

24 Mason Boulevard - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Date: March 15, 2024

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: Ward 8 - Eglinton-Lawrence

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 24 Mason Boulevard under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value according to the Statement of Significance which includes a description of Heritage Attributes found in Attachment 1.

Located southwest of the intersection at Yonge Street and York Mills Road/Wilson Avenue in North York, the property at 24 Mason Boulevard contains a late-19th-century vernacular Ontario farmhouse, known as the Denison/Mason Farmhouse. A Location Map and Current Photograph of the heritage property are found in Attachment 2.

As the oldest surviving structure within its immediate suburban context, the subject property is a vestige of a former 125-acre farm that was owned by members of the Denison family, of the Kensington Market neighbourhood, for about fifty-five years (from 1823 until 1879). The farm is located on Mason Boulevard, which is named after Henry Mason, a farmer who purchased the farm lot from the Denison family in 1879. The Denison/Mason Farmhouse (estimated date of construction between 1876-1882) remained in place as the farming and milling community of York Mills, North York, transitioned into suburban housing in the post-war period.

Staff have determined that the property at 24 Mason Boulevard has cultural heritage value and meets four of the Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, if it meets two or more of the nine criteria.

The current property owners nominated the property at 24 Mason Boulevard for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. For the past thirty years, the current owners have maintained thoughtful stewardship over the almost 150-year-old building.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 24 Mason Boulevard under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance for 24 Mason Boulevard (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1, to the report, March 15, 2024, from the Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

DECISION HISTORY

There are no reports to committee and/or City Council pertaining to this property at the time of writing this report.

POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Provincial Plans and Policies

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

Further, the policies and definitions of the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented.

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

<https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-place-to-grow-office-consolidation-en-2020-08-28.pdf>

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 two or

more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

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

Official Plan

The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime and provides policies to guide decision making within the City. It 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. The Official Plan should be read as a whole to understand its comprehensive and integrative intent as a policy framework for priority setting and decision making. The Official Plan can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>

COMMENTS

Evaluation Analysis

The following evaluation analysis is based on the comprehensive research conducted on the property at 24 Mason Boulevard (see Attachment 3) and provides the rationale for the recommendation(s) found in this report.

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard meets the following 4 out of 9 criteria:

The property has design value or physical value because it is a representative example of a type.

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard has design and physical value as a representative example of a late 19th century vernacular Ontario farmhouse. It is a surviving example of a typology that defined the early development history of York Mills and for which few examples remain extant. While the structure has been altered through a series of additions and rearrangements made in the 20th century, the original section of the building remains evident in its rectangular plan, gable roof with end gables, matching chimneys, red brick cladding, and brick voussoir details.

The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard is valued for its role in communicating the story of York Mills, which began as an early 19th century milling and farming hamlet, established at the crossroads of Yonge Street and York Mills Road, in close proximity to the West Don River to its evolution as a post-war residential commuter suburb. As one of the few known farmhouses built on a York Township farm lot that remains extant, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse was subsequently absorbed into the first subdivision of land, marketed as 'Eglinton Park' in 1892. With the urbanization of York Mills in the mid-20th century and its transformation into a commuter suburb, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse was incorporated into the neighbourhood's residential development where

the property's generous setback and presence stands as a reminder of the origins and evolution of the area.

The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a person and activity that is significant to a community.

24 Mason Boulevard is additionally valued for its associations with several former owners, being members of the Denison family and Henry Mason, whose occupations as farmers and use of the subject property as farmland contributes to an understanding of the property's role in the historical development of York Mills. The Denisons were a prominent Toronto family known for their connection to the "Bellevue" neighbourhood (present-day Kensington Market) and they owned the subject property for about fifty-five years, from 1823 to 1879. Colonel Richard L. Denison, son of George T. Denison who inherited the land from Richard Lippincott, was known as a farmer throughout his life and had a prominent role as the treasurer in the organization known as the Agricultural and Arts Association of Ontario. Furthermore, Richard Denison was a co-founder of the York Pioneer and Historical Society, the oldest historical society in Ontario. Henry Mason purchased the property from Susan Denison, wife of Richard L. Denison, in 1879. Mason sold a portion of the property to York Township in 1886 for the surveying of Mason Boulevard but continued farming the land until 1889 when he sold most of the former 125-acre lot to prospective land developers. The Denison and Mason associations help to illustrate the subject property's initial transition from farmland into subdivision, an early indication of the later widespread urbanization that would change the character of the York Mills community.

The property has contextual value because it is historically linked to its surroundings.

Contextually, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse is historically linked to its surroundings in the York Mills neighbourhood, where its irregular lot orientation principally responded to the topography of the Don River ravine lands. Furthermore, it is one of a few extant buildings dating from the 19th century farming and milling settlement established at the intersection of Yonge Street and York Mills Road, adjacent to the West Don River. As a 19th century farmhouse in York Mills, 24 Mason Boulevard has stood in place as the community evolved from an agricultural one to a residential commuter suburb.

Community Consultation

During the research and evaluation of the subject property, staff met with the current property owners to tour the site. Staff also consulted with several community groups and individuals who have an interest in, and knowledge of, the history and heritage of North York, in particular the York Mills area. Via email correspondence and phone interviews, staff spoke with the North York Historical Society, North York Community Preservation Panel, and Scott Kennedy, a local historian and author of several publications on communities in and around North York. Staff additionally consulted with the Ontario Heritage Trust, who had previously conducted research into the subject property.

CONCLUSION

Staff have determined that the property at 24 Mason Boulevard meets 4 out of 9 criteria in Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. As such, the property merits designation and staff recommend that Council support the designation of this property to conserve its cultural heritage value.

See Attachments 1, 2 and 3 of this report for the Statement of Significance; Location Map and Photograph; and Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources pertaining to the property at 24 Mason Boulevard, as all of these documents are integral to the recommendations made in this staff report.

The Statement of Significance: 24 Mason Boulevard (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1 to this report comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

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SIGNATURE

Kerri A. Voumvakis
Interim Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation)
Attachment 2 – Location Map and Current Photograph
Attachment 3 – Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources

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

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard 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 the categories of design/physical, historical, and contextual value.

Description

Located southwest of the intersection at Yonge Street and York Mills Road/Wilson Avenue in North York, the property at 24 Mason Boulevard, known as the Denison/Mason Farmhouse, contains a two-storey residential building organised within an L-shaped plan. As the oldest surviving structure within its immediate suburban context, the subject property represents a vestige of a former 125-acre farm lot, owned from 1823 until 1879 by members of Toronto's Denison family. Prior to the Denison ownership, the lot was part of a 210-acre parcel that the Crown patented to John Kendrick in 1805. Kendrick divided the parcel (known as Lot 9 Concession 1 West of Yonge) into east and west halves in the same year, and eventually granted the eastern portion to Richard Lippincott in 1808. Lippincott granted the land to his son-in-law, George T. Denison, in 1823.

Since 24 Mason Boulevard pre-dates all of the surrounding properties, the building's angled orientation reflects how its layout was in response to the natural topography of the Don River ravine lands and not to any formalised subdivision plan. The Denison/Mason Farmhouse and Mason Boulevard derive their names from their association with Henry Mason, a farmer who purchased the farm lot from the Denison family in 1879. With the evolution of the area from its origins as a milling and farming settlement known as York Mills, 24 Mason Boulevard (estimated date of construction between 1876-1882) remained in place as the farmlands surrounding it transitioned into suburban housing in the postwar period.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard has design and physical value as a representative example of a late 19th century vernacular Ontario farmhouse. It is a surviving example of a typology that defined the early development history of York Mills and for which few examples remain extant. While the structure has been altered through a series of additions and rearrangements made in the 20th century, the original section of the building remains evident in its rectangular plan, gable roof with end gables, matching chimneys, red brick cladding, and brick voussoir details.

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard has historical value for its role in communicating the story of York Mills, which began as an early 19th century milling and farming hamlet, established at the crossroads of Yonge Street and York Mills Road, in close proximity to the West Don River, to its evolution as a post-war residential commuter suburb. As one of the few known farmhouses built on a York Township farm lot that remains extant in North York, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse was subsequently absorbed into the first subdivision of land, marketed as 'Eglinton Park' in 1892. With the urbanization of York

Mills in the mid-20th century and its transformation into a commuter suburb, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse was incorporated into the neighbourhood's residential development where the property's generous setback and presence stands as a reminder of the origins and evolution of the area.

24 Mason Boulevard is additionally valued for its associations with several former owners, being members of the Denison family and Henry Mason, whose occupations as farmers and use of the subject property as farmland contributes to an understanding of the property's role in the historical development of York Mills. The Denisons were a prominent Toronto family known for their connection to the "Bellevue" neighbourhood (present-day Kensington Market) and they owned the subject property for fifty-five years, from 1823 to 1879. Colonel Richard L. Denison, son of George T. Denison who inherited the land from Richard Lippincott, was known as a farmer throughout his life and had a prominent role as the treasurer in the organization known as the Agricultural and Arts Association of Ontario. Furthermore, Richard Denison was a co-founder of the York Pioneer and Historical Society, the oldest historical society in Ontario. Henry Mason purchased the property from Susan Denison, wife of Richard L. Denison, in 1879. Mason sold a portion of the property to York Township in 1886 for the surveying of Mason Boulevard but continued farming the land until 1889 when he sold most of the former 125-acre lot to prospective land developers. The Denison and Mason associations help to illustrate the subject property's initial transition from farmland into subdivision, an early indication of the later widespread urbanization that would change the character of the York Mills community.

Contextually, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse is historically linked to its surroundings in the York Mills neighbourhood, where its irregular lot orientation principally responded to the topography of the Don River ravine lands. Furthermore, it is one of a few extant buildings dating from the 19th century farming and milling settlement established at the intersection of Yonge Street and York Mills Road, adjacent to the West Don River. As a 19th century farmhouse in York Mills, 24 Mason Boulevard has stood in place as the community evolved from an agricultural one to a residential commuter suburb.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

Attributes that contribute to the value of the property at 24 Mason Boulevard as a representative of a vernacular Ontario farmhouse typology that was constructed in the late 19th century include:

- The placement, setback, and orientation of the structure that reference its former function as a farmhouse located on a 125-acre lot
- The scale, form, and massing of the original sections of the circa 1876-1882 two-storey building on a rectangular plan
- The original gable roof, end (or side) gables, and matching chimneys
- The red brick cladding
- The existing position and proportions of all original window openings
- The flat arch, or jack arch, brick voussoir details above all original window openings

Historical and Associative Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 24 Mason Boulevard as yielding information that contributes to an understanding of the evolution of the York Mills community:

- The placement on a slight rise on its natural topography, long setback, and orientation of the structure on the west side of Mason Boulevard

Contextual Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 24 Mason Boulevard as being historically linked to its surroundings:

- The placement on the west side of Mason Boulevard on a slight rise, the generous setback from the roadway, and the angled orientation of the lot, all of which reflect how the property reacts to the natural topography that is in proximity to a ravine landscape setting located to the northeast

Note that the two-storey rear wing (west elevation) that was added after the circa 1876-1882 construction of the original structure and the one-storey rear addition (west elevation) that was added in the 20th century are not identified as heritage attributes. The wraparound verandah at the east and north elevations, and the porch at the west elevation, are also not identified as heritage attributes.

LOCATION MAP AND CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH 24 MASON BOULEVARD

ATTACHMENT 2



Figure 1. This location map is for information purposes only. The exact boundaries of the property are not shown. The red outline marks the location of the subject site (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2023).



Figure 2. View of east elevation at 24 Mason Blvd., which has been modified to serve as the principal elevation (Heritage Planning, 2023).

24 MASON BOULEVARD

In undertaking this research and evaluation, we recognize that 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.



Figure 2. View of east elevation at 24 Mason Blvd., which has been modified to serve as the principal elevation (Heritage Planning, 2023).

1. DESCRIPTION

24 MASON BOULEVARD - Denison/Mason Farmhouse	
ADDRESS	24 Mason Boulevard
WARD	Ward 8 (Eglinton-Lawrence)
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Bedford Park-Nortown
CONSTRUCTION DATE	Estimated date of construction between 1876-1882
ORIGINAL USE	Residential (detached house-form building)
CURRENT USE* (*This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law	Residential (detached house-form building)
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	None found
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 3
LISTING DATE	N/A

2. ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06 CHECKLIST:

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The following checklist identifies the prescribed criteria met by the subject property at 24 Mason Boulevard for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if the property meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property.

24 Mason Boulevard

1.	The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	✓
2.	The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	N/A
3.	The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	N/A
4.	The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	✓
5.	The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	✓
6.	The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	N/A
7.	The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	N/A
8.	The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	✓
9.	The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	N/A

3. RESEARCH

This section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property. Visual resources related to the research are located in Section 4. Archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Section 5 (List of Sources).

i. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties which are the basis for determining historical or associative value of Criteria 4, 5 or 6 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

York Mills

The property at 24 Mason Boulevard is located southwest of the intersection at Yonge Street and York Mills Road/Wilson Avenue in the Bedford Park-Nortown neighbourhood in North York (Figure 1). In this area, the West Don River flows in close proximity, cutting across beneath the intersection then runs parallel to Yonge for half a kilometre before turning in an easterly direction. Up until the early 20th century, various spring creeks connecting to the Don River flowed in the vicinity of the subject property and the area where Yonge Street now crosses the river were wetlands.¹ On the east side of Mason Boulevard and approximately across from the subject property is a wooded ravine lot with natural landscape and topographical features.

European settlement in this area dates to the early years of the 19th century when a milling hamlet developed around the crossroads of Yonge Street and York Mills Road with the opening of three mill sites located on the Don River.² During its early settlement period, the area was known by various names – Big Creek Bridge, Heron's Bridge, Millford Mills - and in 1836 a post office opened under the name "York Mills", a name that came to describe the entire area.³ The subject property originated as part of Township Lot 9 in the First Concession West of Yonge Street in York Township. Patented in 1805, Loyalist John Kendrick acquired the 210 acres, which he subsequently subdivided in two, resulting in an east half and a west half.⁴ The east half was then acquired by Loyalist Captain Richard Lippincott in 1808.⁵

The milling hamlet of York Mills attracted investments, settlement, and was a natural site for industry as it was well situated at a juncture point on Yonge Street - the critical long-distance route linking Toronto to surrounding regions and the Upper Great Lakes; in close proximity to the West Don River; and, at a concession road running east and west. By 1856 when J. and W. Hogg advertised land for sale in a subdivision called "Hogg's Hollow", it was a prosperous community with several churches, a brick schoolhouse, post office, inns (including the extant York Mills Hotel, built circa 1856, replacing an earlier 1836 structure), and many mills in operation along with various subsidiary trades including a blacksmith, cobbler, cooper, and tannery.⁶ The mills in the area also attracted farmers from outlying districts who travelled to York Mills to have their primary products ground or cut.

However, the second half of the 19th century marked the start of the gradual economic decline of York Mills when the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railroad bypassed York Mills for a more westerly route that skirted the steep valley of the West Don River, and the village lost its status as a transportation hub.⁷ The York County Atlas of 1878 showed the development of York Mills to date and illustrated the consistent farm lot patterns

1 Lost Rivers, "Disappearing Rivers," http://mercator.geog.utoronto.ca/georia/lostrivers/leaflet-storymap_webtest/disappearing.html

2 Patricia Hart, *Pioneering in North York*, Toronto: General Publishing Company (1968):145

3 Ibid. Note: By the mid 19th century, the area adjoining Yonge Street was also locally known as "Hogg's Hollow" for the Hogg family who owned substantial property in the area.

4 Book 98, Concession 1; Lot 8 to 9, West, Historical Books, Land Registry Office

5 Ibid

6 Karen Fejer, "Hoggs Hollow: History," <https://hoggshollow.net/about/history/>

7 Scott Kennedy, *Tales from the Hollow*, Altona: Friesen Press (2022):18

adjoining Yonge Street, including Lot 9, immediately southwest of the centre of the village of York Mills (Image 1).

With the decline of the milling industry at the end of the 19th century, the area began to attract the attention of speculative development and the subdivision of lots ensued. The 1892 Belt Line Railway Map showed the subdivision of the east half of Lot 9 as "Eglinton Park" while "Mason Avenue" had been surveyed (Image 2). The transformation of York Mills and other Yonge Street communities from farming or milling hamlets to residential subdivisions was forecast before the World War I with the purchase of large tracts of land by developers for subdivision plans.⁸ However, it was following the Second World War and the opportunities associated with Toronto's post-war population boom that saw increased activity in residential subdivision plans on former farmland and a building boom in York Mills as a commuter suburb.⁹ By 1950, aerial photos of Mason Boulevard and the surrounding area show the densification of the area on former farmland (Image 3). By 1956, the widening of Yonge Street had been completed and the urbanization of North York with planned communities well underway.

Site History and the Denison/Mason Farmhouse

The subject property was originally part of a 210-acre land parcel (known as Lot 9 Concession 1 West of Yonge), spanning west of Yonge Street to Bathurst Street, that the Crown patented to John Kendrick in May of 1805. A mere two months later, Kendrick divided the land in half and granted the western 100-acres to Hugh McPhee in July 1805, and later granted the 110-acre eastern half to Richard Lippincott in 1808. Lippincott's parcel became known as the eastern half of Lot 9 Concession 1 West of Yonge, the boundaries of which comprise the former farmlands that relate to the history of the extant subject property. Land Registry Records indicate that in 1823, Captain Richard Lippincott transferred ownership of the 110-acres to his son-in-law George T. Denison (1783-1853) of "Bellevue" in Toronto (the area now known as Kensington Market). There is at least one recorded instance that confirms the subject property was a working farm when John Watson, a miller by trade, was employed by George T. Denison to work on the 125-acre lot; Watson was also active in establishing the hamlet of York Mills.¹⁰

By 1854, George T. Denison bequeathed the 110-acre lot to his eldest son Richard L. Denison (1814-1878) of "Dover Court" Dundas Street in Toronto, who then purchased an additional 15-acres from Andrew McGlashan.¹¹ Colonel Richard L. Denison was known as a farmer throughout his life and had a prominent role as the treasurer in the

⁸ "Timeline of North York," <https://nyhs.ca/resources-old/timeline-of-north-york/>

⁹ Scott Kennedy, *Tales from the Hollow* (2022):30

¹⁰ The publication, the Toronto Telegram from 1929 reported that Watson helped with the construction of St. John's Anglican Church and was appointed as one of its first wardens. He was later appointed trustee of a newly erected school in York Mills.

¹¹ McGlashan owned his own parcel of land to the north of the Denison farm. McGlashan was also involved with the early development of the York Mills hamlet; he built several residential buildings in the area, but he was perhaps best known for establishing and operating the McGlashan tannery, once located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Yonge Street and Wilson Avenue, approximately.

organization known as the Agricultural and Arts Association of Ontario.¹² Denison was also the co-founder of the York Pioneer and Historical Society, the oldest historical society in Ontario.¹³ However, even though the Denison's owned and maintained the subject property as an active farm for over 50 years, City Directories indicate that their primary residences were based in Toronto.

Land Registry Records indicate that in 1873, the 125-acres was valued at \$14,000 and held in trust; shortly after, in 1876, the land value had increased to \$18,000, suggesting that a structure had been constructed between these dates. The Historical Atlas of the County of York of 1878 shows Richard L. Denison Jr. (son of Colonel Richard L. Denison) as the landowner of Lot 9 (east half) and an existing structure accessed from Yonge Street by a driveway.¹⁴ In 1879, Susan Denison, the widow of Richard L. Denison Jr., sold the east half of Lot 9 (125 acres) to Henry Mason for \$9420.00.¹⁵ Henry Mason was the son of William Mason who arrived in the United States in 1833 from Massingham Norfolk County, England. The Masons first lived in Rochester, New York before immigrating to Canada and settling in Scarborough.¹⁶ Henry Mason was married to Fanny Palmer and they had 10 children; the Mason family moved to York Mills in around 1883, a year after Fanny Palmer died.¹⁷ The 1882 North York tax assessment rolls identify Henry Mason as a farmer and the owner of the subject property, which at this point was valued at \$7300. Ultimately, the date of construction for the subject property is difficult to ascertain given that the structure appearing in the 1878 Map of the County of York cannot be confirmed as the same structure that Mason and his family resided in (i.e. the existing structure at 24 Mason Boulevard). Current research narrows a construction date range from 1876 to 1882. In 1886, the Corporation of York Township acquired land from Henry Mason for a sum of \$1 for the survey of a road (i.e. Mason Avenue, now Boulevard).

In 1889, Henry Mason entered into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale with land developer Edward Gordon for \$43,542. Henry Mason took back a mortgage in the amount \$26,042.¹⁸ That fall, Gordon and George F. Burton filed a registered Plan of Subdivision of the east half of Lot 9. The subject property is situated in Plan 951. In 1911, the Plan was further subdivided by Plan 1546 by William G. Gooderham and subsequently sold to Lonsdale Park Limited in 1914, who further subdivided Plan 1546 with Plan Number 1965. The subject property is on Lot 124 on this Plan.

12 Robert Evelyn Denison, *A History of the Denison Family in Canada, 1792-1910*, Grimsby (1910): 17

13 History | My Site (yorkpioneers.com)

14 Further data extracted from the 1878 Map indicates that Richard L. Denison also owned Concession 5, Lot 3 near the Humber River in Etobicoke. His son, also named Richard L. Denison is associated with Concession 1, Lot 9 (east half).

15 Book 98, Concession 1; Lot 8 to 9, West, Historical Books, Land Registry Office (Note: an economic recession could have resulted in a substantial decrease in value).

16 History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario, Toronto: C. B. Robinson (1885): 230

17 Ibid

18 According to Adams, Fraser, Smith & Shaver who, in 1970, conducted historical research on the ownership history of the subject property reported that Henry Mason was "to retain possession of the house on the premises to May 1, 1890". The source is unknown.

In 1914, Elias Wood purchased Lot 124.¹⁹ Following his death in 1949, ownership of the property was transferred to his daughters - Lilliam Darling and Clara Davies.²⁰ City Directories indicate that the Woods resided at 4 Mason Avenue (subsequently known as 20 then 22 Mason Avenue and now as 24 Mason Boulevard) for over 50 years. In 1970, high school teacher James Devlin and his spouse Janet Devlin purchased the subject property and resided there until 1991. The property is currently occupied and continues to operate as a single-unit residential building.

ii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property which will establish the basis for determining design or physical value of Criteria 1, 2 or 3 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The Denison/Mason Farmhouse is a late-19th century vernacular Ontario farmhouse with an estimated construction date range of 1876 to 1882.²¹ It is the oldest surviving structure within its immediate suburban context that corresponds with the historic boundaries of the Denison farmland on the eastern half of Lot 9 Concession 1 West of Yonge Street (Image 1). The structure has an irregular, angled orientation within its property parcel and a significant setback because its construction pre-dates the layout of the surrounding subdivision. Therefore, its placement principally responds to the topography of the nearby ravine and the original farm lot. The east elevation is now understood as the front elevation due to its public facing relationship to Mason Boulevard; however, this was not the original front elevation of the property (see Images 15 and 16 for further illustration). The structure has undergone several significant and minor alterations since its initial construction that have compounded its vernacular character. Only the confirmed original portions of the circa 1876-1882 structure, discussed below, are considered to be heritage attributes.

In its present form, the Denison/Mason Farmhouse rises two-storeys on an L-shaped plan that is created by a projecting wing on the rear (west) elevation. An ancillary, one-storey rear addition curves around the southwest corner of the wing, where it culminates in a north facing rear entrance (Image 9).²² Beneath a cross-gable roof, the structure is clad with red brick. The original portions of the circa 1876-1882 structure include the rectangular plan with gable roof, a three-bay front elevation, and the two-bay end gables with matching red brick chimneys (north and south elevations). The red brick cladding on the original structure is laid in a running bond, whereas the later rear wing is laid in common bond. Based on available research documents, it is currently unclear when the two-storey rear wing was added. A 1915 photo of the structure confirms that the wing

¹⁹ After purchasing the property, Wood held an auction sale in 1915 to sell off the various farm stock and implements that he had acquired along with the property, including several horses, cattle, harnesses, a harvester, and the like. Auction listing document provided by the current owners.

²⁰ Book 98, Concession 1; Lot 8 to 9, West, Historical Books, Land Registry Office

²¹ The North York tax assessment rolls only go as far back as 1882. As such, this is the earliest date of recorded data on the property and its structure. As previously discussed, the Historical Atlas of the County of York 1878 map suggests that there was a structure on the Richard Denison farm, but there is no definitive evidence to prove that this is the same structure as the extant building.

²² Added circa 1971-1985; North York building records begin in 1986, and historic aerials are unclear.

was in place by this time (Image 4), but the differences in design features suggest that the two branches of the current L-shaped structure were built in separate phases.

A one-storey verandah runs across the front elevation and returns onto the north elevation where it connects to a car port.²³ The same 1915 photo and a later circa 1970 photo show how the original verandah configuration was flipped and formerly wrapped around the front and south elevations instead (Image 5). Brick discolouration on the south elevation gable end indicates the ghost line of the former porch (Image 11). There is another one-storey covered porch at the rear elevation (Image 12).²⁴

The earliest confirmed entrance into the farmhouse was located at the south elevation, near the southwest corner.²⁵ The door, flanked by what appear to be sidelights, is visible in the circa 1970 photo where steps from the porch lead up to the entrance (Image 5). It has since been bricked over and replaced by the current north elevation entrance that utilised a pre-existing ground floor window opening. Comparing two photos from 1966 and 1971 shows how the north elevation had a symmetrical arrangement of four windows within its two bays until 1971 when the lower right-hand window became the door (Images 6 and 7). The 1966 photo also shows the former sleeping porch that was removed (along with the original verandah) by 1971.²⁶

It is likely that the original fenestration arrangement would have followed the rhythm of bays on each elevation of the rectangular plan, but subsequent alterations have reconfigured the layout. All original window openings have flat arch, or jack arch, brick voussoirs.²⁷ The brick voussoirs on the rear wing deviate from this and further deviate within themselves, exhibiting variations on segmental-arched brick voussoirs in soldier course patterns or header rows (Image 13). Non-original openings have no brick voussoirs. All windowpanes and sills have been replaced and all bay windows are new openings or alterations of existing ones.

As is typical of vernacular architecture, the design of the Denison/Mason Farmhouse does not adhere to one particular style. The farmhouse typology in Ontario was particularly prone to vernacular expression due to the various cultural backgrounds of the new settlers and the requirements of the farming context, where harsh conditions,

23 Car port was added in 1999.

24 Both of the existing porches were added circa 1991 and have elements of historicism design.

25 Interior alterations make it difficult to determine the original layout of the property, which would help to confirm whether the south elevation was the first and only entrance. The earliest available aerial photo from 1939 indicates that there was a driveway at the rear of the property, running east-west, which might suggest that there was also an entrance at the west elevation. However, the limited available documentation of the property means that this is purely speculative.

26 What appears to be wood siding (likely cedar) was added to the second storey of the front elevation after the removal of the verandah and sleeping porch. Several alterations to the two ground level windows, currently operating as French doors, have obscured their original design. The front elevation center window was, at one point, a door that allowed access into the sleeping porch. It has since been converted back to a window (post-1971).

27 The voussoirs on the upper windows of the front elevation are covered by the eaves. All original jack arches on the second storey are laid in a single soldier course pattern.

prioritisation of working the land, and possible financial constraints saw the function of the farmhouse typology prevail over regulations in style.²⁸

The original portions of the Denison/Mason Farmhouse loosely approximate the Georgian style, evidenced in the borrowed features of the plain red brick, flat or jack arch voussoirs, and the lower pitch of the roofline.²⁹ However, prevalence of the Georgian style in Ontario roughly spanned from the late 18th to the mid-19th century, which pre-dates the Denison/Mason Farmhouse. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the structure ever had a central entrance – which is a tenant of the Georgian style. By comparison, the Mercer Farmhouse at 72 Old Burnhamthorpe Road was built in the 1820s and is a more formal example of a Georgian style farmhouse: it is also two-storeys with a gable roof and end gables with matching chimneys and jack arch voussoirs, but it has a symmetrical three-bay principal elevation with a centered main entrance, bricks laid in Flemish bond, and a cornice (Image 14).

Comparing these two structures helps one to see how the Denison/Mason Farmhouse is a later, vernacular interpretation. Instead of following a formal style, its original layout better corresponds with the typology of an I-form building, which are identifiable by these commonly shared proportions: two rooms in length, one room in depth, two-storeys in height, and side gables.³⁰ The origin of the I-form is connected with the farming function and can be traced to farmsteads in the southern USA (as well as the Philadelphia urban house, also called a spec house).³¹ Notably, the I-form holds common principles with the Georgian style, like their symmetry, regular plans, and uncluttered façades, such that they were easily adapted to include elements of the Georgian style,³² as in the case of 24 Mason Boulevard.

The Denison/Mason Farmhouse possesses similarities and takes some elements of the Georgian style, but ultimately simplifies them to better suit the needs of a farming property whose connection to, and representation of, the early character of York Mills as a milling and farming hamlet is typified and communicated through its modesty rather than any grandiosity. While the structure has been altered through a series of additions and rearrangements made in the 20th century, the original section of the building remains a surviving representation of a late-19th century Ontario farmhouse typology with its rectangular plan, gable roof with end gables, red brick cladding, and brick voussoir details.

iii. CONTEXT

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining contextual value of Criteria 7, 8 or 9

28 John Blumenson, *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the Present*, Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside (1990): 5.

29 Blumenson, 8.

30 Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression*, New York: Icon Editions (1992): 56.

31 Gowans, 56.

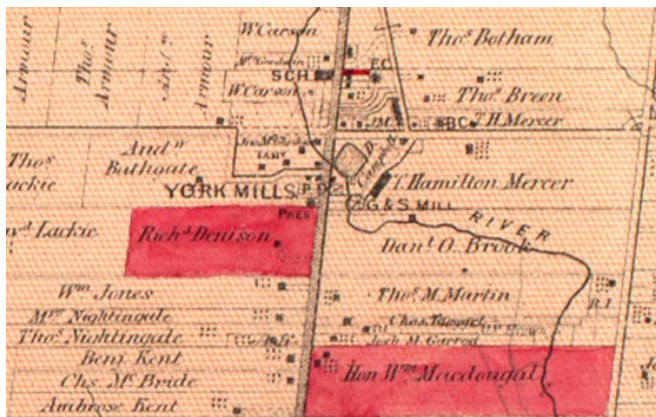
32 Gowans, 56.

according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria. The City of Toronto Property Data Map attached (Attachment 2) shows the site of the property at 24 Mason Boulevard.

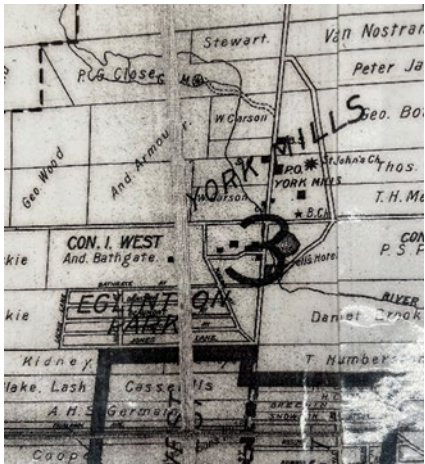
Located southwest of Yonge Street and York Mills Road/Wilson Avenue in North York, the subject property is found on the west side of Mason Boulevard, directly west of Yonge Street (Figure 1). The Denison/Mason Farmhouse is viewed from Mason Boulevard where it is set back from the roadway behind a low stone wall and mature tree canopy and is accessed from a driveway. Mason Boulevard has a slight incline and a bend just south of the subject property (Image 17). A portion of the Don River ravine lands characterized by their sloped topography and natural landscape features are immediately to the northeast of the subject property on the east side of Mason Blvd. The ravine lands are part of the Don River watershed, stewarded by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA). The Denison/Mason Farmhouse has been absorbed into a residential subdivision to the north, west, and south with a combination of postwar and contemporary housing.

The Denison/Mason Farmhouse is one of a few extant structures that were constructed in the area when it was part of the hamlet of York Mills in York Township and prior to the incorporation of North York in 1922. Further east on Yonge Street near its intersection with York Mills Road, the heritage property at 3885 Yonge Street contains the Miller Tavern (also known as the Jolly Miller Tavern) which was constructed in 1857 to replace an earlier inn built in 1836. Similarly, on the east side of Yonge Street, situated near the Don River are residential dwellings linked to York Township, including the George S. Pratt House (circa 1886) and 5 Old Yonge Street (1855), both of which are listed on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. C.W. Jeffrey's House (1833) and St. John's Anglican Church (circa 1843-44) are just north of the intersection at Yonge and York Mills and the former designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act while the latter is on the City's Heritage Register.

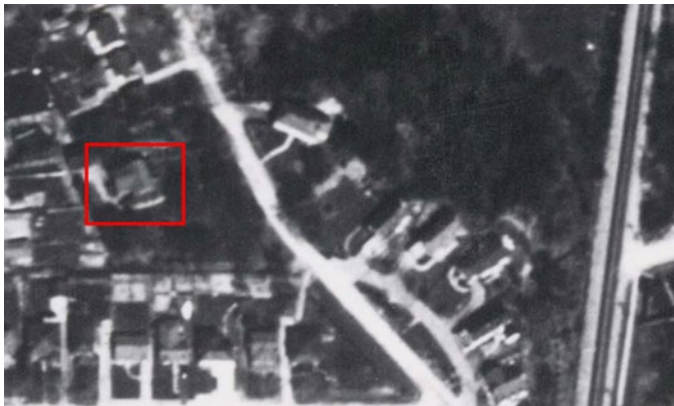
4. VISUAL RESOURCES



1. Detail of the 1878 Map of the County of York showing the East Half of Lot 9 owned by Richard Denison. A structure accessed from Yonge Street by a driveway is present (McGill, Digital Archives).



2. Detail of the 1892 Belt Line Railway Map showing the subdivision of Lot 9, east half marketed as "Eglinton Park". Mason Boulevard has been surveyed (NYCL).



3. Aerial photograph from 1950 showing the urbanization of the area surrounding the subject property, outlined in red, which has been absorbed into a residential development. Note the size of the lot, indicative of the property's past farm function, which will eventually see additional infill (CTA, annotated by Heritage Planning).



4. Partial view of the south elevation of 24 Mason Blvd. in 1915 showing the original verandah and part of the rear wing addition to the left of the building. Note that the rear wing once had a chimney; this was removed in 1999 (Ted Chirnside, North York Historical Society).



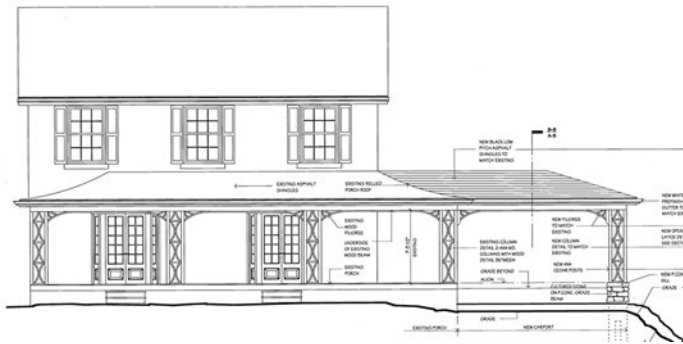
5. Historic photo of 24 Mason Blvd., taken between 1930-1970, showing the south elevation with original verandah and the earliest confirmed entrance at lower left, and the sleeping porch at upper right. The rear (west) wing addition is also visible (Photo provided by property owners, n.d., estimated date range determined by historical aerials and the post-1970 alterations).



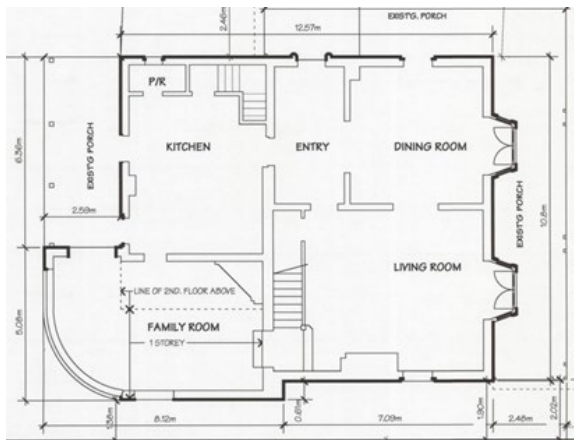
6. View of the east and north elevations of 24 Mason Blvd showing the original verandah, the sleeping porch, and the original configuration of the windows on the north elevation (North York Historical Society, 1966, NYCL).



7. View of the front (east) elevation of 24 Mason Blvd. The verandah and sleeping porch have been removed. Note the awning added to the bottom right opening on the north elevation, indicating the new entrance (North York Historical Society, 1971, NYCL).



8. Front (east) elevation as drawn by Rink Wink Architects Inc. in 1999, showing the new verandah, French doors, and proposed car port (North York Building Records).



9. Floor plan showing the interior layout of 24 Mason Blvd. in 1999 and the curving one-storey addition at bottom left, labelled as the 'Family Room' (Rick Wink Architect Inc. via North York Building Records).



10. View of 24 Mason Blvd. looking southwest, showing the integration of the rear wing (west) with the north elevation (Heritage Planning, 2023).



11. Partial view of the south elevation showing the ghost line of the former verandah, the two original flat or jack arch voussoirs, and the non-original bay window. The former south elevation entrance, beneath the bay window, has been bricked over (Heritage Planning, 2023).



12. Partial view of the west elevation rear wing showing the non-original porch and bay windows. To the lower right is part of the one-storey rear addition with the entrance into the family room (Heritage Planning, 2023).



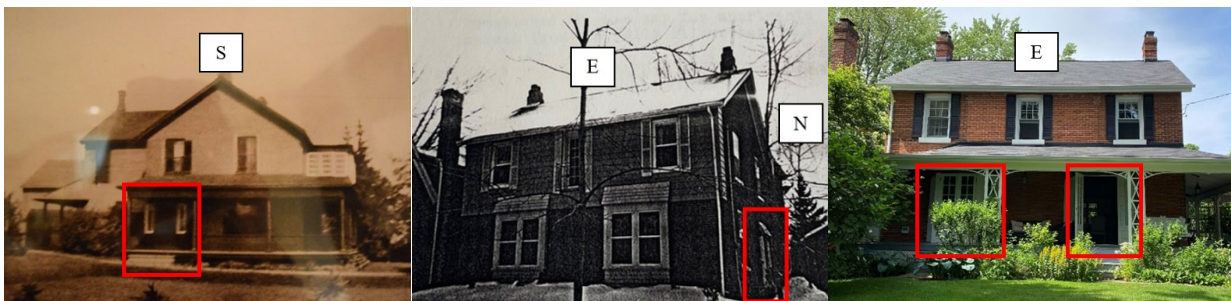
13. Detail comparison of the jack arch brick voussoirs on the original portion of the subject property (at far left) and the varied segmental arch brick voussoirs on the rear wing (Heritage Planning, 2023).



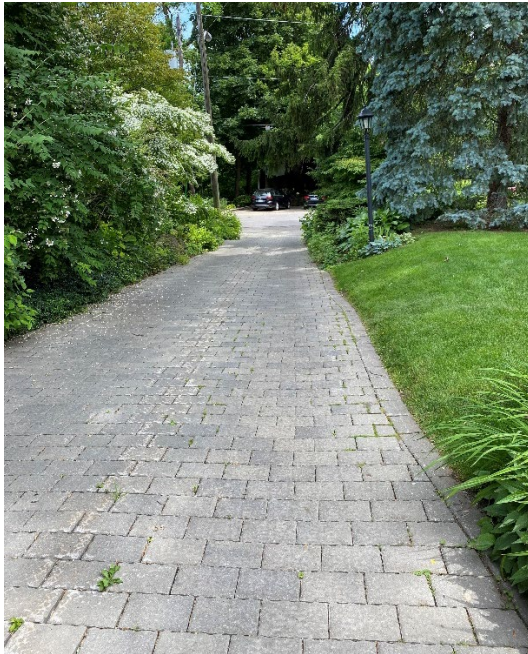
14. Comparison photo of the Georgian style farmhouse at 72 Old Burnhamthorpe Road, known as the Mercer House. Built in the 1820s, its design elements conform to the typical characteristics of the Georgian style, as discussed in Section 3 (Alessandro Tersigni, 2021 via <https://www.acotoronto.ca>).



15. Aerial photo of 24 Mason Blvd. in 2022 that indexes the elevations of the subject property. The south elevation was the earliest known entrance. In 1971, the south entrance was bricked over, and the north elevation became the main entrance. Between 1972-1990, new entrances were added to the west and east elevations (City of Toronto Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning).



16. From left to right: annotated versions of the circa 1930-1970, 1971, and 2023 photographs of 24 Mason Blvd. with elevations labeled and entrances outlined in red (Heritage Planning, 2023).



17. Photo taken from the current driveway of 24 Mason Blvd., looking east to Mason Boulevard and the ravine, showing the slope of the topography that rises up to where the farmhouse sits at a higher elevation (Heritage Planning, 2023).

5. LIST OF SOURCES

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

- Aerial Map, City of Toronto Archives, 1950
- Building Records, North York, Records for 24 Mason Boulevard (1991 & 1999)
- Canadian Census Records, 1881
- City of Toronto Archives [CTA], Photographic Collection
- City of Toronto Directories, 1926, 1930, 1946, 1951, 1961
- Directory for the Township of York, 1870
- Land registry Office, Historical Books: Book 98, Concession 1; Lot 8 to 9, West
- Miles, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, 1878, McGill University, Digital Library
- North York Central Library [NYCL], North York Historical Society Research Collection
- Tax Assessment Rolls, York Township, 1882

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Blumenson, John. *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the Present*. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1990.
- Denison, Robert Evelyn. *A History of the Denison Family in Canada, 1792-1910*. Grimsby, 1910.
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- Gowans, Alan. *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression*. New York: Icon Editions, 1992.

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- Kennedy, Scott. *Tales from the Hollow: The Story of Hogg's Hollow and York Mills*. Altona: Friesen Press, 2022.
- Mulvany, Charles Pelham. *History of Toronto and County of York: Containing an Outline of the History of the Dominion of Canada; a History of the City of Toronto and the County of York, Ontario*. Toronto: C. B. Robinson, 1885.
- North York Historical Society. <https://nyhs.ca/resources/timeline-of-north-york/>
- *The Toronto Telegram*, August 13, 1928, page 20.