>

Their significance would be recognized with two Massey/Governor General's Medals for their first independent project in 1965, the Wayland Drew house near Port Perry and their last Ontario project, the OPSEU headquarters in Toronto, 1992.

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15 Jill Delaney, "Carmen and Elin Corneil," Canadian Encyclopedia online, 2006, revised 2015. [Carmen and Elin Corneil | The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)



They also won in 1977, through Elin's Norwegian practice, a Nordic competition for a post-eruption plan for the rebuilding of Vestmannaeyjar, an island community in Iceland partly buried in 1973.

Carmen Corneil's talent was evident as an undergraduate and was acknowledged not only with prizes and scholarships but also with the subsequent 1960 invitation from Hart Massey to design and then compete against the well-established Canadian architectural titans of the time, John C. Parkin, Ron Thom and Arthur Erickson, in the competition for Massey College, which was ultimately won by Ron Thom. Corneil is a member of the Ontario Association of Architects, a member of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1975) and Professor Emeritus of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, University of Toronto. Elin Corneil has been a member of the Council of the Trondheim Architectural Association, the Committee of the Norwegian Fish Industry Museum, and a founding member on the committee for documentation of Norwegian Iron and Steel Industry and Chairman for the Amelia Earhart Stipend Committee. Throughout their careers, their work has frequently been published in *Canadian Architect*, as well as in multiple Norwegian-based journals such as the *Norwegian Review of Architecture* and in international journals such as *Architectural Design*, *Spazio e Societa*, *Architectural Review* and the *Journal of Architectural Education*. It has also been studied and reviewed by architectural historians and included in various anthologies and exhibitions representing both Norwegian and Canadian architectural practise.

Carmen Corneil (b 1933) was born in Niagara Falls, New York and studied architecture at the University of Toronto. On graduating in 1957, he won an RAIC Medal and received the Pilkington National Scholarship and the Wegman Travel Scholarship. In second year Corneil was taught by William McBain and as an undergraduate worked with him during the summer. After graduation he also worked briefly with Hart Massey in Ottawa and then in September 1957 he sailed to Liverpool, England. During the next twelve months, Corneil was based in London and took a "'Grand Tour' of European architecture on a Lambretta."<sup>16</sup> He flew back to Toronto in early 1958 to contribute to the Massey-Elkin-McBain team entry for the Toronto City Hall competition and then returned to London. Later he would submit drawings to McBain's office for the Winnipeg City Hall competition "so they could build a model and send it in."<sup>17</sup>

In September 1958, "on the day Viljo Revell was declared winner of the Toronto City Hall competition, Corneil arrived in Helsinki and asked for work in several architectural offices including that of renowned architect Alvar Aalto. He toured Aalto's Finnish projects, eventually was interviewed by him, and began an 'internship'. At this time, Finland was a design Mecca for foreign architect students... One of them was Elin Kirksæther (b 1935), an undergraduate from Trondheim, who was there on scholarship"<sup>18</sup> would become his future wife and partner.

During his year in Aalto's office, Corneil worked on the plan for the forest town of Imatra, and then on the Wolfsburg Cultural Centre in Germany (1958-1963). Through this

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16 Carmen Corneil email, 7 March, 2022

17 Carmen Corneil email, 7 March, 2022

18 Carmen Corneil email, 7 March, 2022

experience and a strategic work-station at the back of the office next to the model maker and drawing files, he "gained insight and admiration for Aalto's projects and practise, while learning to draw their way, see things their way."<sup>19</sup> Together Corneil and Elin Kirksæther travelled through Finland, visiting Aalto's work and that of Viljo Revell as well. As Corneil outlines, there was "so much to learn and digest, to keep looking for principles. The Aalto studio in Munkkiniemi is still a beacon: an imaginary auditorium excised from a slope-roofed volume where pines could project shadows and Professor Aalto from his drawing board could project ideas. A beautifully clear form idea rendered classic with white paint."<sup>20</sup> They returned to Trondheim, Elin's home town and visited Norwegian architecture including work by the partnership of Sverre Fehn and Geir Grung.

In September 1959, Corneil returned to Toronto to work with McBain on the Bradford High School addition. In December he went back to Norway to marry Elin and early in 1960, Corneil became a registered architect with the Ontario Association of Architects. He was invited by Hart Massey to undertake the design for Massey College at the University of Toronto. The Massey Foundation, with input from their western contingent, opted instead for a limited competition with orientation meetings at Port Hope.<sup>21</sup> The Corneils would compete against three well-established Canadian architectural figures of the time, John C. Parkin, Ron Thom and Arthur Erickson. Ron Thom ultimately won the design competition.

Corneil continued working with McBain and by the summer of 1961 permit drawings had been prepared for the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters. The 'podium garden' which Corneil had explored in his design for Massey College had found a new application in the Girl Guides' headquarters.<sup>22</sup> Corneil continued working with McBain on the C.C.H. (Commerce Clearing House) Canadian Ltd. offices in North York (now the Japanese Cultural Centre) and on the Toronto Township Library in Cooksville completed in 1962. The library was awarded a Massey Medal in 1964, and later demolished.

The 1960s was a significant period of growth and recognition for the Corneils. They established carmen corneil/ architect as their Toronto-based practice. In 1962 Elin was registered Sivilarkitekt MNAL in Norway, and with Carmen, established their Trondheim-based practice and with that a pattern of working in both Norway and Canada for the next three decades. Together the Corneils began a series of private house commissions in Ontario. In 1964-65 Corneil worked briefly on Ron Thom's Activity Areas for Expo 67, and was assigned bandshells for five of these as an independent commission. carmen corneil/ architect took over a small space in the vast Terminal Warehouse, at 207 Queens Quay West, as workshop and office.

In 1967 Corneil began teaching at the University of Toronto's School of Architecture. Peter Pragnell was the Director of Architecture at the time and under his leadership, the Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger came to lecture at the school introducing "Dutch Structuralism." Hertzberger's emphasis on the user in design and creating enhanced

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19 Carmen Corneil email, 7 March, 2022.

20 Carmen Corneil email, 14 March, 2022

21 Carmen Corneil email, 14 March, 2022

22 Carmen Corneil email, 14 March, 2022

individual experience and social connection was already evident in the Girl Guides' headquarters and would be a significant quality in their work going forward.

Soon after Elin Corneil began teaching Environmental Design at the Ontario College of Art (now known as OCAD) with the architect Joan Burt, and winning awards for her weaving. Elin Corneil also taught at the Norwegian Institute of Technology and the Faculty of Architecture at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Corneil relays that he "taught a fourth year studio in 1968 at U of T with Jeffrey Stinson. When carmen corneil/ architect was short-listed for the new Carleton University School of Architecture in Ottawa he brought Jeffrey in and they made a proposal for a siting study and design approach. The site study was 'applied Jane Jacobs'...trying to animate and urbanise the pastoral Carleton campus where much of the action was hidden in the underground tunnel system. When we got to the actual building, the urban design ideas persisted, melding with their own experience of the rugged framework of the Terminal Warehouse where we ourselves were working."<sup>23</sup> The School of Architecture at Carleton University was constructed between 1969 and 1971 and in 2019 was listed on the City of Ottawa Heritage Register. It is also recognized by DOCOMOMO Ontario.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1970s their talent for innovative thinking as urban designers, which held understanding and enhancement of the spirit of the place as the first principle, continued in their collaborative designs with Jeffrey Stinson for Toronto's Harbourfront Passage, 1973. This urban regeneration of Toronto's Waterfront transformed previously, privately-owned industrial properties into a continuous pedestrian parkland along the edge of Lake Ontario. A series of Nordic competitions followed, including their winning competition entry to rebuild through sensitive small scale repair the Icelandic town of Vestmannaeyjar following its partial destruction by a volcano. They worked there, in the plan office, for several periods from 1977-1981.

In 1981 and 1984, Corneil was invited to teach a studio at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Elin Corneil would also teach at MIT in 1985. These studios were presented in 1987 in the Journal of Architectural Education. In 1983, a large exhibition of their work entitled "Storm Windows" was mounted first at the U of T Department of Architecture, and subsequently travelled to Reykjavik, Cambridge (England), Oslo, Copenhagen, Helsinki and back to Toronto, from where some panels were later included in a group exhibition in NYC. Several significant projects emerged in this decade including the Wintergreen commercial block, 1982, located in Thornhill Ontario and designed with David Binder and the McMullen House in Haliburton (1988-1992) which attracted sufficient renown to be featured in the UK's *Architecture Review* in 1994 and the German *Building in Wood: Construction and Details* in 1996. In 1992 they received a Governor General Medal for Architecture<sup>25</sup> for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union Building, in Toronto.

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23 Carmen Corneil email, 7 March 2022

24 <http://docomomo-ontario.ca/gallery/carleton-university-school-architecture/> The provincial organization is related to the international DOCOMOMO which is dedicated to the documentation and conservation of the Modern Movement

25 The Governor Generals Medals and Awards were previously known as the Massey Medals

After almost three decades of practising and teaching between Norway and Canada, in 1986 Elin Corneil returned to Norway on a permanent basis. Corneil followed in 1995, retiring from teaching at the University of Toronto (but remaining professor emeritus) and closing down the Toronto-based studio. In recognition of their importance to Canadian architecture as teachers and practitioners, documents related to their work were collected by the Canadian Architectural Archives at the University of Calgary and the Carmen and Elin Corneil fonds was established. On behalf of the Archives, the Director, Michael McMordie, proposed a travelling exhibition celebrating 50 years of their life's work. Under the curatorship of the architectural historian, Michael Milojevic, who had been studying their work for over a decade, and in collaboration with Carmen and Elin, an exhibition, with a catalogue, was realized and travelled to three schools of architecture, Carleton University, mounted first at Carleton University 2008 for the architecture building's fortieth birthday, then at the University of Toronto and Dalhousie University and in 2009.

In the Foreword to the exhibition catalogue, Terrance Galvin, Director of the Dalhousie University School of Architecture stated: "In such a lifelong, ethical practice, the exchange of ideas between two architects of this caliber results in lessons in architecture that have transcended the individual to become universal."<sup>26</sup> Michael Milojevic wrote of their accomplishments: "The exceptional body of work of (architects) Elin and Carmen Corneil...resonates with the theatrical and the dynamic....Their imperative towards the theatrical has led them to orchestrate the inclusion of a variety of podia, stages and arenas within their works which serve to enhance the activities of day-to-day life and imbue the ordinary life of buildings and people with the theatrical. (Their) large-scale urban works also seek to dramatize the urban experience by bringing one through the mediation of reassuring objects, into memorable juxtapositions and immediacies with extraordinary places."<sup>27</sup> Written in 2001, this quote applies to several instances in the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters competed almost 40 years earlier.

## **Alvar Aalto**

As noted above, Carmen Corneil worked with Alvar Aalto from September 1958 through to September 1959. Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), the Finnish-born architect, along with Le Corbusier (1887-1965, Swiss-born), Walter Gropius (1883-1969, German-born) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969, German-born) was one of the greatest and most internationally influential architects of the 20th-century. Whereas his European counterparts, Le Corbusier and Mies, were contributing founders of the modernist International Style in the 1920s which had as its mantras, a house is a "machine for living" and "less is more," Aalto, a decade younger, was quoted in 1938 as saying "Nature, not the machine, is the most important model for architecture."<sup>28</sup> While his work began with the cubic glass and white-stuccoed aesthetic that characterize the early International Style of the 1920s, Aalto's early work such as the Sanitorium at Paimio, 1929-33, combined this aesthetic with site plans and formal solutions that responded to site, use and orientation. Instead of tubular steel and aluminum framed-furniture, Aalto's furniture, was made of wood and using "bentwood" technology achieved fluid organic

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26 Galvin, "Foreword," Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic *architecture e+c: work of elin+carmen corneil*.

27 Ibid., p. 51.

28 Curtis, p. 453.

forms. In 1936 he won a Finnish glass design competition with his vase, known as "Aalto" which means wave and is now amongst the great design icons of the 20th century. From 1938 with his masterpiece, the Villa Mairea at Noormarkku, Aalto's work integrated the surrounding landscape, the use of wood, brick and tile and introduced a greater response to the sense touch with his textures. He also imbued his work with dramatic formal and structural expression highlighted by natural light. (*Figures 33-38*)

Aalto's work would become known outside of Finland through his Finnish pavilions constructed for the 1937 Paris World Exposition, and the New York World's Fair (1938-9) as well as through an exhibition of his work in 1938 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York which subsequently travelled to other American Cities. He gave a series of lectures at Yale University and in 1940 was appointed a professor architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which was followed by his Baker House dormitory building of 1948 also at M.I.T.

In conversation, Corneil outlined what appealed to him about the work of Alvar Aalto.<sup>29</sup> One aspect was Aalto's experiments with wood in furniture making and using this material, a national natural resource, in manufacturing rather than just exporting it as well as 'exploiting its potential with glue-lam bends to give organic forms as a result.'<sup>30</sup> Corneil also responded that it was Aalto's use of linear wood and tile elements which combined to create planes, free-form surfaces and volumes. The other important quality seen in Aalto's massing of volumes, which again reflected Finnish nature and wood practise, was the way in which a building complex would be composed of several building components, often disparate, which partly enclosed or framed an exterior space. Corneil also appreciated that along with wood, brick, stone and natural materials expressive of the place were employed in Aalto's work. The lessons derived from both Aalto's work and the Norwegian architects, Fehn and Grung would be translated at the Girl Guides' headquarters.

According to George Baird, an authority on Aalto and Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto, and a teaching colleague of Corneil's from the 1960s onwards, Aalto's influence on Corneil is shown, not only at 50 Merton Street but also in his competition entry for Massey College, 1960 and in the 1963 entry for the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Building competition. (*Figures 27-28, as above*) "These remarkable entries, similar to the Girl Guides' headquarters, show Aalto's strong influences on his thinking. This is particularly evident in the geometries of the proposed buildings in plan and in section and in the deployment of such natural materials as brick masonry."<sup>31</sup>

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29 Facetime conversation with Carmen Corneil, February 1, 2022.

30 Email from Carmen Corneil, March 14, 2022.

31 Baird, 2016, p. 41.

### iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property which will establish the basis for determining 'Design and Physical Value' according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

#### **Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters, 50 Merton Street**

In the April 1961 edition of *The Canadian Guider*, beneath a photograph of the architects' model, the following was proclaimed: "Is there anything so thrilling and satisfying as the knowledge that something you have dreamed and hoped for is at last to become a reality?... That is what is happening to our dreams and hopes for a new Canadian Headquarters - a home for Canadian Girl Guides! We own the land, centrally located near transportation, and here is the architect's idea of what our home will look like. The lower part will be of concrete and the upper floor of brick giving an appearance of solidity and permanence. We think you will agree that the building is pleasing in design, modern in conception and compatible with the progressive spirit of the Girl Guides." <sup>32</sup> (*Figures 21, 39-42*)

The headquarters was completed in 1962 and extended in 1970-72 by the architect of the original design. The extension continued the original concept of the original building, and in the opinion of the architect, improved it as will be discussed below. The following description includes photographs and drawings which relate to both the original and the current building. The headquarters has been recognized as an exemplary example of Post-War Modern architecture including the influence of Scandinavian design and particularly the work of the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.<sup>33</sup>

In the design of the building, the project architect and lead designer, Carmen Corneil, responded to the functional programme and symbolic importance of the new national headquarters as well as its context. This response integrated his recent experience of working with Alvar Aalto and his beginning awareness of Norwegian architecture as well as a new-found appreciation of Toronto's building typologies and a sensitivity to the location of the property, and anticipated and enhanced the experience of visitors and occupants of all ages to the headquarters. The design addressed three primary functions, national headquarters, administrative offices and storeroom for Guides books, badges etc. These functions were provided with three distinct architectural expressions which together created a dramatic setting and innovative architectural complex for the new headquarters.

In developing the design, Corneil took into account the location of 50 Merton Street, just to the east of Yonge Street, and how the Girl Guides' national headquarters would be viewed on approach from the city's main thoroughfare, as well as the recently completed Davisville subway station. The building's design incorporated the dual importance of both the south (front) and west (side) elevations departing from the usual primacy of the street-facing façade. This key concept was presented in an early perspective drawing published in *The Canadian Guider* in June 1961 and it would be

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<sup>32</sup> *The Canadian Guider*, April 1961, p. 37

<sup>33</sup> The term "Post-War Modern" refers to the period after World War II extending from 1945-1965.

represented in a drawing made for later exhibitions including the project.<sup>34</sup> When the *Canadian Architect* published the new headquarters shortly after its completion, the lead photograph was of this view of the building showing all three parts of the complex. (Figures 43-45)

The property was a rectangular lot on the north side of Merton Street. The site plan located the more important and public elements at the front of the property with pedestrian access at the south-west corner nearer to the subway. A driveway with a loading dock was located on the east side giving access to the parking at the rear north side. The building was planned with the storeroom, which required the largest area, located in a partially submerged basement. This provided an opportunity to create a raised concrete-clad podium giving the headquarters greater visibility and prominence. Expressing the symbolic importance of the function of the national headquarters, the boardroom and two committee rooms were set at the front of the podium, facing Merton Street and raised up on steel columns on a second floor level, in a rough-faced, brick-clad volume. Beneath, and recessed behind the columns, was a glazed enclosure for the reception area, the bookstore and lunch room, all of which were viewed from and faced out onto the podium terrace creating a sense of openness and accessibility. Behind the front ceremonial and public spaces, was the two-storey administrative offices section which stepped back in plan and was clad with a curtain wall with pre-cast concrete panels. (Figures 46-55)

The podium was accessed by a flight of stairs which in early iterations splayed out as it descended to the street at its south-west corner. For visitors, young and old, the ascent to the podium terrace with the principal entrance set back along the west side and terminated by a landscape space added to the ceremony of arriving at the national headquarters. The landscape, which included a small pond with gold fish, stones of lava and plantings with a tree of paradise was the architect's tribute to the Guides' pursuit of nature and the outdoors. With access from the lunch room, the podium with its concrete balustrade further provided the Guides with an opportunity to gather safely outside and, from an elevated point, survey Merton Street. (Figures 56-59)

Corneil has acknowledged the various typological roots in his design, calling the podium an acropolis<sup>35</sup>, and indeed the relationship of the four-columned, brick clad ceremonial building, has in its adjacent location to the steps, a parallel with the Temple of Athena Nike<sup>36</sup> (appropriately dedicated to the goddess of Victory). The use of a raised podium with an open space around which a collection of buildings is arranged with a splayed staircase is also reminiscent of Aalto's Saynatsalo Town Hall (1949-52). It is also related to a Nordic vernacular building typology known as a 'tun', a complex of log farm buildings arranged a 'knoll' in a mountain landscape and partially enclosing an outdoor space. Corneil admired the wisdom of the 'tun' "situating distant farms in a vast landscape, putting them in 'command' and in visual communication with 'neighbours'".<sup>37</sup>

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34 These exhibitions included the 1982 *OKanada!* exhibition held at the Akademie der Kunst, Berlin and the travelling Canadian exhibition *architecture e+c: work of elin+carmen corneil 1958-2008*.

35 Conversations with the architect on January 14 and February 1 and email January 31, 2022.

36 This has also been noted by Michael Milojevic in his paper 'Between Helsinki and Los Angeles: the work of Carmen and Elin Corneil.'

37 Carmen Corneil email 14 March, 2022.

Aalto had echoed with his own house and studio (1952-54) at Muuratsalo and Corneil would explore in the later Massey Medal-winning Wayland Drew house of 1967. (Figures 60, 35-36 and 30)

Set on the plateau of the podium, the headquarters partly encloses outdoor space on its south and west sides and is articulated as two separate parts. As noted above a distinction is made between the national headquarters-ceremonial function and banal-administrative section of the building through rendering the first more sculptural and varied in form and materials and the second simpler and rectilinear. This 'parti' is a characteristic of many of Aalto's buildings, for example in the massing of Saynatsalo Town Hall, the Wolfsburg Cultural Centre (1958-63) "but here the opposition is more clearly horizontal opposing vertical, which is why the extra height of the third-floor addition to the offices helped the design".<sup>38</sup> In Corneil's words, the meeting rooms are given public status by their setting, form and elevation above the warehouse and entrance terrace like a traditional *piano nobile*, with a stepped roof-scape to enclose a great skylight above the boardroom and cladding of rough-faced brick.<sup>39</sup> (Figures 35 and 37)

Brick was common in the work of Aalto which typically accentuated the importance of the sense of touch in the selection of materials. Corneil described the choice of materials and details as expressing "an 'ethic' in their ruggedness and simplicity, something we saw in the Guides' principles. These qualities were sharpened in contrast with the folded glass wall behind...an opposition which was clarified in 1972 by making the backdrop building higher."<sup>40</sup> The bricks, which had an innovative surface texture were made by the Cooksville Brick Company. "Instead of machine scoring the brick surface before firing, they started producing brick fired face-to-face and then split to achieve a natural broken surface. From rug to rugged - brilliant!"<sup>41</sup>

The distinction between the ceremonial and the banal sections of the building was further enhanced through the fenestration. In contrast to the continuous curtain wall cladding of the office section, the composition of the window openings of the upper level of the board room is more particular, punctuating the brick box at specific points related to the internal rooms: the long ribbon window on the south elevation for the board room and originally constructed with wood fins to provide a sunscreen and "sense of seclusion and emphasise the 'outside' light from above".<sup>42</sup> The projecting fins added an important sculptural quality to the façade with their vertical rhythm and wood material contrasting the horizontality of the stepped, brick volume.<sup>43</sup> On both the east and west elevations, the continuous brick surface is cut away and an asymmetrically composed set of windows with an exposed steel beam across the top and a projecting precast

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38 Carmen Corneil email 14 March, 2022

39 Carmen Corneil email, January 31, 2022. The term 'piano nobile' refers to the main level of a palazzo or villa, typically raised one level above the ground where the important public rooms would be located.

40 Carmen Corneil email, January 31, 2022, referring to the third floor addition to the office section in 1970-72 undertaken by Carmen Corneil Architects.

41 Carmen Corneil email 14 March, 2022. Corneil would use these bricks at the Cooksville Public Library and the Wayland Drew house.

42 Carmen Corneil email 14 March 2022.

43 According to Google Street View, the wood fins were removed sometime between September 2007 and May 2009.



concrete fin is set in. On the west side the importance of the two windows which provide light and view for the two committee rooms is signalled by their larger size and their location over the main entrance. The larger of the two windows on the west side also had an asymmetrical screen of wood louvres. (*Figures 56, 58 and 61*)

The sculptural form of the front section of the building, was further accentuated through recessing the first floor level giving greater prominence to the second-storey brick volume, exposing the first floor columns and providing a sheltered outdoor space and shading for the glazed elevations whose visual lightness contrasted with the textured brick mass above. The steel I-beam columns were clad in wood, 'upholstered' anticipating shoulders.<sup>44</sup> As with Aalto's columns this additional cladding stopped short of base of the column, revealing their bases or feet as in Aalto's work.<sup>45</sup> In the 2008 exhibition catalogue, the headquarters is described as follows: "the rustic and refined elements share an elevated podium, provided by the basement and mail-order work warehouse. The front rooms are where the institution wears its uniform and is woodsy and wholesome, while the offices at the back retire behind a folded screen."<sup>46</sup> (*Figures 62-4*)

Originally, as shown in the first models and drawings for the headquarters published in 1961, a series of skylights on the roof arranged in a grid pattern were designed to illuminate the boardroom. The building was to be constructed with a concrete structure, but steel emerged as a cheaper alternative. This resulted in the exchange of the grid of skylights over the boardroom for the stepped volume of the roof to enclose the long clerestory light. Both methods, grids of skylights or clerestories were consistently featured in Aalto's work. With the evolution of the design, the "ribbon" window was introduced along the south elevation running parallel to the north clerestory. "Ribbon" windows were one of the 'Five Points of a New Architecture' set out by Le Corbusier in 1926. The second-storey volume with the ribbon window above a recessed glazed first floor volume set behind columns on the perimeter bring to mind Le Corbusier's iconic Villa Savoye at Poissy, France, 1928-1931.<sup>47</sup> But at the Girl Guides' headquarters the response to the urban site and elements such as the wood fins, brick cladding, and the podium, familiar in the work of Aalto, provide a new variation of the French icon. (*Figures 65-66*)

Although the emphasis in the design was on the south and west elevations which would be viewed on approach and contained the terrace and the main entrance, the east and rear elevations were also carefully composed. As on the south and west sides, the second floor, brick clad volume extends beyond the concrete block wall of the shipping bay supported on clad steel beams and columns. The addition of the fire escape stairs above the loading bay adds to the variety in the composition of voids, projecting volumes and material. The black metal fire escape stairs descend from the glazed volume above, the simple hand rail and the light from above adding to the skilful play of elements around the shipping bay. Beyond, the east elevation reveals the interior office use with a bay of curtain wall glazing and pre-cast concrete panels before the elevation

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44 Carmen Corneil email, 14 March 2022.

45 This detail is shown on the 1961 elevations of the permit set of drawings.

46 Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic, p. 9

47 Milojevic also suggests the reference to the Villa Savoye, 'Between Helsinki and Los Angeles: the work of Carmen and Elin Corneil.'

is complete with a section that is brick clad with horizontal bands conveying the internal floor levels and concrete slab system. (*Figures 67-71 and 52*)

The rear north elevation has the simplest and most banal expression, appropriate to the architect's conception. It continues the curtain wall glazing and pre-cast concrete panels of the front office elevation, consistent with its internal function. As on the east elevation, the fire escape stair is cantilevered from the elevation. Clad in rough brick, it is a notched volume, cut back beneath the landing and hovering above the ground reminding Aalto fans momentarily of his projecting stairs such as, for example that at Baker House, 1948 at the M. I. T., but here they are scaled to suit function and scope of the project. (*Figures 70-71*)

The exterior of the building has been altered with the addition of the third storey to the office section in 1970-71 and the ramp which made the terrace universally accessible in 1981. From Corneil's point of view the third floor addition served to improve the building complex as a whole as it provided a backdrop enhancing the sculptural composition of the boardroom section: "It got better with the third floor which distinguished the back section from the front and the front came into its own as monumental sculptural clump."<sup>48</sup> The glazing was also changed later and the original, long narrow opening sections were removed. (*Figure 72*)

## **Interiors**

Inside, the variety of materials and details selected by the architect integrated the lessons of Alvar Aalto, enhancing the programmatic functions as well as the visual experience of the new national headquarters.

The entry to the interior was made through a pair of glazed, double doors which opened into a double-lock vestibule lined with a vertical wood slats corresponding to the height of the doors with glazed transoms above, providing an intimate screened zone. After the ascent on the stairs and the passage along the open space of the terrace, past the glazed walls of the ground floor, the wood screen and small size of the vestibule provides a sense of transition between the interior and exterior adding to the experience of the route to the headquarters. Slatted screens, which introduced texture, material variety, pattern and a variation in visibility were a frequent motif of Aalto's, "in consideration of momentary privacy."<sup>49</sup> (*Figures 73-75 and 36*)

A pair of vertically panelled wood doors, one wider than the other, feature a sculptural set of metal door pulls. Composed of a grid of intersecting verticals and horizontals, the horizontal rails correspond to the different ages and heights of the reach of Guides, Brownies and the organization's staff members. The Girl Guides' emblem, a small trefoil, has been fixed on the door above the door pulls and on the inside the door pull featured a cut out of the trefoil. (*Figures 76-77*)

The double doors open into the reception area intended by the Guides to be welcoming. Opposite to the entrance is the reception desk and immediately to the left is the stair

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48 Conversation with Carmen Corneil, January 14, 2022.

49 Email from Carmen Corneil, 14 March 2022.

which provides access to the Board Room and committee rooms. To the right, south, is the entry to the store and to the left a small lounge area provided a view of the landscaped terrace. Beyond the stairs were the offices and the route to the lunch room.

The reception area is finished with natural materials such as slate floor tiles, set in a random pattern, and wood slats on the ceiling continuing a material palette characteristic of Aalto's work which also represented the organization's pursuit of the outdoors. The slats on the ceiling wood have been very forward looking in 1961, and along with frequent uses of exposed concrete block, represented another instance of the 'modern conception' and 'progressive spirit' the Guides identified in the headquarters building. (*Figures 78-82*)

Situated at the centre of the space, the reception desk and the stairs were the focal points functionally and symbolically and while carefully designed to express their importance for the Guides, they also reveal the influence of Aalto. The stairs lead away from the reception desk with three steps which arrive at a landing from which the Chief Commissioner, provincial commissioners, and various committee chairs as well Guides from across Canada could turn and pivot to continue their ascent while still able to survey the reception area and all who may be coming and going within it. The staircase, in true Aalto form, is wrapped with a screen of vertical metal elements which provides a sense of privacy for the office spaces and lunchroom access beyond, but also highlights the separateness of this transitional point between two floors. The structure of the stairs is clearly visible, steel framed with a central structural spine supporting pre-cast terrazzo treads with wood noggins.

The handrail, an important point of contact for the human hand and the sense of touch has become an important and characteristic element. The importance of this element in Aalto's work has been documented by Professor Baird in his 1969 monograph: "Touching a door-handle crystallizes an experience for a moment, touching a railing extends it in time."<sup>50</sup> Corneil has expressed his admiration for Aalto's handrails to direct movement.<sup>51</sup> The wood handrail here originally extended along the front of the reception desk and up the stairs along the inner sides of the stair case. On the outer edge along the outside of the landing, as one descends back to the first floor, the handrail doesn't just stop when the floor is reached but wraps around the metal screen and takes the user north towards lounge area, the offices and lunch room. A simple cylindrical form, as it rose against the metal grills or rough block walls, the handrail was partly ensconced by a larger sculptural wood shield as if to protect and prevent harm from contact with either surface.

At the second floor level, the balustrade is created by a low block wall, with the handrail continuing along its outer edge towards a second seating area. Here the block wall drops down and is replaced by the metal grill allowing those seated to view those coming and going on the stairs increasing opportunity for social interaction. (*Figures 83-85*)

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50 Baird, 1969, p. 15.

51 Conversation with Carmen Corneil, 14 January 2022.

The board room and two committee rooms are located adjacent to the top of the stairs. The board room, the symbol of the organization's national unity, is a long rectangular volume, dramatically lit by a clerestory stretching its length and bringing north light into the meeting space. The design of the ceiling is emphatic in representing the importance of the space as it combines the clerestory window which is viewed through a series of paired wood rafters along the north side and a coved plastered ceiling along the south side which reflects the daylight coming from the clerestory. The cove springs from a lower ceiling, running along the south wall providing an intimately scaled edge to the room that is reinforced by the low height of the ribbon window. It was important to Corneil that the source of the light, i.e. the clerestory, be open to view.<sup>52</sup> Beyond the pairs of wood rafters, the steel beams and the steel, flat-roof deck of the ceiling can be seen. The industrial and rudimentary character of both the steel deck and the block walls introduce a sensibility and appreciation of the raw elements of building that would characterize the second half of the twentieth century and be explored in the works of various architects from Herman Hertzberger to Frank Gehry, both of whom have had considerable impact on the City of Toronto. (Figures 86-91)

The board room is divided into three bays according to the structural grid of steel I-beam columns and two beams run across it. The rectangular plan is notched to accommodate a vestibule area with a lower ceiling and a coats cupboard which serves as a transitional space on entering the board room. The third bay at the east end of the boardroom could be closed off from the main space by a folding wood screen and is wider than the other two, increasing the size of this secondary meeting space.

The importance of the design of the space and particularly the ceiling has been recognized in publications over the years. In the September 1962 issue of *Canadian Architect*, not only was a photograph of the boardroom included but also a section drawing of the design of the ceiling illustrating the clerestory, rafters and coved ceiling. A photograph of the ceiling with the clerestory revealed between the wood rafters was also included as one of two images for the project in the 1982 *OKanada!* exhibition<sup>53</sup> and on the project page of the 2008 *architecture e+c* catalogue indicating the importance of this element. Its layered screening of the clerestory with wood rafter elements, is reminiscent of the clerestory design of Aalto's Imatra church "but it moves toward a more deliberate play between the 'raw' outer structure and the inner 'refined' plaster, glass and wood ceiling".<sup>54</sup> (Figures 38)

The two committee rooms are much smaller spaces but have also been given a special ceiling treatment with a suspended screen with a grid pattern of wood frames. As the building has been constructed with a structural steel grid, the large office space at the rear of the building had non-structural partitions, originally of glass and plywood, which

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52 Conversation with Carmen Corneil, January 14, 2022.

53 Sponsored by the Canada Council for the Arts, *OKanada!* was a three-month exhibition of contemporary Canadian art, architecture and performance held at the Berlin Akademie der Kunst in 1982-3. The architecture component, curated by George Baird and George Kapelos featured approximately three dozen works of contemporary Canadian architecture, including the Girl Guides' headquarters. The catalogue included an extensive essay by Baird and Kapelos on Canadian architecture. The exhibit was extensively reviewed in the European and Canadian press.- Interview with George Kapelos, March 17, 2022.

54 Carmen Corneil email, 14 march 2022.

have been modified over time. Throughout the building, the exposed concrete block has been combined with plaster walls in all range of spaces from the board room to the fire escape stairs. One special feature was the design of the radiators partly concealed with a continuous shelf surface. The north fire escape stairs and the third staircase added in 1970-71 with the third floor addition both exhibit the consistent standard of design in the combination of wood and metal in the details of the stair balustrade. The later one, with its reddish clay tile floors, wood and black frames with large, stepped windows opening to the south above the shelf designed for the radiators makes this a particularly handsome and well-detailed space to pass through. (Figures 92-104)

## Summary

From the time of its completion in 1962, the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters has been continuously recognized for its architectural design. Opened in June 1962, it was, shortly after, published in *Canadian Architect* in September 1962 and afterwards in *Canadian Art*, July, 1963, and in the publication, *Architectural Design*, 1963. In 1982, the headquarters building would be included as a representative of contemporary Canadian architecture in the *OKanada!* exhibition held at the Akademie der Kunst, Berlin. In 1998, to mark the centenary of Aalto's birth, the Museum of Modern Art held a large-scale retrospective exhibition and published a catalogue which included an essay by Kenneth Frampton, CBE, Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University. This essay "The Legacy of Alvar Aalto: Evolution and Influence" included the Girl Guides building, with John Andrew's Scarborough College for the University of Toronto, as two early Canadian examples of Aalto's legacy as well as later works by the Patkau's.<sup>55</sup>

In the 2003 the Toronto Society of Architects Guide Map *Toronto's Modern Architecture 1953-2003*, included the headquarters with the comment, "It reminds us that so many Canadian architects were profoundly affected by the work of the Scandinavian modernists and the values that they represent."<sup>56</sup> It was one of the works selected for the 2008 catalogue of the exhibition celebrating 50 years of the Corneil's work. In his 2016 essay for the *True Nordic* catalogue for a Canadian exhibition,<sup>57</sup> Professor Baird, selected the Girl Guides Headquarters, "with its angular volumetric form, its very rough, red-brick cladding and its wood-louvered windows"<sup>58</sup> as one of the buildings which best represent Aalto's legacy in Toronto.

While Corneil has acknowledged the "influence of Aalto in elevating ceremonial parts of the program and expressing them architecturally and sculpturally,"<sup>59</sup> he has also noted that the building represents a beginning of a shift away from Aalto and that it is an expression of his response to vernacular building typologies in Toronto, particularly

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55 Frampton, "The Legacy of Alvar Aalto: Evolution and Influence," p. 134, in Museum of Modern Art, *Alvar Aalto: Between Materialism and Humanism*, 1998.

56 Brigitte Shim, FRAIC, OC, RCA, Hon. FAIA, OAA, comment on the Girl Guides Headquarters in the TSA Guide Map: Toronto Architecture 1953-2003.

57 The True Nordic exhibition was held at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto in 2016, and at the New Brunswick Museum, St John and the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2017.

58 Baird, 2016, p. 41.

59 Conversation with Carmen Corneil, January 14, 2022.

brick-clad, cast-iron or steel-framed industrial warehouses with their adjacent laneways and low-rise apartment blocks of similar long narrow plans with their garden spaces on either side for light. This would apply to the footprint of the Guides' headquarters with the narrower brick volume at the front allowing for a garden space on the west side and the laneway for deliveries and parking on the east. In Corneil's words, "it also demonstrates a constant effort to find a locally relevant departure point for artistic expression in materials and form, and a balanced interplay between the parts."<sup>60</sup> The relevant departure point came as a response to an "imagined Guides ethos; and to Toronto and its historic urban fabric, its ravines and forested hinterland."<sup>61</sup> It also took Toronto's ubiquitous rug brick and adding texture gave it a distinctive "rugged" quality<sup>62</sup> that would find itself in the Cooksville Public Library and the Wayland Drew house.

Beyond the integration of the key principles of the work of the great modernist master Alvar Aalto, by an architect who worked in Aalto's studio, the Girl Guides' headquarters is important in its own right and for its influence on the city. In 1963, Eric Arthur, historian and University of Toronto professor wrote, "I predict that its influence on local architecture will be considerable."<sup>63</sup> Professor Baird has commented that on its completion the Girl Guides' headquarters was "seen as a building of consequence. At that time Dickenson and Parkin were the dominant forces in Toronto and the Girl Guides' building represented something new and other, a different kind of architecture."<sup>64</sup>

In reviewing the drawings and the photographs published in *Canadian Architect* of 1962, one of the strongest elements that come across is a sense of collage, overlay and fragment in the design of the elevations. The material combinations, the sculpted massing, the cuts into the building's skin to reveal structure, for example, projecting precast and wood fins and slats, all express an artful relationship between the requirements of function and its potential to be rendered beautifully in form, materials and details. On completion in 1962, the building caught the eye of the *Canadian Architect's* photographer, and even the fire escape stairs was included in the publication. In spite of alterations, unfortunate removals and additions, these same spaces, thoughtful details and their material expression continue to engage visitors and passersby. (Figure 105)

#### **iv. CONTEXT**

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property at 50 Merton Street, which is the basis for determining 'Contextual Value' according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters is situated on the north side of Merton Street, east of Yonge Street within walking distance of the Davisville Subway Station. Between Yonge and Mount Pleasant Road, the context of the street is characterized by a mix of

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60 Carmen Corneil, email 14 March 2022.

61 Carmen Corneil, email 14 March 2022.

62 Carmen Corneil, email 14 March 2022.

63 Milojevic, "Between Helsinki and Los Angeles: the work of Carmen and Elin Corneil," note 15, Milojevic quotes Eric Arthur, Architecture as a Purely Lyrical Thing," *Canadian Architect*, July 1963.

64 Conversation with George Baird, January 17, 2022.

building types, heights and periods representing its evolution and history. Elements characteristic of its late Victorian and industrial past survive in the early 20th-century house at 267 Merton Street with its rear light industrial use on the south side of the street in proximity to the 19th-century railway. The railway's conversion to the recreational Kaye Gardner Beltline Trail parallels the redevelopment of properties occupied by industrial buildings on Merton Street with low and mid-rise multiple housing complexes on the south side of the street. The west end of Merton Street, towards Yonge Street, is characterized by mid-rise residential and commercial buildings and a high-rise tower at 1815 Yonge Street at the south-west corner of Yonge and Merton Streets. (*Figures 106-113*)

Amidst the century-old mix is a collection of distinctively-designed, mid-century buildings constructed after the completion of the Yonge subway line which reflects a surge of development following the area's new accessibility. This resulted in the north side of the street being characterized by a mix of primarily low-rise commercial buildings which provide a strong architectural character typical of the third quarter of the twentieth century. Along with the low-rise commercial buildings were those constructed as purpose-built headquarters for social agencies including the Girl Guides, The War Amps and the Visiting Home-makers Association (50, 140 and 170 Merton Street, respectively). Later, agencies such as the Geneva Centre for Autism (112, 164 and 224 Merton Street), purchased already existing properties. The property to the east of the Girl Guides' headquarters at 64 Merton was originally developed in 1955 as a warehouse with offices which evolved to become a shopping centre in 1967 and was later occupied by the Al Green Gallery and the Greenrock Real Estate advisors. Its low-rise scale and evolving use since its construction in the 1950s represents the growth and transformation of the neighbourhood.

While Merton Street presents an architectural and typological mix representing its history, the post-war development following the advent of the subway and the increased presence of social agencies is one of its strongest defining features of its history. The Girl Guides' headquarters building at 50 Merton Street is an important contributor to that particular neighbourhood character.

### **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. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the City of Toronto also uses these criteria when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. There are three categories for a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest. As demonstrated below, the property meets several criteria in all three categories.

## 50 MERTON STREET - GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA HEADQUARTERS

### DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

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

*i. Representative example of a type and style and display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:*

The Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters building, dating to 1961-62 with a 1970-72 extension is in its meticulous design an excellent representative of Post-World War II Modernism exhibiting in particular the influence of the great Finnish modernist, Alvar Aalto. It has also been acknowledged that on its completion the new headquarters was "a building of consequence... representing something new and other, a different kind of architecture"<sup>65</sup> in Toronto. The building design is significant for its response to context, for its interpretation of the functional programmatic requirements as an opportunity for symbolic design and for creating a sequence of indoor and outdoor spaces which enrich the use and experience of Guides' members of all ages.

*ii. Displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit*

In its interpretation of the brief, orientation on the site, composition and massing of the various programmatic components, in the choice of materials and in the details from the window openings to the handrails, columns and door pulls the building exhibits a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit.

### HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

Historical or Associative Value	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	✓
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	N/A
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	✓

*i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community*

The property at 50 Merton Street has association with the Girl Guides of Canada and in turn with the International Guiding Movement which is one of the largest youth movements in the world. The Guides were established in England in 1909 by Lord

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<sup>65</sup> George Baird, Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto.



Baden-Powell and his sister Agnes Baden-Powell shortly after the founding of the Boy Scouts in 1907. Canadian branches followed in 1910, the first in St. Catharines, Ontario and then Toronto. The core values of the organization emphasized the outdoors, character building, good citizenship and self-reliance with the motto: "Be Prepared." Since 1923, the guides have been largely self-funded through the sales of their iconic, trefoil-shaped cookies. Completed in 1962, the building was designed to be the first permanent, purpose-built national headquarters for the Girl Guides. Girl Guides are located across Canada and celebrated their centenary in 2010. The National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the national significance of the organization through its designation of the Girl Guide of Canada Movement in Canada a National Historic Event.

*iii. Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community*

The Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters has associative value as it reflects the work and ideas of Carmen Corneil, lead designer and project architect for William J. McBain & Associates who designed the original building in 1961-2 and the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil, for the addition undertaken in 1970-72. Throughout their 50+ years of practice, Elin and Carmen Corneil have been influential as teachers and practitioners from their home-bases in Norway and Canada. Their work, which has included both architecture and urban design, has been recognized with two Massey Medals, won an international competition and has been published and exhibited widely. First living and working together in Toronto in 1960, their projects introduced a strong Scandinavian formal and typological influence which was based in expressive programmatic form, tactile materials and details, a variety of sources for daylight and the integration of landscape and nature. As their ideas and work evolved, these initial principles would be extended to eschew the formal aesthetic concerns of Modernism for an architecture that was underpinned by familiar building typologies related to a variety of individual and collective social experiences, with a frank tectonic expression inherent in Dutch Structuralism and particularly the work of Herman Hertzberger. Throughout their careers a primary commitment to architecture's enhancement of human experience through meaningful and connected place-making has been at the heart of their practice.

## CONTEXTUAL VALUE

Contextual Value	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	✓
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	✓
iii. landmark	N/A

*i. Important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:*

Set on the north side of Merton Street in the first block east of Yonge Street, the Girl Guides of Canada headquarters, maintains and supports the character of the area which is related to its transformation following the completion of the Yonge Street subway line in 1954 making it a prime location for institutional uses such as the Visiting Home Nursing Association, The War Amps, the Geneva Centre for Autism and to the

north of Davisville Avenue, the School for the Deaf (demolished). Its distinctive Post-War Modern design, low-rise scale and public outdoor space is shared with these other institutional buildings. Other low-rise buildings representing commercial and residential uses, with distinctive mid-century modern style maintain this character of Merton Street which is under transformation.

*ii. Physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings:*

Completed in 1962, the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings as it represents the transformation of Merton Street and the Davisville community following the completion of the subway line in 1954 with an increased institutional use, transforming the street's early mixed character of industrial and residential properties with a sequence of low-rise, Post-War Modern properties.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 50 Merton Street (Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters) and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act under all three categories of design, historic/associative and contextual values and that it is a significant built heritage resource.

The Girl Guides' national headquarters has design value as a three-storey complex completed in 1962 to the design of William J. McBain & Associates with Carmen Corneil as project architect. It was extended in 1970-72 by the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil. The complex is a fine example of Post-War Modern architecture, and particularly represents the globally influential leadership of the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto which, in its use of natural materials, attention to daylight and integration of nature and outdoor space, presented a more humane modernism, enhancing human experience and responsive to local context. The work of the Corneils exemplified this approach which earned them two Governor General Awards and was evident in their teaching and practice based in North America and Norway, where they currently reside.

The property is historically significant as the location, chosen in 1959, of the first permanent, purpose-built national headquarters for the Girl Guides, which had been founded in England in 1909. The Girl Guides came to Canada in 1910 and one of the first branches was located in Toronto. The citation on the historic plaque at the property notes the importance of the Girl Guides as both a Canadian and international organization which emphasizes the "outdoors, character-building, and self-reliance... the organisation has provided Canadian girls and women with strong, inspirational role models in order to nurture responsible, service-oriented citizens and community leaders.<sup>66</sup>

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66 Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and Parks Canada plaque at 50 Merton Street

Contextually, the headquarters is valued as one of several low-rise, Post-War Modern institutional complexes and commercial and residential buildings which transformed Merton Street following the opening of the Yonge Subway line in 1954.

Following its completion in 1962, the complex was widely published and was selected to represent Toronto and Canada's Post-War Modern architecture in local and international exhibitions and publications. Over the next 50 years, Elin and Carmen Corneil would build upon and expand this approach, which earned them two Governor General Awards and was evident in their teaching and practice based in North America and Norway, where they currently reside.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Mary L. MacDonald, MA, CAHP  
Senior Manager, Heritage Planning  
Urban Design, City Planning

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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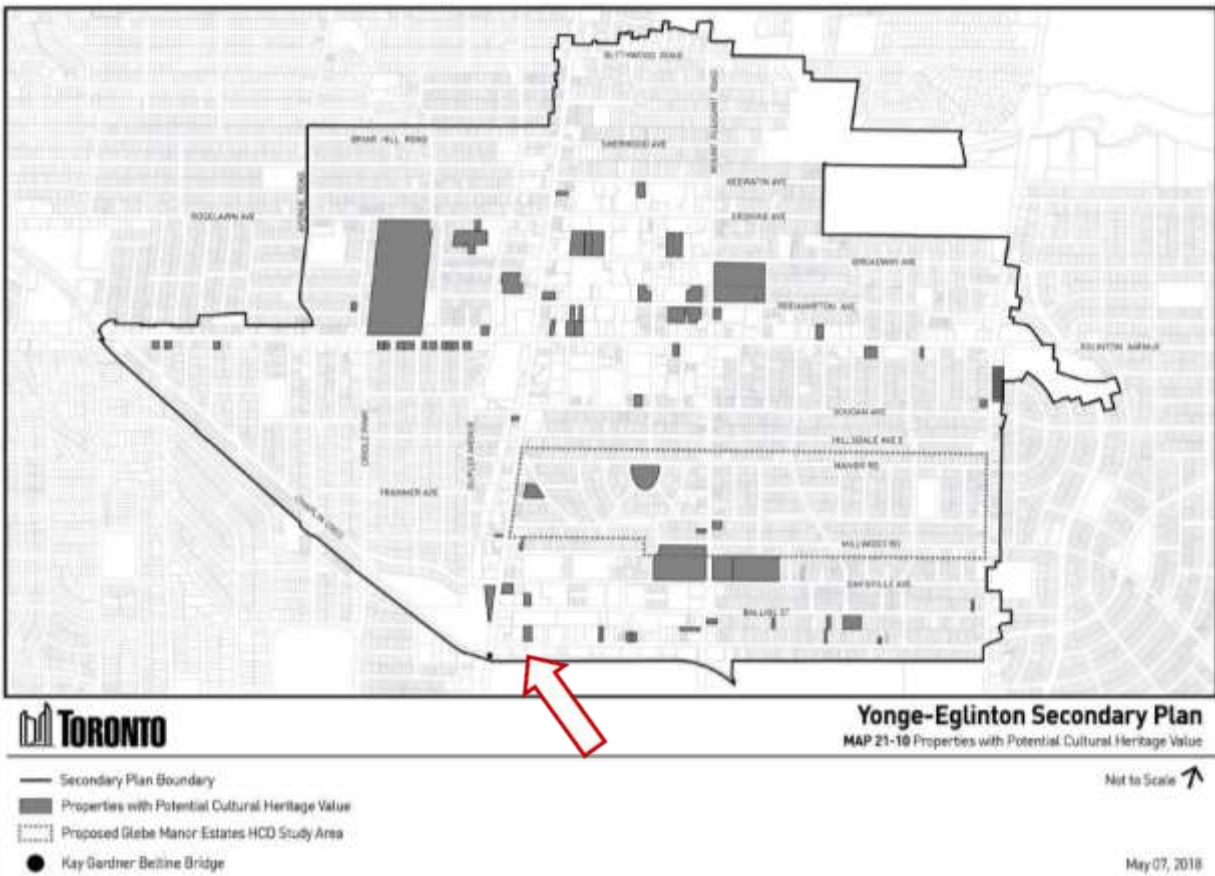
Attachment No. 1 - Maps and Photographs  
Attachment No. 2 - List of Research Sources  
Attachment No. 3 - Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation):  
50 Merton Street



1. City of Toronto Map: showing the subject property's location and approximate boundaries with the building footprint at 50 Merton Street. This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown. North is at the top of the map.



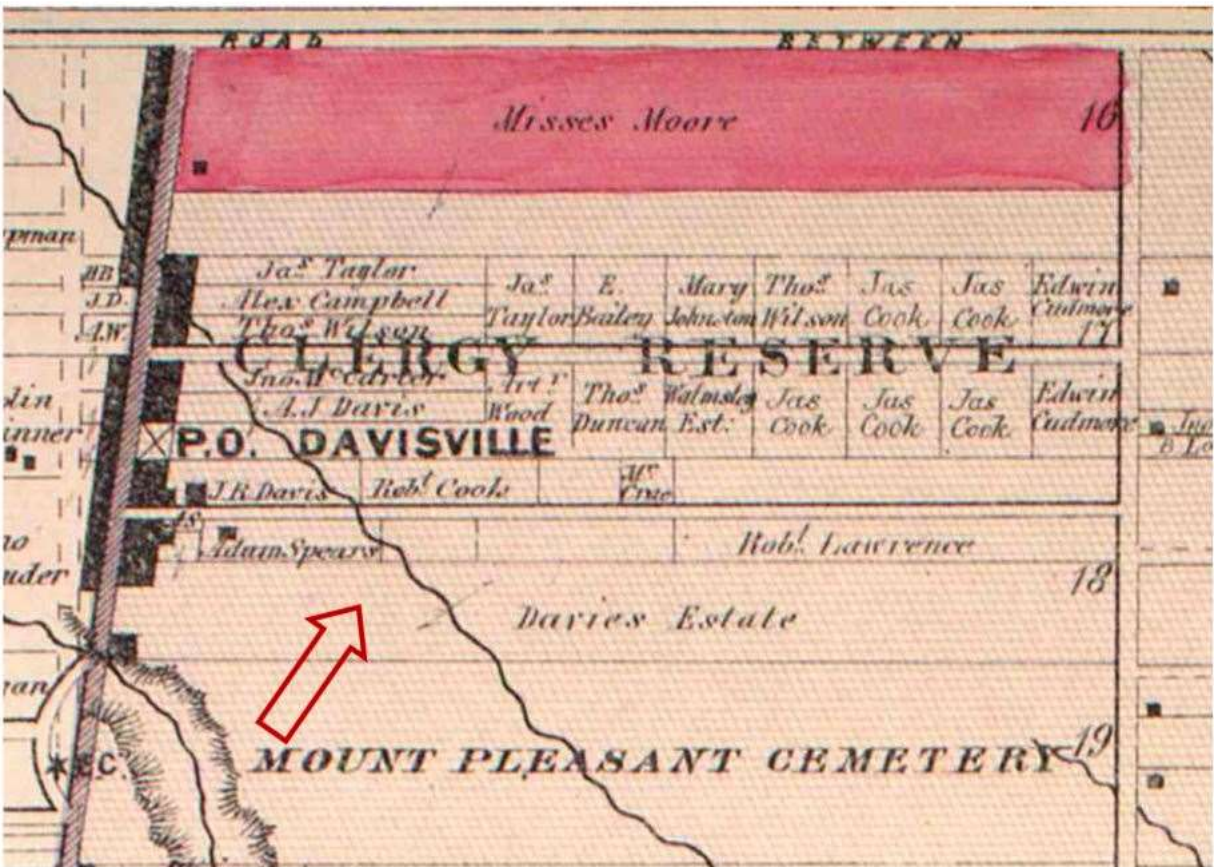
2. Aerial view of the property at 50 Merton Street on the north side of the street to east of Yonge Street in the Davisville neighbourhood (Google Maps, 2022)



3. Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan OPA 405 Map 21-10 identifying properties with cultural heritage value and indicating the property at 50 Merton Street.



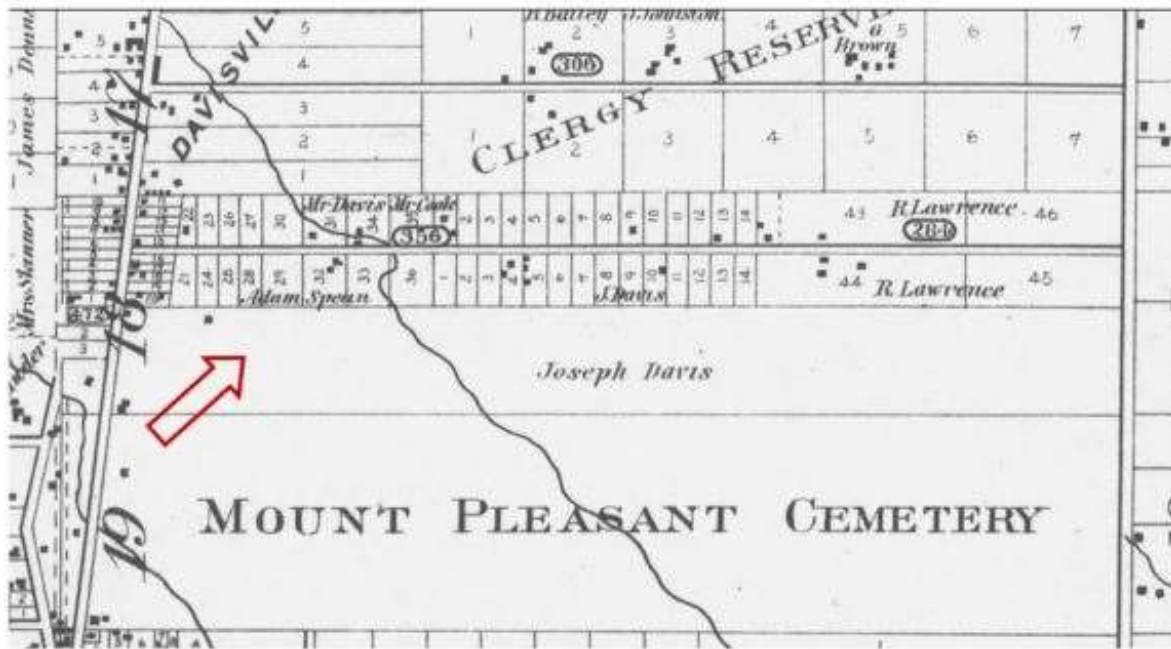
4. Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and Parks Canada plaque celebrating the Girl Guide Movement and located at the south-east corner of the property at 50 Merton Street. (HP, 2022)



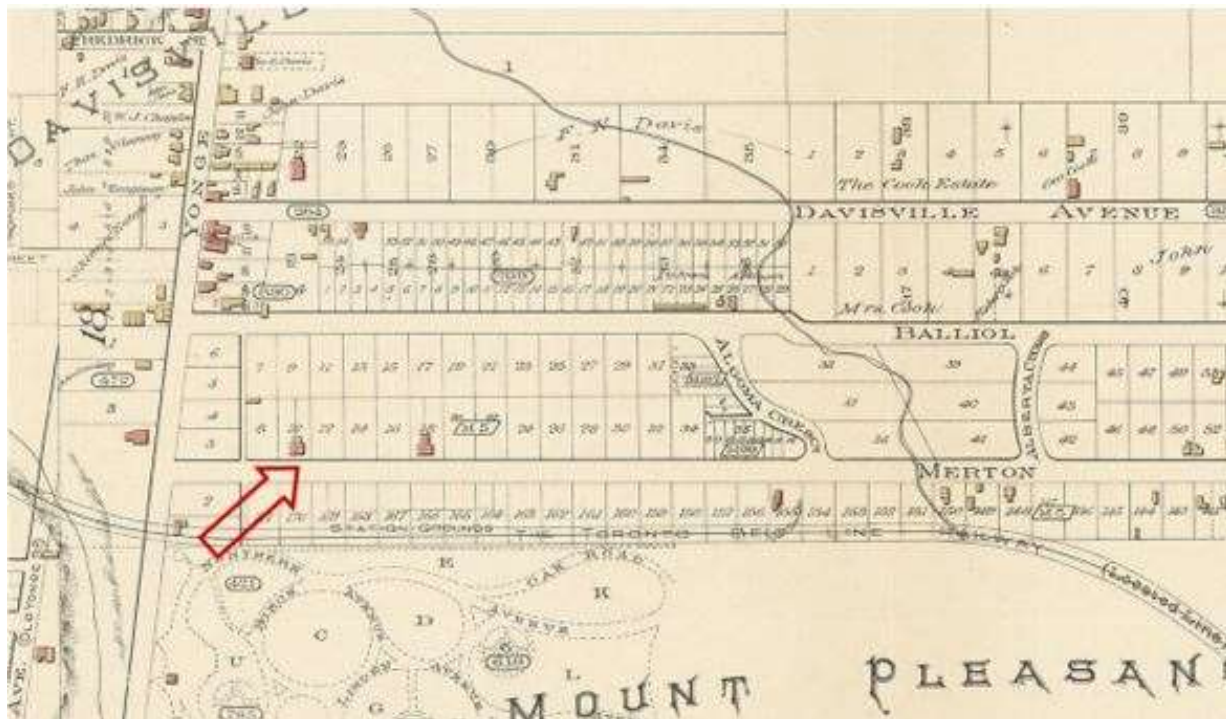
5. Miles & Co., *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York*, (detail), 1878: showing Davisville, to the east of Yonge Street, with its post office, the school (next to 'J.R. Davis'), and the property marked A. J. Davis where the pottery was located.(Ng)



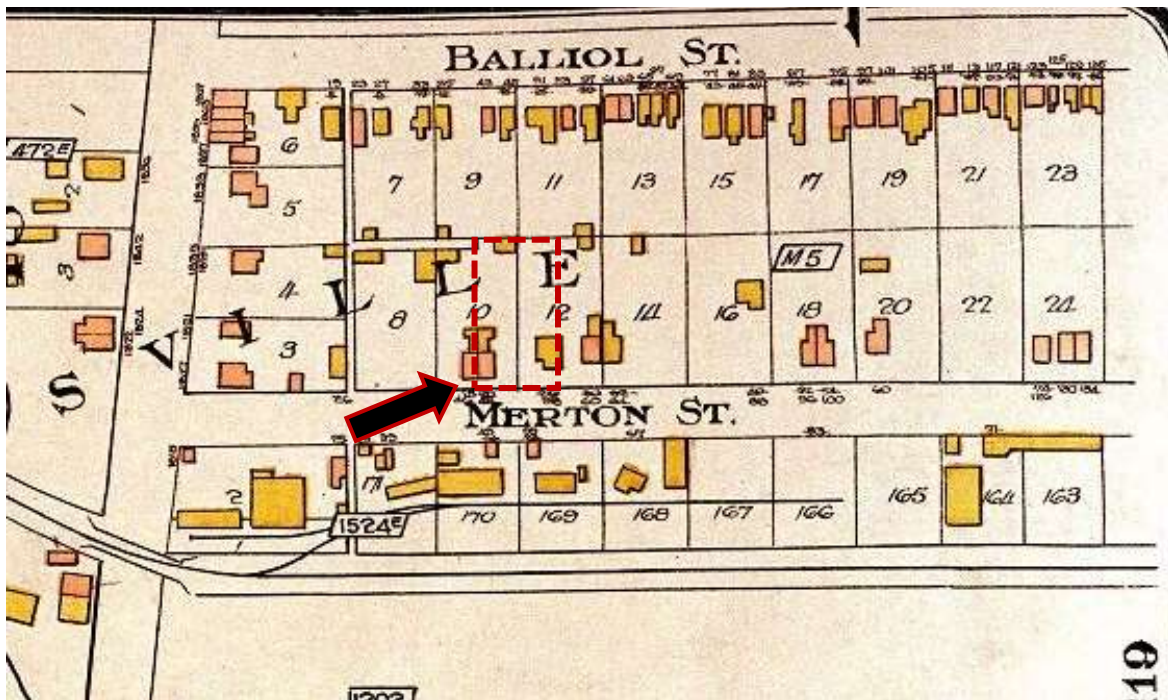
6. J. J. Davis store, c 1900, showing the store owned by John Davis' grandsons, John J. and Charles R. Davis and the location of the Davisville post office from c 1894-1913. The property is currently occupied by a Starbucks (Toronto Public Library, 977-19)



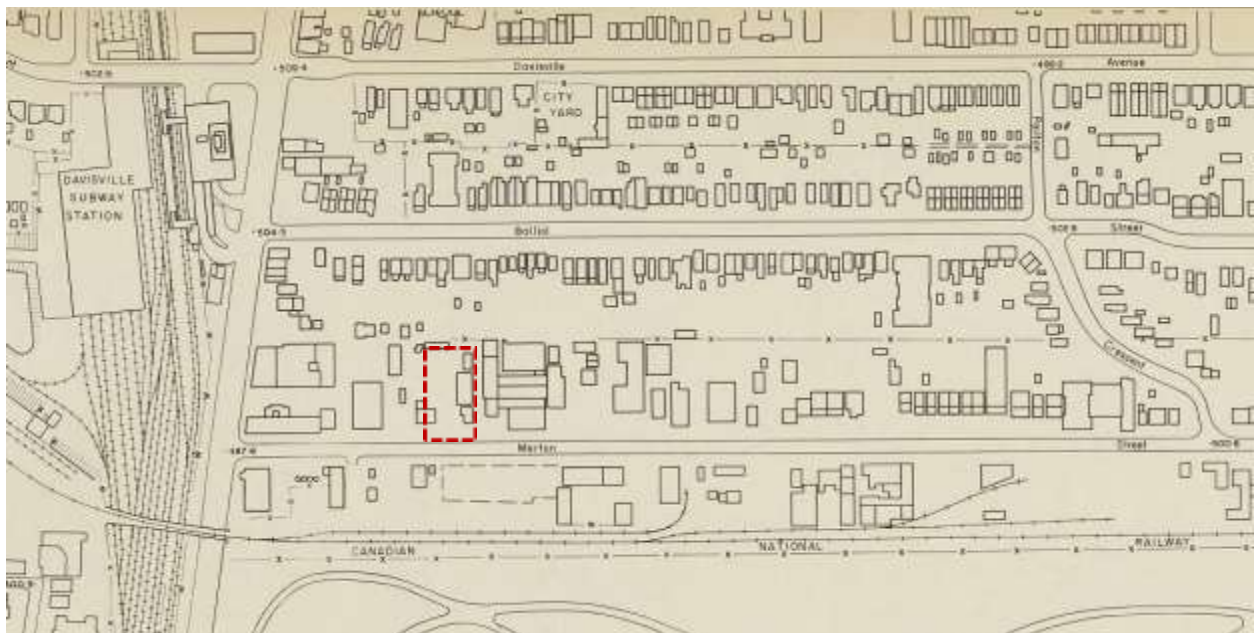
7. Goad's Atlas, 1884 (detail): showing the southern half of Lot 18 owned by Joseph (Stanley) Davis and the approximate future location of 50 Merton. (City of Toronto Archives [CTA])



8. Goad's Atlas, 1890 (detail): showing the M5 subdivision of the Joseph Stanley property and the creation of Balliol and Merton Streets, the layout of Algoma Crescent (now known as Pailton Crescent) parallel to the course of Mud Creek to the east and the Toronto Beltline running along the edge of the properties on the south side of Merton Street north of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. (CTA)



9. *Goad's Atlas 1924* (detail of Plate 118) showing the development on the north side of Merton Street which is primarily houses of mixed types and on the south side primarily industrial properties adjacent to the railway line. The subject property at 50 Merton includes the east half of Lot 10 and the west half of Lot 12. (CTA)



10. *City of Toronto Planning Board Atlas, Sheet 29, Part D*, based on aerial photography from April 1959 Drawing 1960, (detail): showing the primarily industrial and commercial development of Merton Street with remnants of residential properties and the CNR railway line with its sidings providing access to various properties on the south side of the street. Note also the completed Yonge subway line at the west end of Merton Street and a portion of the Davisville subway station. The dotted outline indicates the approximate location of the property at 50 Merton Street. (CTA)





11. Guides First Canadian Council c.1918  
(Girl Guides Archives [GGA] aph2126)



12. Photograph of Lady Baden-Powell (*The Canadian Guider*, April 1961, p. 48)



13. Canadian Guides Crest with the motto 'Be Prepared' the trefoil and Canada's beaver surrounded by Maple Leaves (*The Canadian Guider*, April 1961, p.38)



14. Girl Guides Camping in Ontario, c 1913 (GGA aph1741)



15. 25th Toronto Company of Guides, 1918 (GGA, aph01199)



16. Guides providing War Service collecting scrap metal, c1942. (GGA)



17. Brownies practising cookie sales, 1979 (GGA, aph00096)



18. Sparks, the youngest branch of the Guides organization, 2006 (GGA)

**Headquarters Building Has**



**Square Inches For Sale**

**Total Sq. Inches For Sale**  
2,592,000

Number of **SQUARE INCHES** already bought, 904,883 sq. in.


Number of **SQUARE INCHES** still available, 1,704,767 sq. in.

**Money Orders** to be made payable to The Canadian Girl Guides Association; Building Fund, 1173 Bay St., Toronto 5.

Be sure and send your name and address with donations to the Building Fund for Record Purposes. Receipts are sent for donations of \$5.00 and over. Receipts for donations of under \$5.00 will be sent **ONLY UPON REQUEST**

**Square Inches For Sale**

*"Belinda the Brownie"*



19. and 20. *The Canadian Guider* advertisements for the Building Fund campaign, June 1961, p. 67 (left) and April 1961, p. 47 (right).



Property of National Archives  
Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada  
80 Merton Street, Toronto, Ontario  
M4S 1A8

**Canadian GUIDER**

VOL. 31, NO. 4      TORONTO, CANADA      APRIL, 1961

**A NEW HEADQUARTERS**

21. April 1961 cover of *The Canadian Guider* showing an early model of the headquarters building (GGA, *Canadian Guider*, April 1961)



—Star Photo by Don Dalt

### *New Headquarters*

HON. ELLEN FAIRCLOUGH opened the new **Girl Guides** in Canada headquarters on **Merton St.** yesterday. Ranger Maureen Kelly serves cookies to **Girl Guide** Chief Commissioner E. Henrietta Osler and Mrs. Fairclough.

22. Photograph of Ellen Fairclough, MP and members of the Girl Guides, Chief Commissioner, E. Henrietta Osler and Ranger Maureen Kelly published in the *Toronto Star* on the occasion of the opening of the Girl Guides' new headquarters at 50 Merton Street. (*Toronto Star*, June 1, 1962, p. 49)



23. Girl Guides on the steps of the new national headquarters building after the official opening. The name plaque bears the recently changed name of the organization and reads: "Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada" (GGA, aph1096)



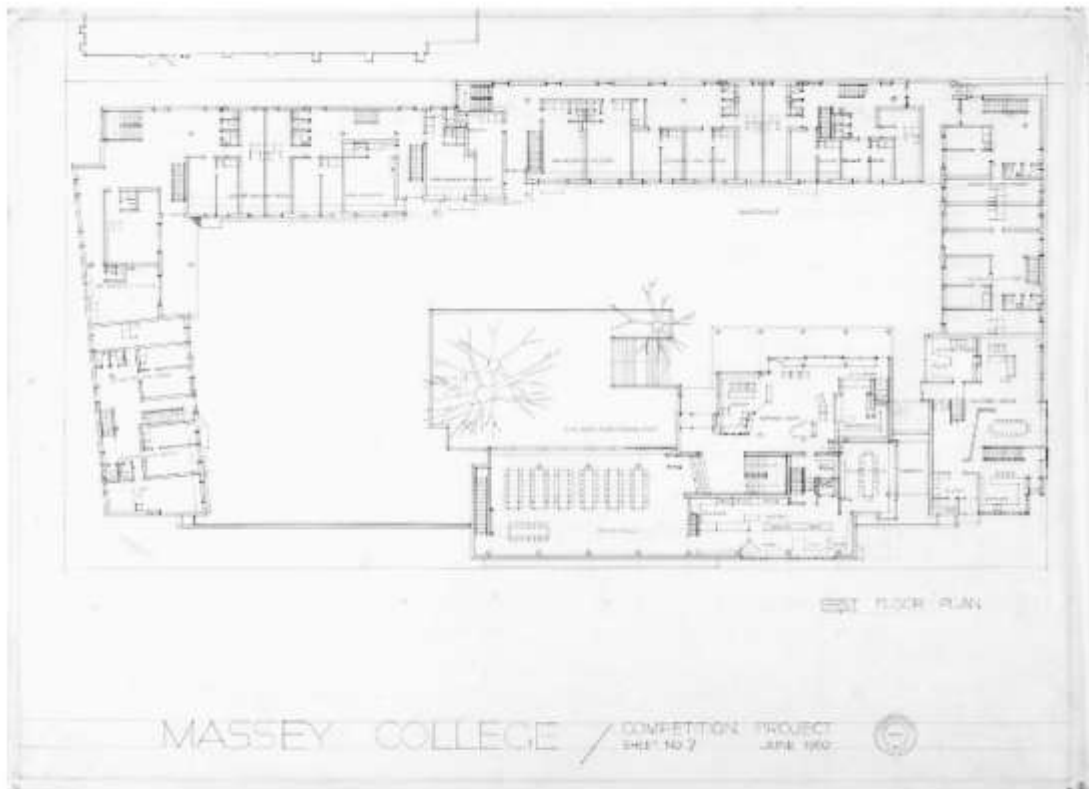
24. Guides help set up the new headquarters (GGA, aph01085)



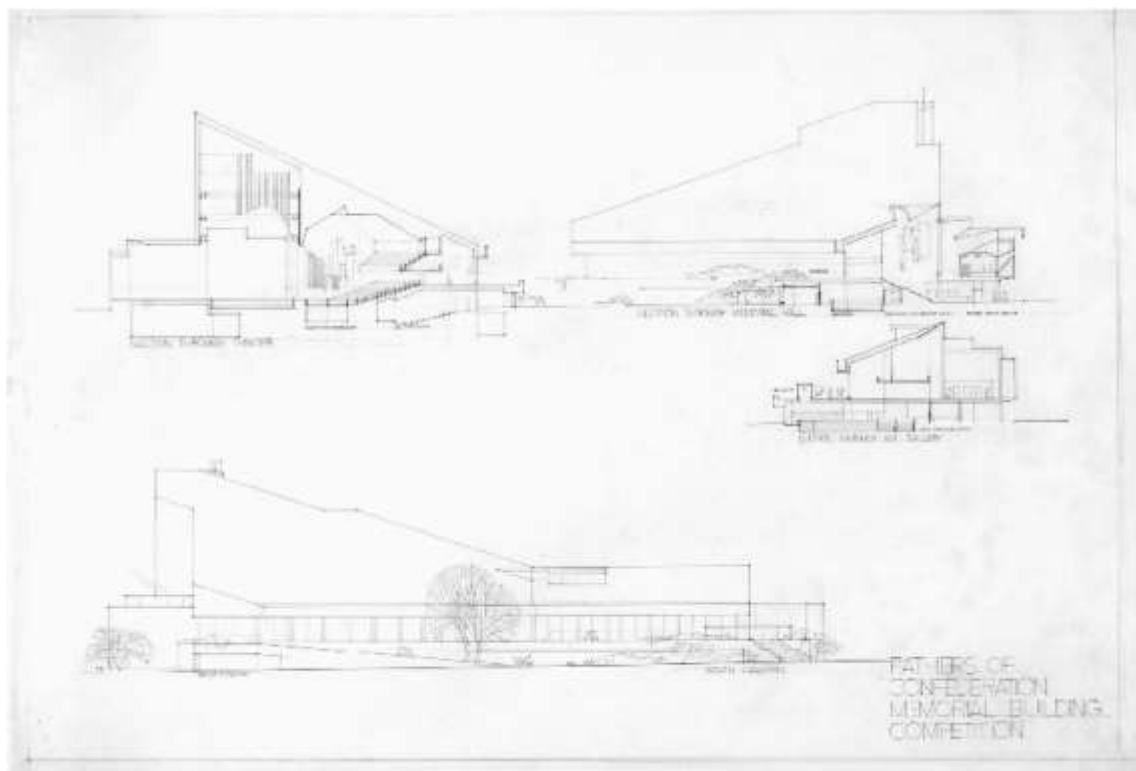
25. Guides gathered on the staircase in reception after the completion of the building (*The Canadian Guider*, photograph taken by the Toronto Star, June 1962, p. 83)



26. Photograph of Elin and Carmen Corneil taken c1975 (Carmen Corneil)



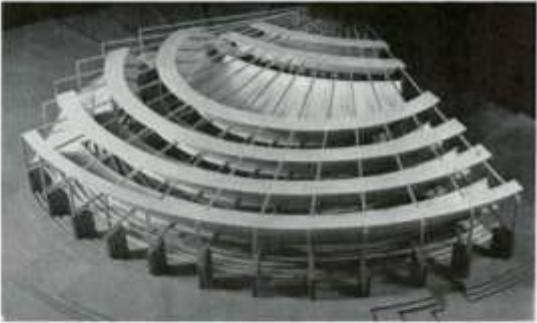
27. Carmen Corneil, Plan for the Massey college Competition, 1960 (Baird, 2016, p.42)



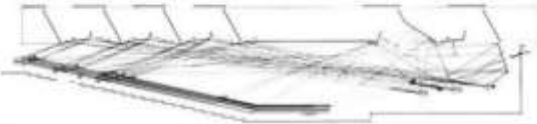
28. carmen corneil/ architect, Elevations and Sections for the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Building, Charlottetown, 1963. (Baird, p.42)



26



27



28

29. carmen corneil/ architect, models and acoustic drawing for the Bandshell at Expo '67 (*Architecture Canada*, July 1966, p. 40)



30. carmen corneil/ architect, Wayland Drew House, Port Perry, 1967 (*Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic*, p.10)





31. carmen corneil/ architect with Jeffrey Stinson, Carleton University Architecture School, 1968-1972: left, exterior detail of the 'porch' and right, interior view of the 'street' (Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic, pp.18-19)



32. carmen corneil/ architect, OPSEU offices, Don Mills, showing the interior with atrium and 'street', 1989-91 (Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic, p.39.)



33. Alvar Aalto, Bentwood Chair designed for the Sanatorium at Paimio, Finland 1931 (Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York)

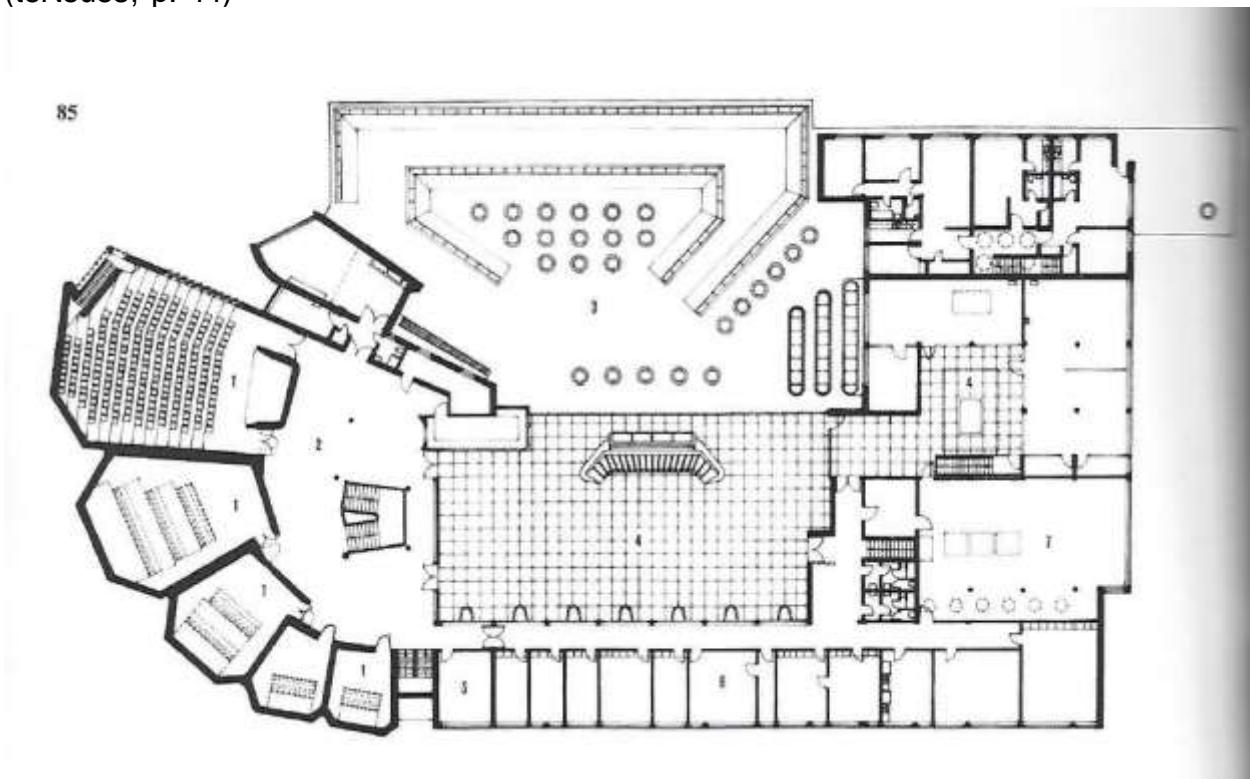
34. Alvar Aalto, 'Wave' ('Aalto') vase, 1936 (litala website)



35. Alvar Aalto, Town Hall, Saynatsalo, Finland, 1948-1952 (Curtis, 1996, p.456.)



36. Aalto's experimental house and studio at Muuratsalo, Finland, 1952-4 (teNeues, p. 44)



37. Alvar Aalto, Wolfsburg Cultural Centre, 1958-63, Plan showing the banal and the extraordinary components (Baird, 1971, Fig. 85)



38. Alvar Aalto, Church at Imatra, Clerestory and inner ceiling, 1956-9 (Curtis, p. 452)



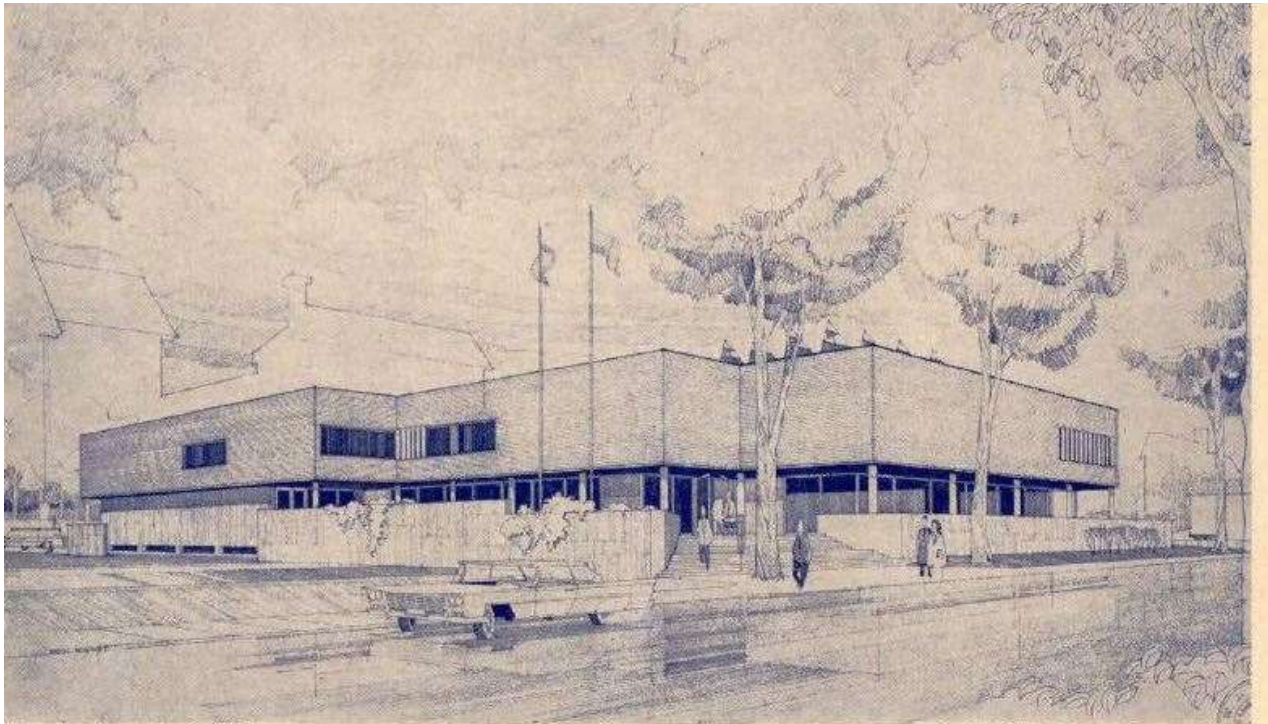
39. Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters, shortly after completion in 1962 (Baird, 2016, p. 41)



40. Current photograph of the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters, south and west elevations (HP, 2022)



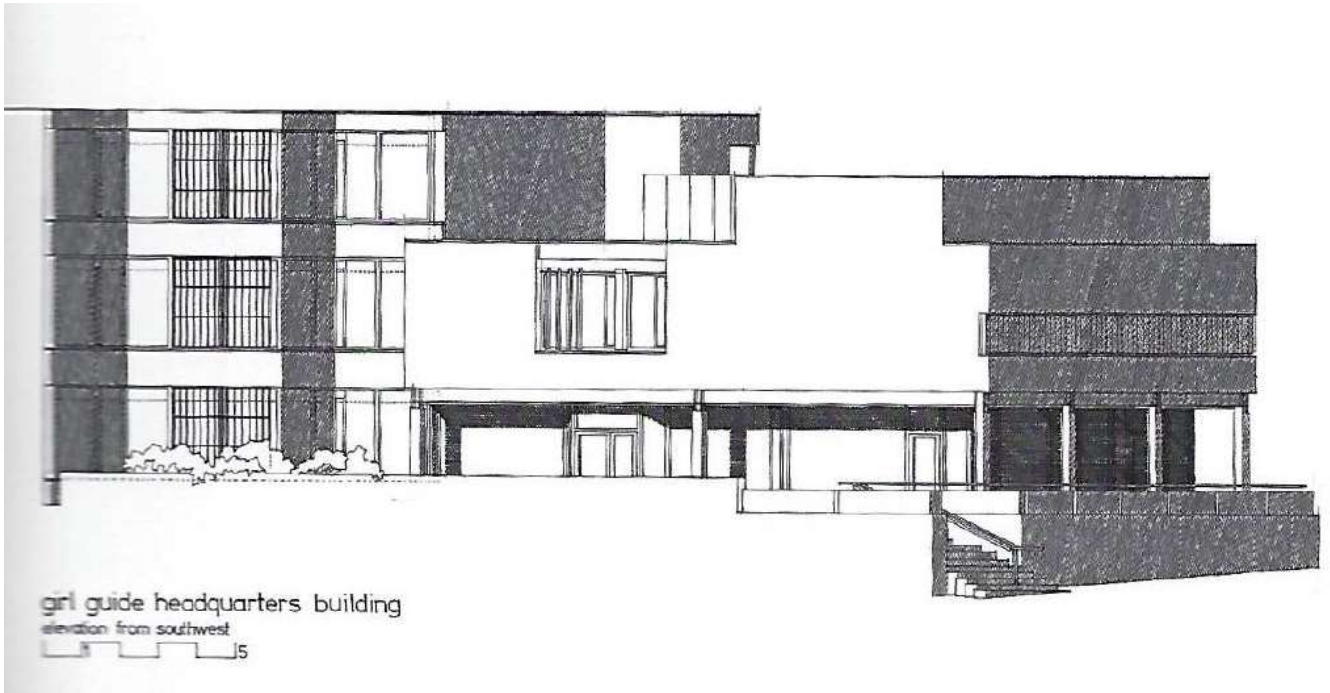
42. Photograph of the Girl Guides' headquarters, south and east elevations (HP, 2022)



New Headquarters Building

Wm. J. McBain & Associates, Architects

43. William J. McBain & Associates, Architects, Early perspective sketch showing the essential concept of the building, featured on the June 1961 cover of *The Canadian Guider*. (GGA)

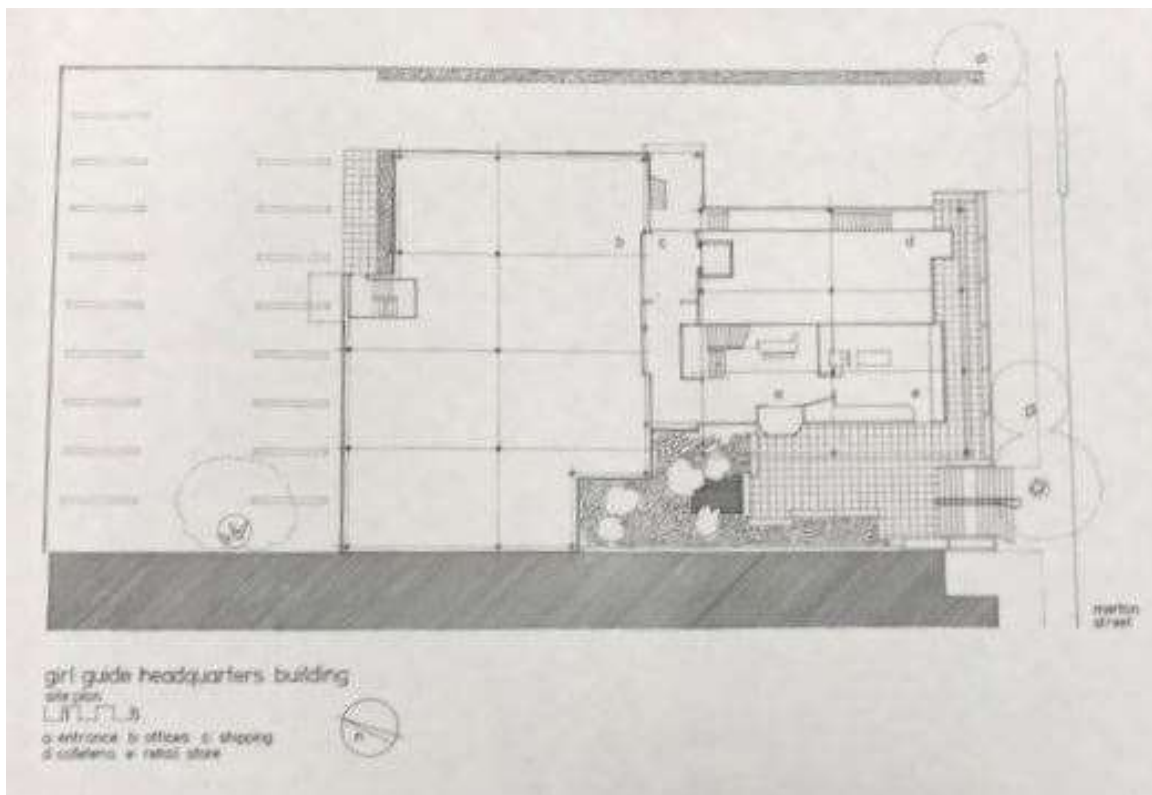


girl guide headquarters building  
elevation from southwest  
1 5

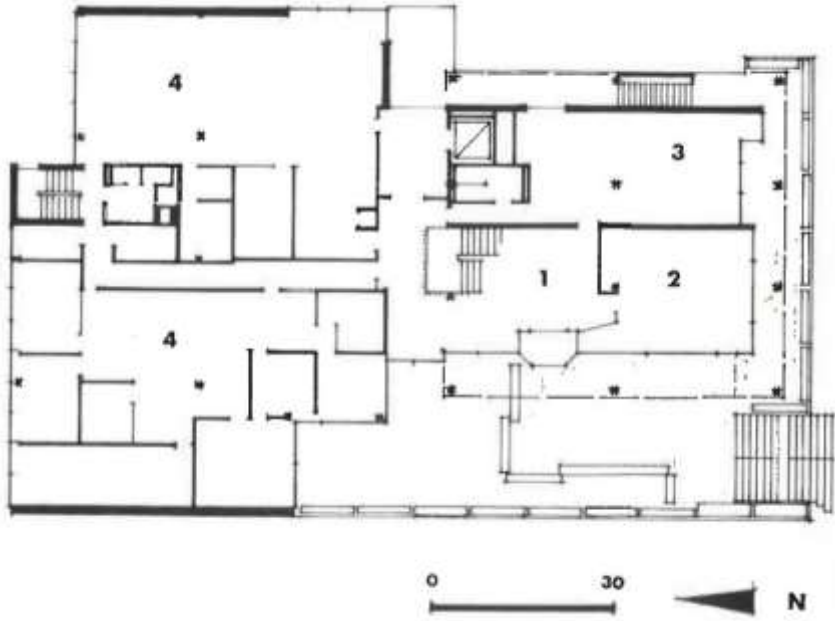
44. Concept Sketch for the Girl Guides' headquarters on Merton Street prepared by carmen corneil/ architect for the 1982 *OKanada!* exhibition and the 2008 *architecture e+c* exhibition (Corneil, Corneil and Milojevic, p.9.)



45. Photograph of the west and south elevations which was the lead photograph for the September 1962 *Canadian Architect* article on the new Girl Guides Headquarters which echoed the architect's concept regarding the most important view of the building. This was obscured by the later addition of the parking garage. (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p. 45.)



46. carmen corneil/ architect, Site Plan of the Girl Guides' headquarters building, drawn in 1970 and showing from left to right the parking lot, the office section of the building, the terrace and garden with the reception and headquarters functions above and at the top of the drawing, the loading dock and driveway to the parking lot in the rear. Merton Street is at the right. (Canadian Architectural Archives, CU111064178)

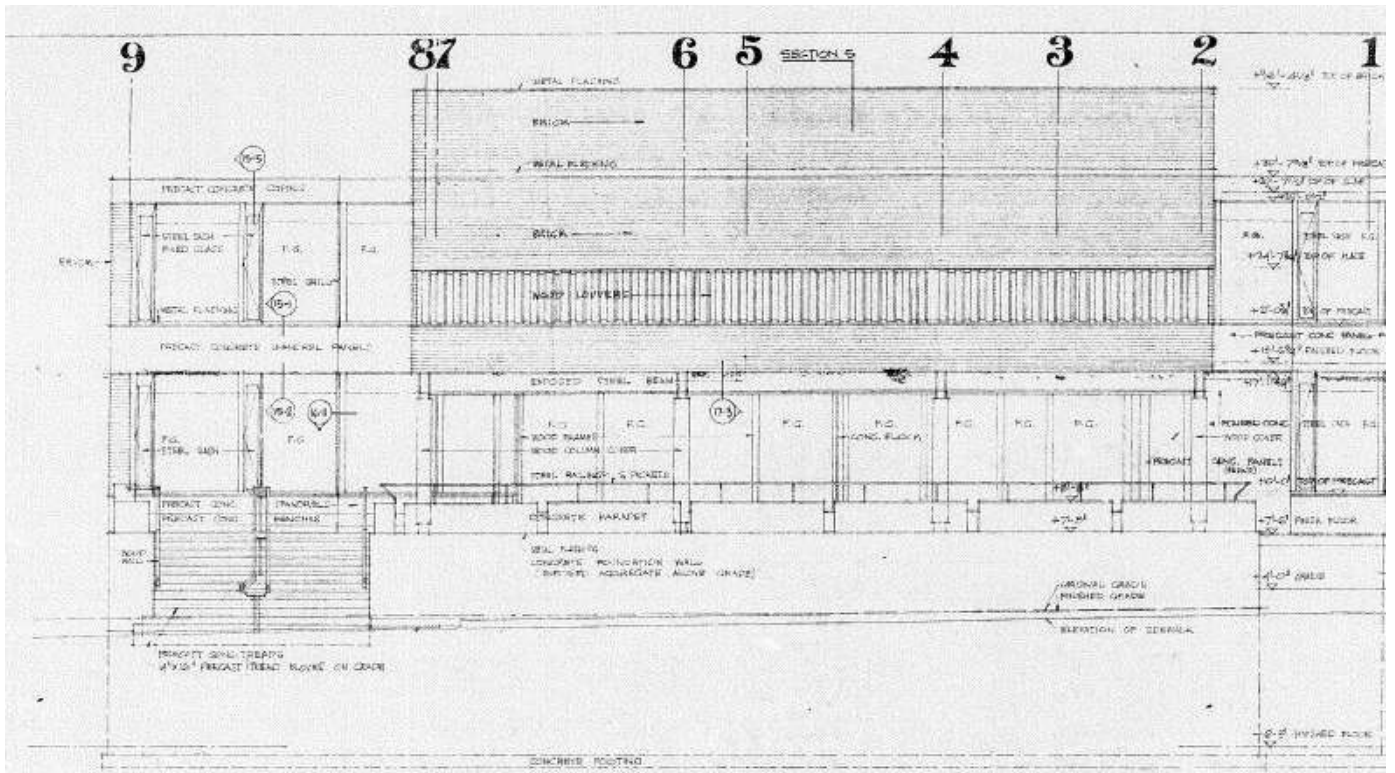


47. Ground Floor Plan, showing 1. Reception, 2. Retail, 3. Lunchroom, 4. Offices (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p. 47.)

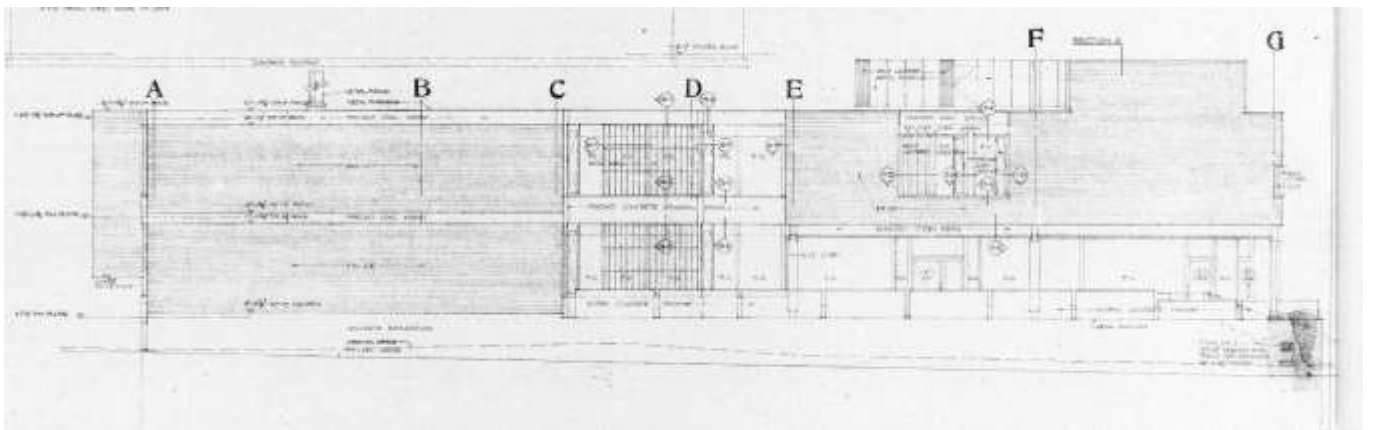


48. Second Floor Plan, showing 1. Committee rooms, 2. Boardroom, 3. Stair Landing, 4. Offices (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p. 47.)

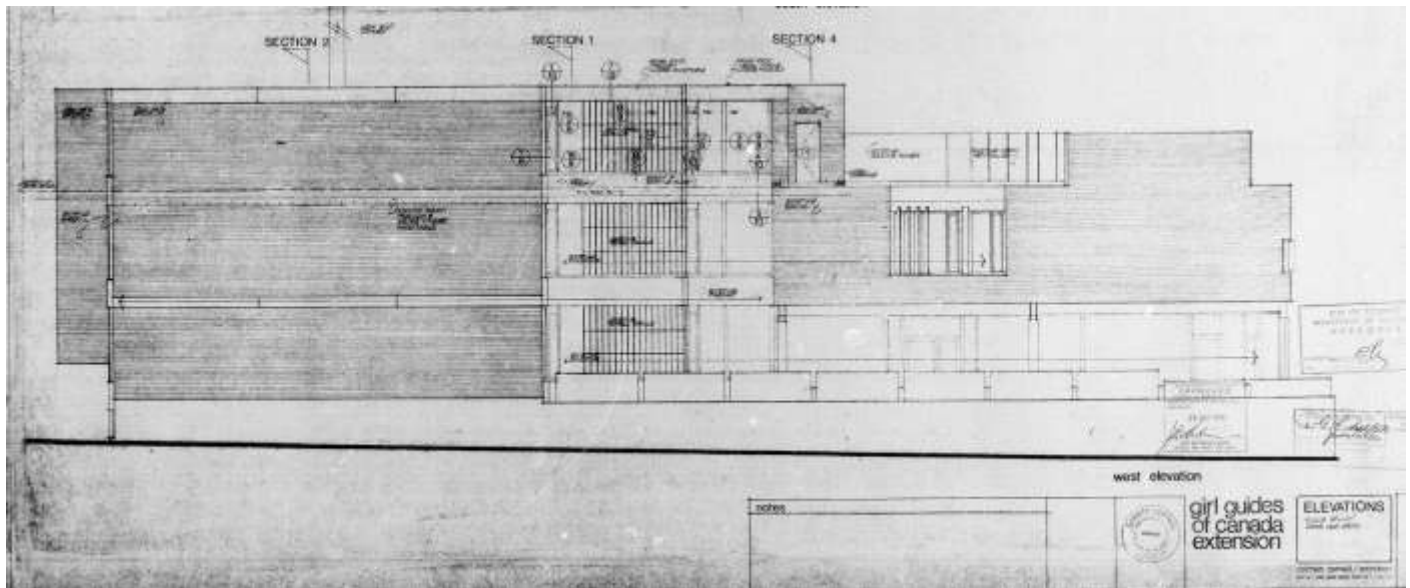




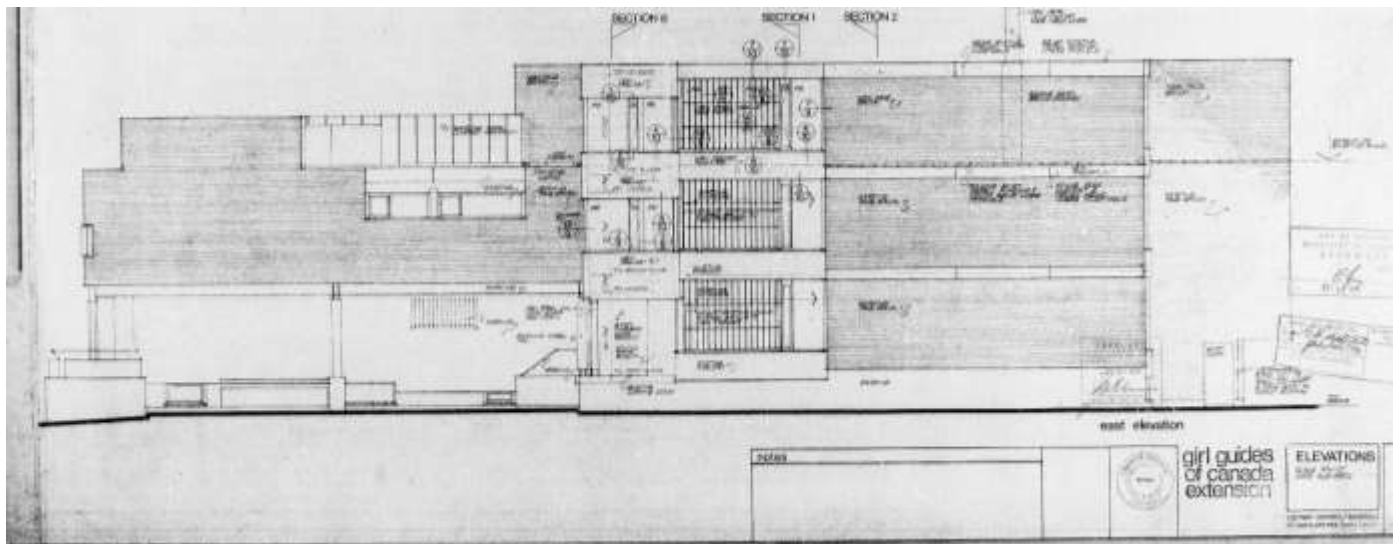
49. William J. McBain & Associates, Architects. Drawing of the South Elevation, 1961 (Building Records, City of Toronto)



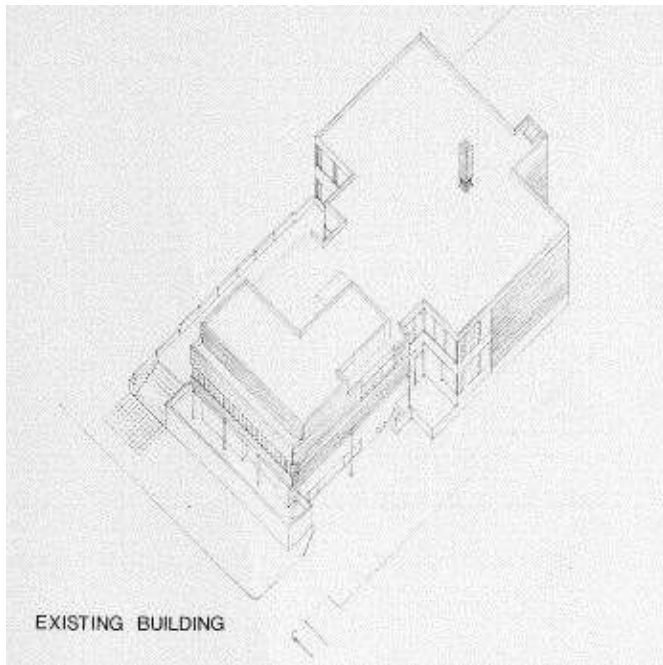
50. William J. McBain & Associates, Architects. Drawing of the west elevation, 1961 showing the original building with a two-storey office wing at the left (Building Records, City of Toronto)



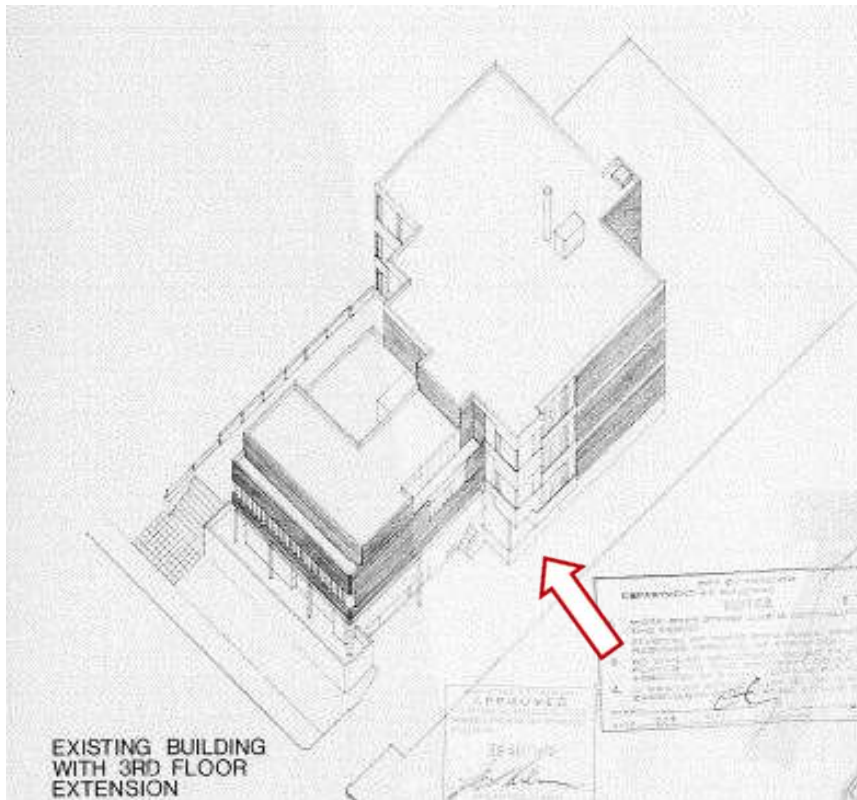
51. carmen corneil/ architect, Drawing of the west elevation of the headquarters showing the third floor addition to the office section at the left of the drawing (Building Records, City of Toronto)



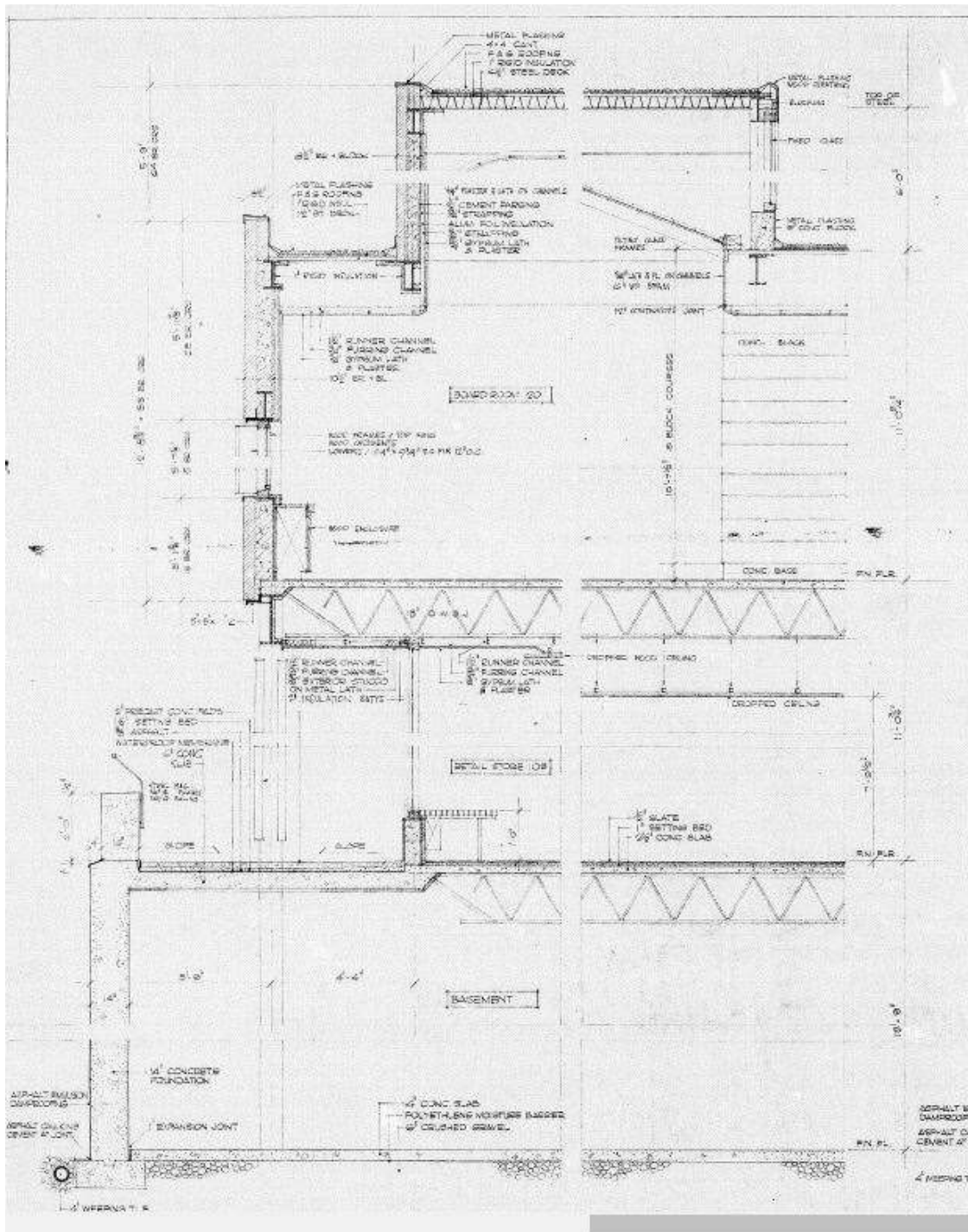
52. carmen corneil/ architect, Drawing of the east elevation, 19701 showing the third floor addition to the office section at the right of the drawing (Building Records, City of Toronto)



53. carmen corneil/ architect, axonometric drawing, 1970, showing the existing building with the two-storey rear office section (Building Records, City of Toronto)



54. carmen corneil/ architect, axonometric drawing, 1970, showing the proposed addition of a third floor which added an additional stairs above the loading bay as indicated by the arrow (Building Records, City of Toronto)



55. William J. McBain & Associates, Architects. 1961, Section drawing through the front of the building showing the basement, terrace and lunchroom, boardroom above with ribbon window on the south wall, various ceiling heights including the cove ceiling and clerestory (Building Records, City of Toronto)



56. Photograph of the landscaping, which included a pond, on the west side at the entrance of the building which was meant to reflect and honour the guide's tradition of being connected with nature and the outdoors and activities such as hiking and camping (*The Canadian Guider*, June 1962)



57. Photograph of the pond and landscaping on terrace at the entrance (GGA, aph978)



58. Current view of the west, side and rear, south, elevations with principal entrance, terrace and the two primary components of ceremonial public functions at the front and the contrasting rear office section. The third floor extension of offices continued the materials and design of the original 1962 building (HP, 2022)



59. The raised and partly enclosed terrace was intended to provide the Girl Guides and Brownies with a protected outdoor space from which they could survey Merton Street. Girl Guides and Brownies at the new headquarters shortly after completion and in advance of name-plaque being inserted.

(*The Canadian Guide*, photograph taken by the Toronto Star June 1962, p. 83)

60. Acropolis, Athens with the Temple of Athena Nike at the far right (HP, 2011)



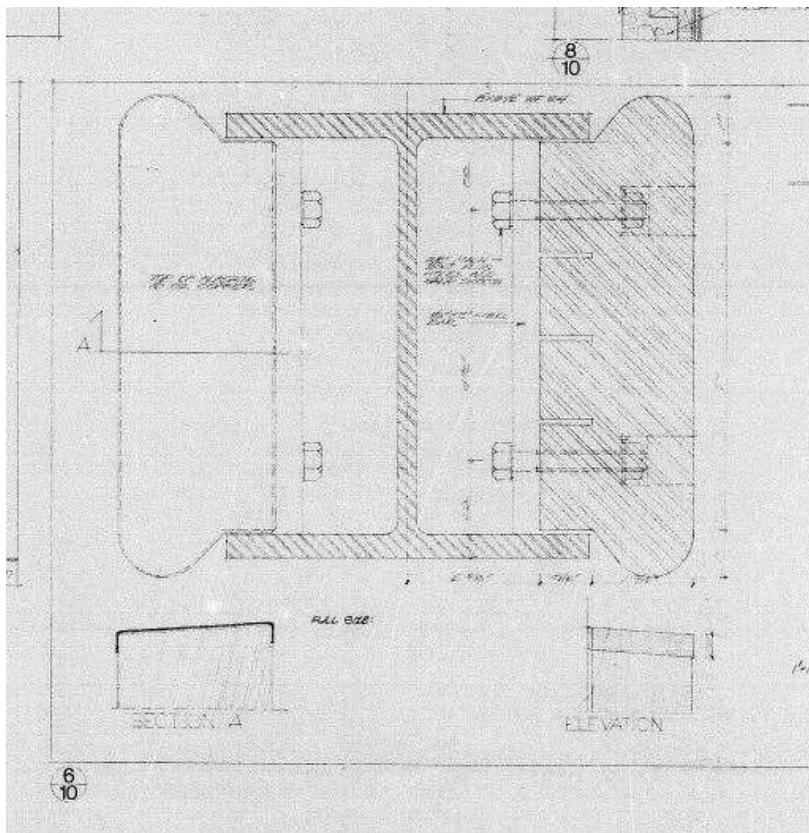
61. Fenestration on the east and south elevations showing the cut into the brick cladding to reveal the beam, the windows and the concrete fin and beyond, curtain wall glazing of the office section applied to the 1970 fire escape staircase. (HP, 2022)



62. Terrace and glazed first floor facing Merton Street (HP, 2022)

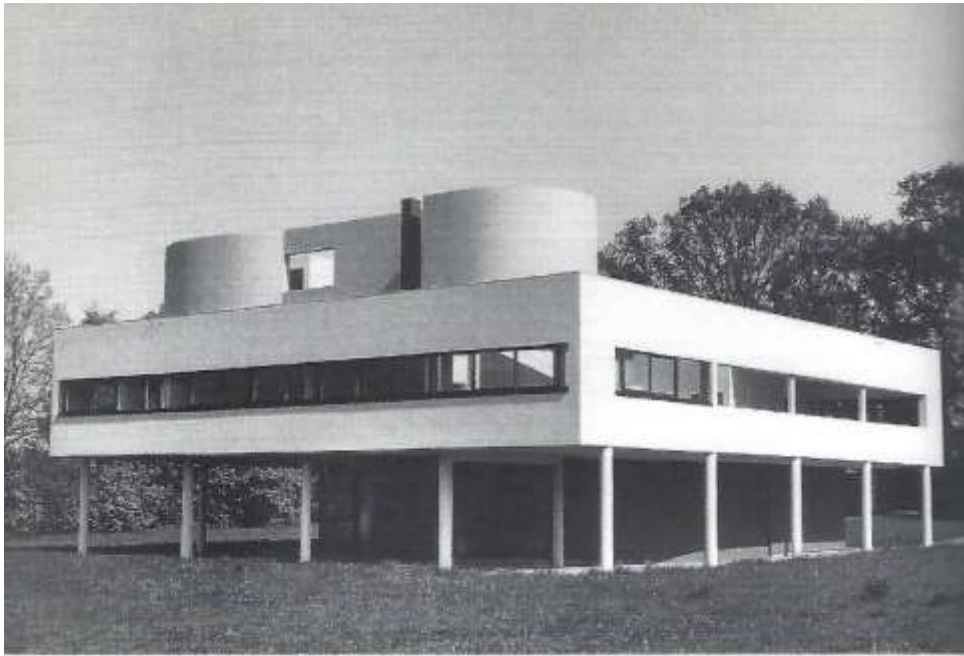


63. Steel column with wood cladding on the loading dock (HP, 2022)



64. carmen corneil/ architect, section drawing detail of the wood cladding fixed to the steel 'I' beam columns, 1970 (Building Records)





65. Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, 1928-31 showing a parallel concept of a *piano nobile*, with ribbon windows, a recessed, glazed first floor behind a screen of columns (Curtis, 1986, Fig. 92)



66. South and east elevations of the Girl Guides' headquarters, with the ribbon windows of the *piano nobile*, recessed first floor behind a screen of columns, here in an urban location with a raised podium, brick cladding and, a screen of wood fins (Google Street View, 2007)



67. Photograph of the East elevation and loading dock, showing the restroom and washroom windows of the second floor, kitchen window of the first floor and basement windows, with curtain wall of the office section to the right (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p. 46)



68. Principal, south and side, east elevations showing loading dock and driveway access (HP, 2022)



69. East side with loading dock and 1970-72 fire escape stairs (HP, 2022)



70. Archival Photograph of the north, rear elevation taken shortly after completion in 1962 with the original two-storey rear office wing (GGA aph1075)



71. North and east elevations showing the rear, north side with the projecting, brick-clad volume of the staircase and third floor addition completed in 1970 (HP, 2022)



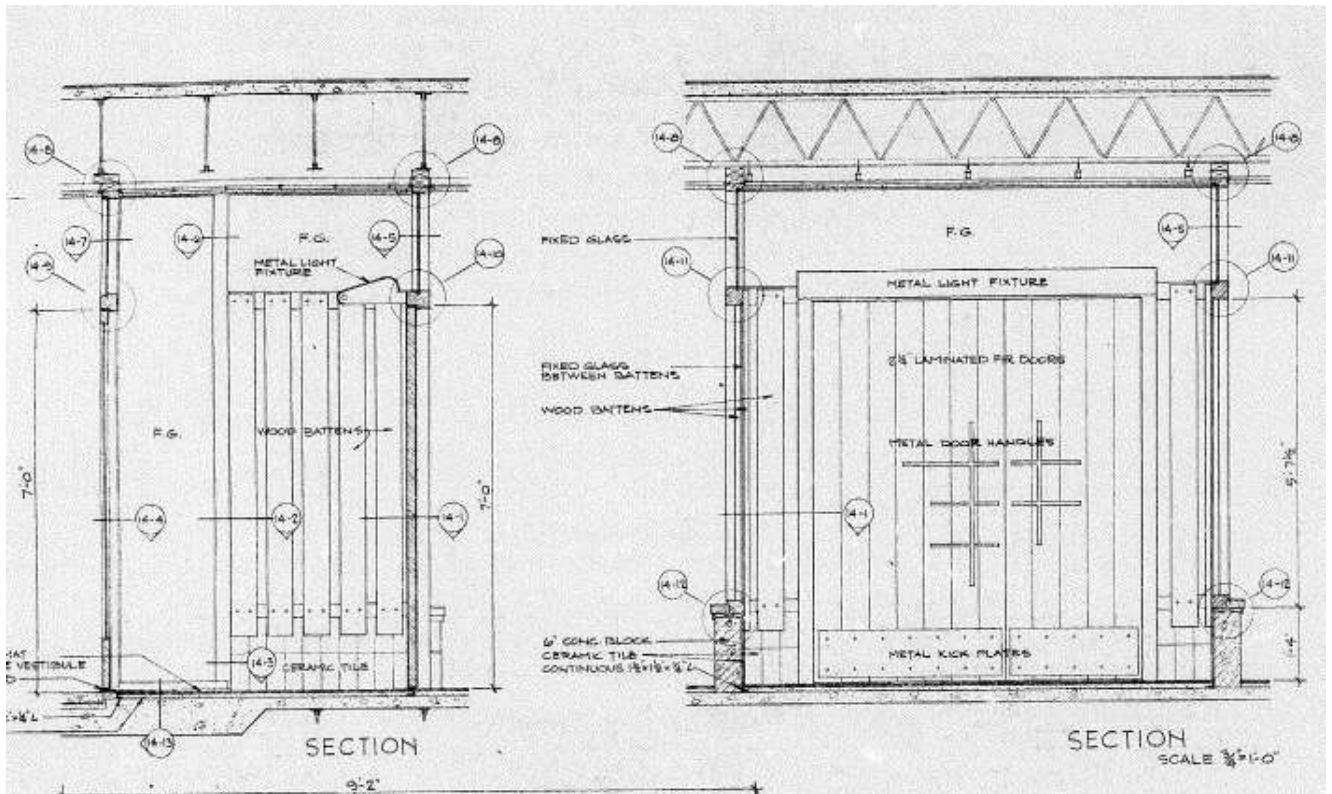
72. View of the third floor addition, shortly after completion, c1972 (GGA aph991)



73. Entrance Vestibule with asymmetrical double doors, slatted wood screens and transoms above (HP, 2022)



74. Main entrance doors: exterior doors (left) show the different heights of door pulls (covered by Covid-19 signage) (HP, 2022)



75. William J. McBain & Associates, 1961, details of main entrance vestibule and doors showing the wood slats details on the left and the doors on the right with handrails designed for different heights of the Girl Guides and staff. (Building Records)

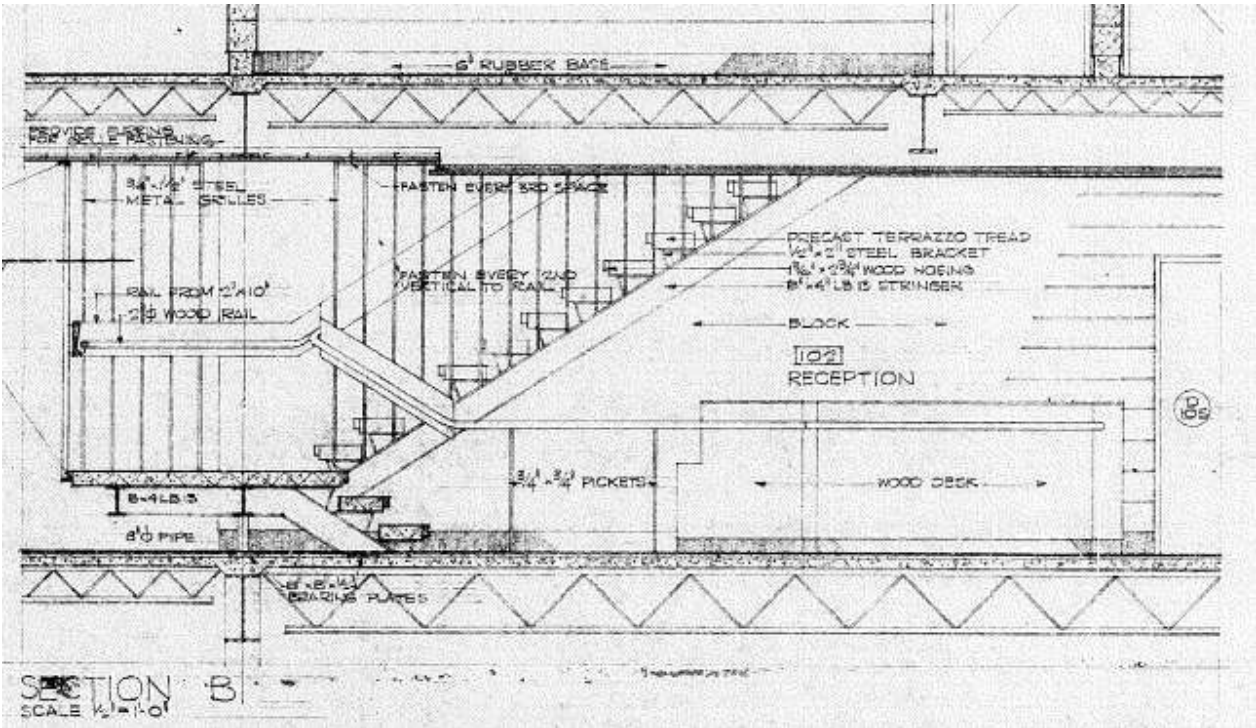


76. Reception, main doors with slatted wood screens (HP, 2022)

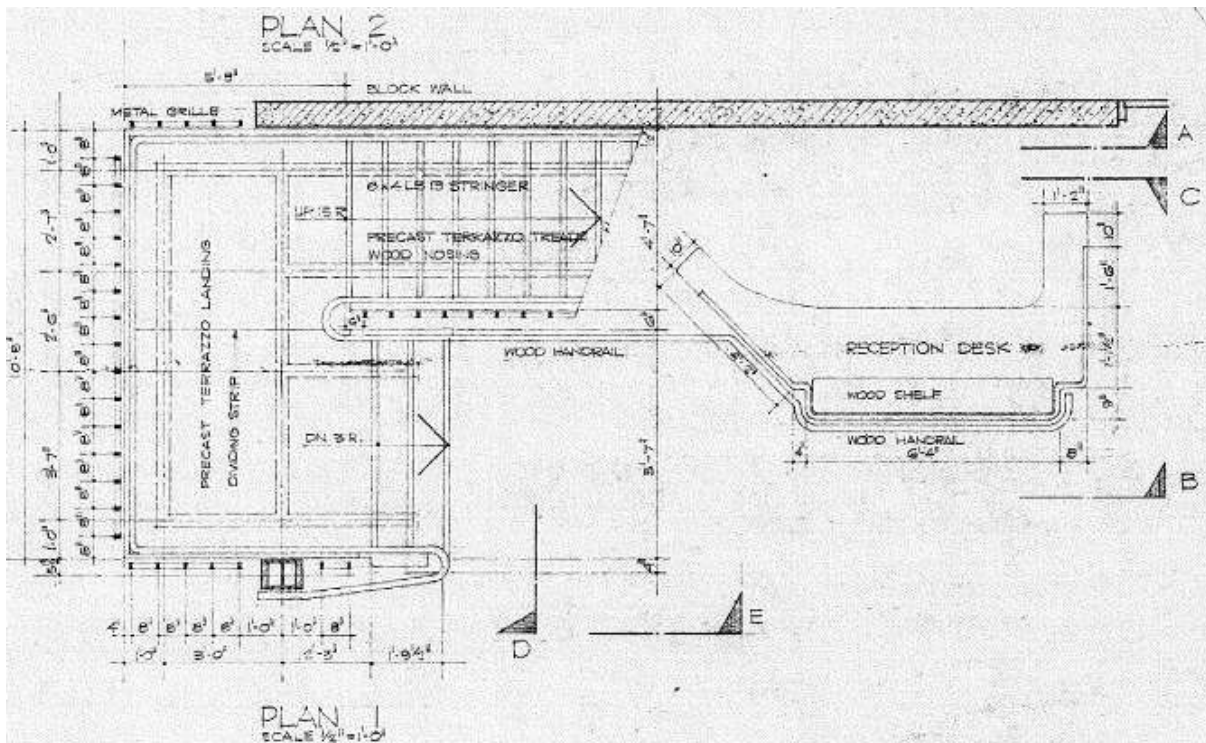
77. Interior door (right) shows the Girl Guides' trefoil symbol incised in the 'pull' of the door hardware (HP, 2022)



78. Reception area c 1962, looking north with entry on the left, counter on the right and seating area and offices beyond (GGA, aph1107)



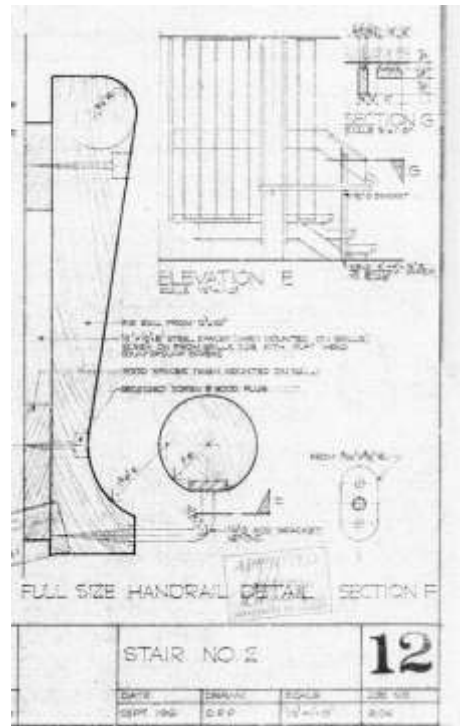
79. William J. McBain & Associates, 1961, elevation/section drawing of the first floor showing the reception desk, staircase (Building Records)



80. William J. McBain & Associates, 1961, Plan of the main staircase and reception desk showing including the original continuous handrail (Building Records)



81. Main entrance lobby stair and handrail (HP, 2022)



82. William J. McBain & Associates, 1961, section drawing of the handrail (Building Records)



83. Staircase, handrails and balustrade at the second floor level (HP, 2022)



84. Second floor, balustrade and handrail details continuing the materials and details of the staircase with the metal screen, wood handrail and cement block wall (HP, 2022)



85. Second floor display of Girl Guides and Brownies uniforms adjacent to the entrance to the board room and committee rooms (HP, 2022)

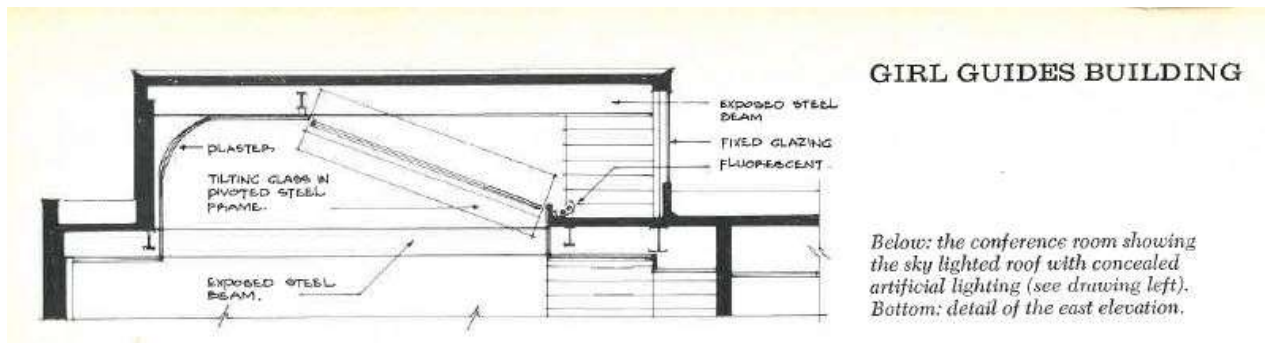




86. Board room, looking north-west with skylight, wood rafters, steel beams and metal deck ceiling and also showing the transitional entry zone with coat storage (CAA, 2\_CU111069249)



87. Board room looking west with skylight with paired wood rafters, coved ceiling, lower ceiling and ribbon windows with their vertical fins (*Canadian Architect* Sept 1962, p 46)



88. Section drawing included in the coverage of the new Girl Guides Headquarters to show the details of the board room ceiling (*Canadian Architect* Sept 1962, p 46)



89. Current photograph of the boardroom with ribbon window on the south elevation, coved ceiling and paired wood rafters with exposed metal deck, steel structure and light from the clerestory. (HP, 2022)



90. Photograph of the boardroom looking east showing the ceiling details (HP, 2022)



91. Committee room with wood ceiling and window located over the west entrance (HP, 2022)



92. Corner office, second floor looking south and showing original opening sections and glass and plywood partitions and the integrated shelving above the HVAC system (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p 48)



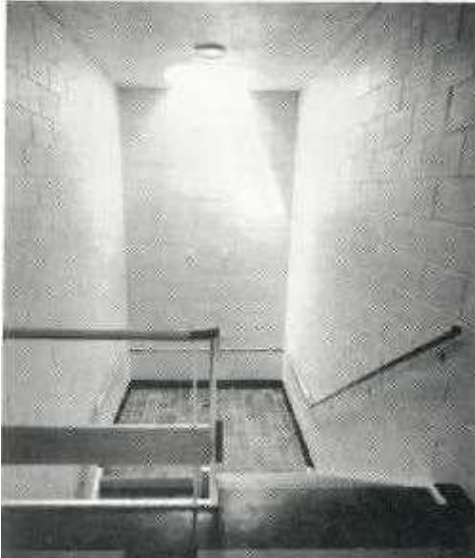
93. Corner office, second floor looking southwest (HP, 2022)



94. Corner office, second floor looking south towards the front of the building (HP, 2022)



95. Offices with glazed partitions looking north (HP, 2022)



96. North Stair (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p 48)  
97. North Stair (HP, 2022)



98. Basement Storeroom (HP, 2022)



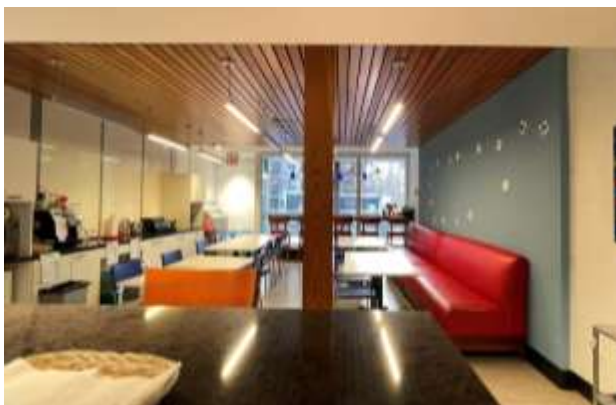
99. Girl Guides store interior with original fittings, including the slate floor and the slatted wood ceiling (GGA, aph 1087)



100. Current use and configuration of former store (right) (HP, 2022)



101. Lunchroom showing the wood slatted ceiling and the glazed view onto the terrace and Merton Street (*Canadian Architect* Sept 1962, p 48)



102. Lunchroom, current photograph showing the dressed steel column and the wood ceiling (HP, 2022)



103. Egress Stair added in 1970-72 on the east side of the building, looking west with handrail, shelf and soffit details (HP, 2022)

104. Egress Stair added in 1970-72, looking west (HP, 2022)



105. East Elevation looking towards Merton Street, photographed by the *Canadian Architect* shortly after completion in 1962 (*Canadian Architect*, September 1962, p 48)



106. Context: 267 Merton Street, south side of Merton Street, showing one of the remaining late 19th-early 20th century houses on the street with a later industrial use introduced behind the house. (HP, 2017)



107. East end of Merton Street towards Pailton Crescent showing the examples of low-rise commercial buildings. (HP, 2017)



108. 290 Merton Street, north side of Merton Street, another example of 1950s-1960s low-rise development with distinctive architectural design and character. (HP, 2017)



109. War Amps Headquarters, 1959, 140 Merton Street and 164 Merton Street, owned by the Geneva Centre for Autism showing other examples of a purpose-built social agency headquarters with distinctive mid-century modern design. (HP, 2022)



110. Visiting Home Nurses Association, 1968-69, 170 Merton Street, a purpose-built social agency headquarters and also showing the context of the north side of Merton Street with townhouses and condominiums maintaining the low-rise scale of the street (HP, 2022)





111. Merton St looking east from 50 Merton (at the far left) showing the later mid-rise housing (HP, 2022)



112. Merton Street, looking west from 100 Merton Street showing low-rise scale of 50 and 64 Merton Street on the right marked with an arrow (HP, 2022)



113. West end of Merton Street, high rise tower at 1815 Yonge Street (HP, 2017)

## RESEARCH SOURCES

## ATTACHMENT 2

### Archival Sources

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Assessment Rolls, City of Toronto Archives  
Building Records, 50 Merton Street, City of Toronto. Files 67179, 1961; 002472, 1970; 003203, 1970; 169276, 1981.  
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## **Interviews**

Carmen Corneil: Emeritus Professor and former Professor, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto: 14 January and 1 February, 2022

George Baird, Emeritus Professor and former Dean, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto: 17 January, 2022.

George Kapelos, Professor of Architecture, Ryerson University: March 17, 2022.

*Acknowledgements for their assistance with the research for this report:*

Carmen Corneil and Janne Corneil

Catherine Miller-Mort, Archivist, National Office, Girl Guides of Canada

George Baird, Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto.

Lisa Doherty, Library, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto.

Michael Milojevic, School of Architecture, University of Auckland.

Tamara Anson-Cartwright, Heritage Planning, City of Toronto.

William McIlroy, Shapero/McIlroy Design, Boston, MA.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)**

The property at 50 Merton Street (Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters) is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under all three categories of design, associative and contextual value

**Description**

The property at 50 Merton Street contains the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters, a three-storey complex completed in 1962 to the design of Carmen Corneil, project architect for William J. McBain & Associates and extended in 1970-72 by the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil.

In 2011, the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the national significance of the Girl Guides of Canada through its designation of the Girl Guide of Canada Movement in Canada a National Historic Event and installed a plaque at 50 Merton Street.

Both the Midtown in Focus Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (2016) and the City of Toronto OPA 405 identified the property as having potential cultural heritage value.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value - Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters**

The Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters building, dating to 1961-2 with a 1970-72 extension is in its meticulous design an excellent representative of Post-War Modern architecture exhibiting in particular the influence of the great Finnish modernist, Alvar Aalto. It has also been acknowledged that on its completion the new headquarters was "a building of consequence... representing something new and other, a different kind of architecture"<sup>67</sup> in Toronto. The building design is significant for its response to context, for its interpretation of the functional programmatic requirements as an opportunity for symbolic design and for creating a sequence of indoor and outdoor spaces which enrich the use and experience of Guides' members of all ages. In its interpretation of the brief, orientation on the site, composition and massing of the various programmatic components, in the choice of materials and in the details from the window openings to the handrails, columns and door pulls the building exhibits a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit.

The property at 50 Merton Street has association with the Girl Guides of Canada and in turn with the International Guiding Movement which is one of the largest youth

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<sup>67</sup> George Baird, Emeritus Professor and former Dean of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at the University of Toronto.

movements in the world. The Guides were established in England in 1909 by Lord Baden-Powell and his sister Agnes Baden-Powell shortly after the founding of the Boy Scouts in 1907. Canadian branches followed in 1910, the first in St. Catharines, Ontario and then Toronto. The core values of the organization emphasized the outdoors, character building, good citizenship and self-reliance with the motto: "Be Prepared." Since 1923, the guides have been largely self-funded through the sales of their iconic, trefoil-shaped cookies. Completed in 1962, the building was designed to be the first permanent, purpose-built national headquarters for the Girl Guides. Girl Guides are located across Canada and celebrated their centenary in 2010. The National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized the national significance of the organization through its designation of the Girl Guide of Canada Movement in Canada a National Historic Event.

The Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters has associative value as it reflects the work and ideas of Carmen Corneil, lead designer and project architect for William J. McBain & Associates who designed the original building in 1961-62 and the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil, for the addition undertaken in 1970-72. Throughout their 50+ years of practice, Elin and Carmen Corneil have been influential as teachers and practitioners from their home-bases in Norway and Canada. Their work, which has included both architecture and urban design, has been recognized with two Massey Medals, won an international competition and has been published and exhibited widely. First living and working together in Toronto in 1960, their projects introduced a strong Scandinavian formal and typological influence which was based in expressive programmatic form, tactile materials and details, a variety of sources for daylight and the integration of landscape and nature. As their ideas and work evolved, these initial principles would be extended to eschew the formal aesthetic concerns of Modernism for an architecture that was underpinned by familiar building typologies related to a variety of individual and collective social experiences, with a frank tectonic expression inherent in Dutch Structuralism and particularly the work of Herman Hertzberger. Throughout their careers a primary commitment to architecture's enhancement of human experience through meaningful and connected place-making has been at the heart of their practice.

Set on the north side of Merton Street in the first block east of Yonge Street, the Girl Guides Headquarters, maintains and supports the character of the area which is related to its transformation following the completion of the Yonge Street subway line in 1954 making it a prime location for institutional uses such as the Visiting Home Nursing Association, The War Amps, the Geneva Centre for Autism and to the north of Davisville Avenue, the School for the Deaf (demolished). Its distinctive Post-War Modern design, low-rise scale and public outdoor space is shared with these other institutional buildings. Other low-rise buildings representing commercial and residential uses, with distinctive mid-century modern style maintain this character of Merton Street which is under transformation.

Completed in 1962, the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings as it represents the transformation of Merton Street and the Davisville community following the completion of the subway line in 1954 with an increased institutional use, transforming the street's early mixed character of industrial and residential properties with a sequence of low-rise, Post-War Modern properties.

## **Heritage Attributes of the Girl Guides of Canada National Headquarters**

### **Design and Physical Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the design and physical value of the Girl Guides Headquarters at 50 Merton Street as an excellent representative of Post-War Modern architecture exhibiting in particular the influence of the great Finnish modernist, Alvar Aalto and as an example of the work of the partnership of Elin and Carmen Corneil as it responded to the project program and its Toronto context:

#### **Exterior**

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on its property on the north side of Merton Street, east of Yonge Street
- The scale, form and massing of the flat-roofed, building composed of a two-storey front wing and a rear, three-storey back wing set on a raised podium with a terrace on its south and west sides.
- The massing of the front wing is modified by the higher roof for the clerestory and services and by the set-back of the first floor on the south, east and west sides, the staircase on the south side of the podium at the west end and on the east side where the podium has been set-back adjacent to the loading bay
- The massing of the rear, three-storey wing includes the stepped massing in plan at its south-west corner and the two-projecting fire-escape stairs
- The first floor level of the front wing of the building including the glazed south and west walls
- The brick cladding, on the second-floor of the front wing of the building and the staircase on the north side of the rear wing, which achieved its rugged texture through a special process of firing the bricks face to face and then splitting them apart to achieve the natural broken surface, and then set in a common bond pattern
- The concrete cladding of the podium and its parapet-balustrade
- The cladding of the rear second wing which combine sections of curtain wall glazing with pre-cast concrete panels and brick cladding with bands of concrete indicating the floor levels on the east and west elevations
- The composition and detailing of the fenestration of the front brick clad wing as follows:
  - second floor level, south elevation, long ribbon window stretching the full width of the elevation and originally containing wood fins to the architect's design
  - second floor, west elevation, single opening containing two windows separated by a pre-cast concrete fin with a clad steel beam above and originally wood fins as per the architect's design on the window to the north side of the fin
  - second floor, east elevation the opening for two windows with a precast concrete fin between and clad steel beam above and beneath them,
  - first floor level, east elevation, rectangular window opening.
- The steel columns with their wood cladding on two faces supporting the upper level of the front wing

## **Interior**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the design and physical value of the interior of the building including the main entrance, lobby and staircase to the second floor lobby, and the second floor board room:

### **Main Entrance, Lobby and Staircase**

- The main entrance vestibule which includes a projecting, glazed volume with glazed double doors, the double, wood-panelled entrance doors which open to the interior, flanked by, on the interior section facing the lobby, two screens, partially glazed with wood slats and corresponding with the height of the doors. Above the panelled doors and the screens are glazed transoms
- The wood-panelled, double-doors with unequal widths, and each has a narrow vertical glazed openings, vertical wood panel
- The ironmongery for the doors includes, on the exterior face two, large, metal door pulls composed of a series of vertical and horizontal elements, with horizontal bars set at different heights. A metal Guides' trefoil symbol is also included on the face of the north door at the entrance. On the interior face, the door pull on the northern door includes a cut-out trefoil
- The lobby materials include a slate floor in a random pattern, a concrete block wall on the east side of the staircase and wood slats fixed to the ceiling
- The lobby staircase includes a screen composed of vertical metal elements, stairs with an exposed structure with terrazzo treads and wood noggins, a continuous wood handrail combined of a cylindrical rail and a wood facing plate fixed to the metal screen or walls with a curvilinear profile. (Please note, originally this hand-rail continued along the face of the reception desk designed by the architect)
- At the second floor level the staircase handrail continues along a low block wall balustrade which is cut down to a lower height on its north end to include a low metal screen

### **Second Floor Boardroom**

- The second floor boardroom ceiling which includes a glazed clerestory, exposed metal roof decking, pairs of wood rafters along the north side, a coved ceiling along the south side and a lower ceiling level parallel to the full-width ribbon window on the south elevation
- The plan of the second floor boardroom includes an entrance area on the north side with a lower ceiling and in the third bay at the east end, a longer bay which extends north

## **Contextual Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the contextual value of the Girl Guides of Canada Headquarters at 50 Merton Street as it supports the Post-World War II character of Merton Street in the section between Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road

- The scale, form and massing of the two-three-storey building, in a Post-War Modern style clad with a combination of brick and curtain wall glazing set on raised podium with an exterior terrace facing the street on the north side of Merton Street.