

## **450 Rustic Road - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act**

**Date:** April 16, 2025

**To:** Planning and Housing Committee

**From:** Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

**Wards:** Ward 5 - York South-Weston

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 450 Rustic Road 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.

The subject property at 450 Rustic Road is located on the north side of Rustic Road, south of Highway 401, and west of Keele Street. A location map and current photographs of the heritage property are found in Attachment 2.

The property at 450 Rustic Road contains a rare Pre-Confederation houseform building composed of two sections, the original circa 1843 modest-sized rural dwelling with Georgian styling and a circa 1855 expansion that evolved the dwelling into a grand farmhouse into the more ornate Italianate architectural style.

The building was associated with the Bull family for over 83 years. The house was constructed for John Perkins Bull (1822-1902), a local Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Reeve for York Township, as his residence. While the subject property that contains the house was sold in 1886, it was not until 1913 that the Bull family sold the remaining six acres of the 200-acre property, which Bartholomew Bull (1791-1879) purchased in 1830, from the estate of Robert J.D. Gray, the Crown Grantee. Known as "Downs View House", the historic structure is oriented eastwards towards Keele Street, which was the property's original entry point. The community of Downsview was named after this landmark property.

Since the 1960s, the subject property operated as a nursing home. The property contains a late-20th century, one-and two-storey institutional building, which extends north on the property from the north elevation of the c.1843 wing. The North Park Nursing Home facility closed in 2024, and the property is vacant and currently for sale.

The subject property was recognized for its architectural and historical significance by the former municipality of North York in 1977 with its inclusion on the heritage inventory and, following amalgamation, it was listed on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register on September 27, 2006, for its cultural heritage value or interest.

Bill 23 of the Ontario Heritage Act requires listed properties either be designated by a municipality or be removed from a Heritage Register by January 1, 2027.

The local Councillor requested Heritage Planning in June 2024 to research and evaluate the property due to concerns surrounding the closure of the nursing home and the expiration of the property's listing originally scheduled for January 1, 2025.

As of January 1, 2023, should a property be subject to an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application, properties must be listed on the heritage register prior to Part IV designation and before the occurrence of a prescribed event. A prescribed event is a point of time when the application for an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application has been deemed complete and the City Clerk provides notice of that complete application to the public in accordance with the Planning Act.

Staff have determined that the property at 450 Rustic Road has cultural heritage value and meets five 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.

Designation enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance. Designation also gives property owners access to City of Toronto heritage incentive programs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 450 Rustic Road under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance: 450 Rustic Road (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1, to the report dated April 16, 2025, from the 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

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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.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

## DECISION HISTORY

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In 1977, North York Council included the subject property at 450 Rustic Road on the Inventory of Heritage Properties in the City of North York. The property is currently listed on the City's Heritage Register as of 2006.

## POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

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### 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 Planning Statement (2024) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented.  
[Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(ontario.ca\)](#)

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/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

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On January 17, 1977, Council passed By-law No. 26643 establishing the North York Historical Board (NYHB). The NYHB identified the subject property on its inaugural Heritage Inventory in 1977.

The 1976 nursing home extension is not considered a heritage attribute of the property.

In March 1994, Fayle Associates prepared, "Heritage Structure Report: John Perkins Bull House, 450 Rustic Road, City of North York" that included measured drawings.

### Evaluation Analysis

The following evaluation analysis is based on the comprehensive research conducted on the property at 450 Rustic Road (see Attachment 3) and provides a rationale for the recommendations found in this report.

The property at 450 Rustic Road meets the following five out of nine criteria.

**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**

The property at 450 Rustic Road, known as Downs View House, has design and physical value as a rare and representative example of a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse incorporating Georgian and Italianate elements which was constructed between c. 1843, and c. 1855. The rectangular form, massing and detailing of the c.1843 section, including the moderately pitched side gable roof, balanced window openings topped by brick voussoirs, and multi-paned, flat-headed windows separated and supported by wooden muntin bars are all reflective of the Georgian architectural style.

The c.1855 section is defined by its two storey, square massing; shallow pitch, hipped roof with deeply overhanging eaves decorated with ornamental wooden brackets; prominent brick and wood clad projecting tower; decorative brickwork including raised brick quoins, decorative stringcourses, and brick voussoirs; segmentally arched windows with hood mouldings, and large, rectangular multi-paned windows, all of which are elements indicative of Italianate style villas and farmhouses in Ontario. Upon its completion, this grander section became the Bull family's main farmhouse and the smaller c.1843 section became the west wing.

As viewed from Keele Street across an expansive green lawn, the main house served the dual purpose of reflecting Italianate architecture's goal of creating places that were meant to be picturesque ornaments in carefully landscaped settings, and as a prominent statement of John Perkins Bull's standing in the community.

**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**

450 Rustic Road is valued for its direct associations with Bartholomew Bull who purchased the 200-acre property in 1830, from the estate of Robert J.D. Gray, the Crown Grantee, with his son, John Perkins Bull, who constructed his home, Downs View House between c.1843 and c.1855, and with John's grandson, William Perkins Bull (1870-1948), who was born and raised in Downs View House.

Bartholomew Bull emigrated from Ireland arriving in York, Upper Canada in 1818. In 1824, he acquired 200-acres of land between what is now Dufferin Street, Ossington Avenue, Davenport Road, and St. Clair Avenue. He was a devoted Methodist, who is remembered as an early immigrant success story who made the transition from a "bush farmer" to a prominent landowner whose sons became doctors and lawyers.

John Perkins Bull was a prominent member of the community, where he served as Deputy Reeve (1871-1877), and Justice of the Peace for York Township, earning the nickname "Squire Bull". A Justice of the Peace for 35 years, John Perkins Bull is purported to have held court in the projecting tower of his home at Downs View House and even used the basement as a holding chamber. Bull was also a promoter and president of the local agricultural society. A devout Methodist, Bull was instrumental in the founding of the York Methodist Church, the precursor to Downsview United Church. Before the first Methodist church was built in 1850, John Perkins Bull welcomed the congregation to meet at Downs View. It was John's first wife, Caroline (nee Carpenter) Bull, who is credited with naming the property "Downs View" because of its position on a high point of land, which afforded it view of its surroundings, or downs. The name was later given to the local post office, church, school, and community.

William Perkins Bull K.C., LL.D. (1870-1948) was a lawyer, businessperson, philanthropist, and local history collector and author. After attending Osgoode Hall Law School, William Perkins Bull became the youngest Kings Counsel in 1896. He is best known for establishing, in England during World War One, the Perkins Bull Convalescent Hospital for wounded and recovering Canadian officers, as well as for his love of history. The latter passion led to Bull's own research and writing on the history of Peel County and surrounding area. His last publication, *From Oxford to Ontario: a history of the Downsview community* includes a sketch of Downs View House by Bull's grandson, Forsey Pemberton Bull Page (1885-1970) of the prominent Page and Steele architectural firm.

The contributions of William Perkins Bull K.C., LL.D. to the preservation of cultural heritage are recognized by the Ontario Heritage Trust with a plaque (2007) located in front of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA) in Brampton where his research is preserved.

**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 450 Rustic Road has historical and associative value as it contributes to an understanding of the early development of the historic community of Downsview. As the village's namesake, Downs View House played a central institutional role in the fledgling community both as a place of worship for York Methodist (Downsview United) Church from its founding in 1844 until 1850, and as a seemingly informal courthouse and jail during John Perkins Bull's 35-year term as the local Justice of the Peace.

**The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings**

Downs View House has contextual value as it is physically and historically linked to Rustic Road. Originally named Bull('s) Lane, this road was likely the namesake of the original owner, John Perkins Bull, and the laneway to the c.1843 house, whose principal (south) elevation is oriented toward this road. As the oldest surviving structure in the area and one of only three remaining 19th-century structures from the historic community of Downsview included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register, Downs View House continues to define the Pre-Confederation era, rural character of its eponymous community.

**The property has contextual value because it is a landmark**

Prominently situated atop a natural rise in the local topography near Keele Street, south of the 401, the property at 450 Rustic Road (Downs View House) has contextual value as a landmark for its central role in the 19th-century history of the Downsview community.

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 450 Rustic Road, as all of these documents are integral to the recommendations made in this staff report.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Staff have determined that the property at 450 Rustic Road meets five out of nine 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.

The Statement of Significance: 450 Rustic Road (Reasons for Designation) is attached as Attachment 1 to this report and comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Thorne  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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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 450 Rustic Road, "Downs View House", is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value and interest as it meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the categories of design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual value.

**Description**

The property at 450 Rustic Road is located on the north side of Rustic Road, south of Highway 401 and west of Keele Street. Constructed in two phases (c.1843 and c.1855), the property contains Downs View House, a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse. A two-storey residential care facility built in 1976 extends northward from the farmhouse building. The property is the namesake of the historic village of Downsview and the current Downsview neighbourhood.

The property has been recognized by the former municipality of North York for its cultural heritage value since 1977.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value****Design or Physical Value**

Downs View House has design and physical value as a rare and representative surviving example of a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse in Toronto, and the earliest of only three remaining 19th-century structures from the historic community of Downsview that are included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. The two other 19th century structures are Downsview United Church (1870), a local landmark located at 2822 Keele Street, and the George Jackson House (after 1885), located at 2950 Keele Street.

The property at 450 Rustic Road, known as Downs View House, has design and physical value as a rare and representative example of a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse incorporating Georgian and Italianate architectural features which was constructed in two phases (c.1843 and c.1855). The rectangular form, massing and detailing of the c.1843 section, including the moderately pitched side gable roof, balanced window openings topped by brick voussoirs, and multi-paned, flat-headed windows separated and supported by wooden muntin bars are all reflective of the Georgian architectural style.

The c.1855 section is defined by its two storey, square massing; shallow pitch, hipped roof with deeply overhanging eaves decorated with ornamental wooden brackets; prominent brick and wood clad projecting tower; decorative brickwork including raised brick quoins, decorative stringcourses, and brick voussoirs; segmentally arched windows with hood mouldings, and large, rectangular multi-paned windows, all of which

are elements indicative of Italianate style villas and farmhouses in Ontario. Upon its completion, this grander section became the Bull family's main farmhouse and the smaller c.1843 section become the west wing. As viewed from Keele Street across an expansive green lawn, the main house served the dual purpose of reflecting Italianate architecture's goal of creating places that were meant to be picturesque ornaments in carefully landscaped settings, and as a prominent statement of John Perkins Bull's standing in the community.

### **Historical or Associative Value**

450 Rustic Road is valued for its direct associations with Bartholomew Bull who purchased the 200-acre property in 1830, from the estate of Robert J.D. Gray, the Crown Grantee with his son, John Perkins Bull, who constructed his home, Downs View House between c.1843 and c.1855, and with John's grandson, William Perkins Bull (1870-1948), who was born and raised in Downs View House.

Bartholomew Bull emigrated from Ireland arriving in York, Upper Canada in 1818. In 1824, he acquired 200-acres of land between what is now Dufferin Street, Ossington Avenue, Davenport Road, and St. Clair Avenue. He was a devoted Methodist, who is remembered as an early immigrant success story who made the transition from a "bush farmer" to a prominent landowner whose sons became doctors and lawyers.

John Perkins Bull was a prominent member of the community, where he served as Deputy Reeve (1871-1877), and Justice of the Peace for York Township, earning the nickname "Squire Bull". A Justice of the Peace for 35 years, John Perkins Bull is purported to have held court in the projecting tower of his home at Downs View House and even used the basement as a holding chamber. Bull was also a promoter and president of the local agricultural society. A devout Methodist, Bull was instrumental in the founding of the York Methodist Church, the precursor to Downsvue United Church. Before the first Methodist church was built in 1850, John Perkins Bull welcomed the congregation to meet at Downs View. It was John's first wife, Caroline (nee Carpenter) Bull, who is credited with naming the property "Downs View" because of its position on a high point of land, which afforded it view of its surroundings, or downs. The name was later given to the local post office, church, school, and community.

William Perkins Bull (1870-1948) was a lawyer, businessperson, philanthropist, and local history collector and author. After attending Osgoode Hall Law School, William Perkins Bull became the youngest Kings Counsel in 1896. He is best known for establishing, in England during World War One, the Perkins Bull Convalescent Hospital for wounded and recovering Canadian officers, as well as for his love of history. The latter passion led to Bull's own research and writing on the history of Peel County and surrounding area. His last publication, *From Oxford to Ontario: a history of the Downsvue community* includes a sketch of Downs View House by Bull's grandson, Forsey Pemberton Bull Page (1885-1970) of the prominent Page and Steele architectural firm. The contributions of William Perkins Bull to the preservation of cultural heritage are recognized on an Ontario Heritage Trust plaque (2007) located in front of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA) in Brampton where his research is preserved.

## **Contextual Value**

Downs View House has contextual value as it is physically and historically linked to Rustic Road. Originally named Bull('s) Lane, this road was likely both the namesake of the original owner, John Perkins Bull and the laneway to the c.1843 house, whose principal (south) elevation is oriented toward this road. As the oldest surviving structure in the area and one of only three remaining 19th-century structures from the historic community of Downsview included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register, Downs View House continues to define the Pre-Confederation era, rural character of its eponymous community.

Prominently situated atop a natural rise in the local topography near Keele Street, south of the 401, the property at 450 Rustic Road (Downs View House) has contextual value as a landmark for its central role in the 19th-century history of the Downsview community.

## **Heritage Attributes**

### **Design or Physical Value**

Attributes that contribute to the value of the property at 450 Rustic Road as a rare and representative example of a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse incorporating Georgian and Italianate architectural features, include:

#### **1843 Section (former main dwelling, now west wing):**

- the one-and-a-half storey scale, with rectangular form and massing on a fieldstone foundation
- the moderately pitched side gable roof, with shallow, projecting boxed and returned eaves, and a shed dormer on the rear (north) elevation adjacent to the abutting west elevation of the 1855 extension
- the brick cladding
- on the principal (south) elevation, the existing arrangement of door and window openings
- on the west elevation, the symmetrical, two bay organization and arrangement of the window openings with their radiating brick voussoirs and projecting sills
- the existing flat-headed window openings surmounted by radiating brick voussoirs
- the fenestration pattern, which includes six-over-six and six-over-three wooden window frames with wooden muntin bars

#### **1855 Section (main house):**

- the two-storey scale with rectangular form and massing on a fieldstone foundation and a square, two-storey projecting tower on the south elevation
- the shallow-pitched, hipped roof with projecting and boxed eaves with small paired ornamental eaves brackets and surmounted by a "widows walk"
- the gabled roof dormer with its pediment and one-over-one window framed by flat pilasters on the side (west) elevation.

- the brick cladding with decorative brick quoining, raised brick stringcourses at the eaves and second-storey windowsill level, and decorative recessed rectangular panels below the first-floor windows
- on the south elevation of the building, the main entryway accessed via a covered verandah and vestibule
- The main entrance door on the south elevation, (accessed via the vestibule in east elevation of the projecting tower) with its rounded panels and detailed moulding framed by a flat-headed transom and tall rectangular sidelights within panelled reveals
- the existing arrangement of single and paired window openings
- the existing combination of window opening types, including flat-headed, rounded-arched, and segmental-arched
- the existing combination of voussoirs, including arched, and flat with keystones
- on the east elevation, the balanced three-bay organization of window openings with their radiating brick voussoirs and existing fenestration pattern
- on the north elevation, the asymmetrical arrangement of window and door openings, including radiating brick voussoirs over the rear entryway door and second floor window, and the arched brick voussoir over the double hung, six-over-six rounded arch window and 8-paned storm window
- on the south and east elevations, the window openings with their flat pilaster trim and moulded capitals on plain base blocks, and radiating brick voussoirs with keystones
- the existing fenestration pattern, which includes six-over-six, three-pane round-headed windows atop six-over-six, six-over-three, and round-arched, multi-paned, painted glass windows in the projecting tower, all with their wooden muntin bars
- on the west elevation, the single stack, inset brick chimney with a corbelled cap

#### Interior Attributes

- the side hall plan with a J-plan, or double-winder, main stairway on the west wall of the entry hall
- the detailing of the main stairway, with its moulded hardwood balustrade and railing terminating in a whorl and supported by turned balusters (currently painted), open stringer decorated with “S”-shaped brackets, and series of vertical moulded panels on the wall below
- the decorative plaster ceiling medallions with fine sculptured acanthus leaf centres in the entry hall and parlour

#### Contextual Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 450 Rustic Road being physically and historically linked to its surroundings include:

- the original setback, placement, and orientation of the building on Rustic Road, which likely started out as the farm’s laneway and was originally called Bull(s) Lane

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 450 Rustic Road as a landmark:

- the original setback, placement, and orientation of Downs View House on a rise on the north side of Rustic Road and west side of Keele Street

NOTE: The 1976 nursing home extension is not considered a heritage attribute.

## LOCATION MAP AND CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH

### 450 RUSTIC ROAD

## ATTACHMENT 2

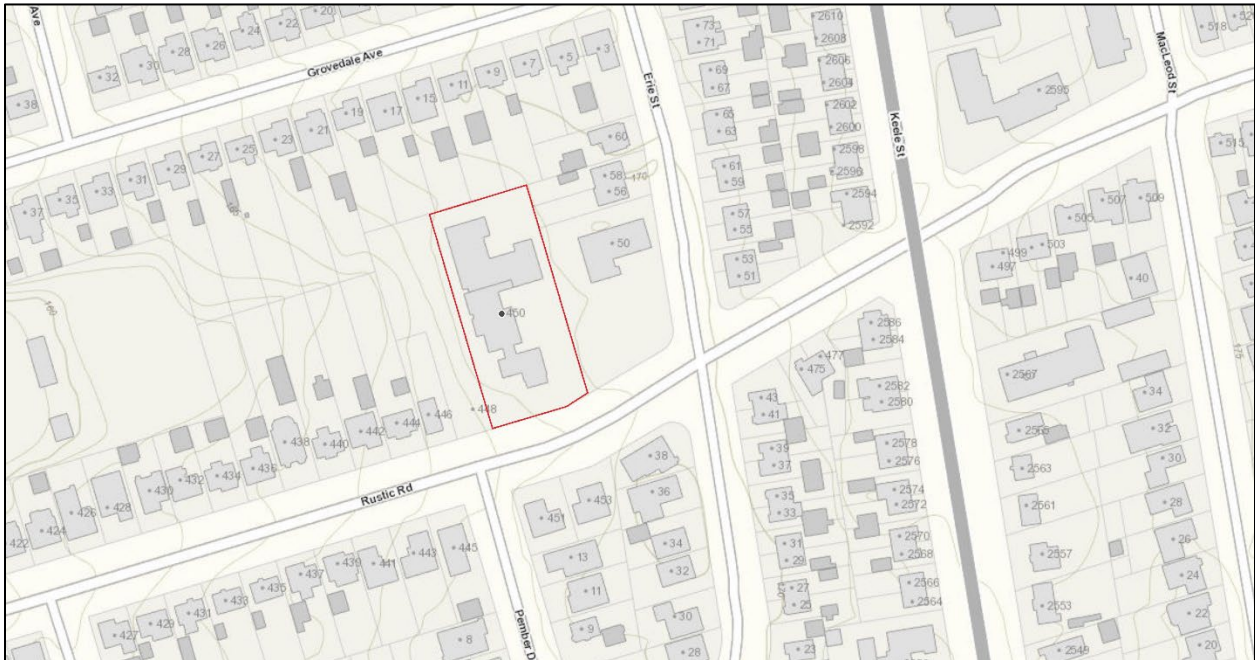


Figure 1. This location map is for information purposes only. The exact boundaries of the property are not shown. The red outline marks the location of 450 Rustic Road (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 2. 450 Rustic Road (Heritage Planning, 2025).

**RESEARCH, EVALUATION &  
VISUAL RESOURCES  
450 RUSTIC ROAD**

**ATTACHMENT 3**

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 Anishinaabeg, 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 3. 450 Rustic Road (Heritage Planning, 2025).

**1. DESCRIPTION**

450 RUSTIC ROAD - DOWNS VIEW HOUSE	
ADDRESS	450 Rustic Road
WARD	5 - York South - Weston
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Maple Leaf
CONSTRUCTION DATE	c.1843 (former main dwelling, now west wing) and c.1855 (main house)
ORIGINAL USE	Residential
CURRENT USE* (*This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law	Vacant - formerly institutional
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Unknown
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	1976
LISTING DATE	1977 (Inventory of Heritage Properties in North York) and 2006.

## 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 450 Rustic Road 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.

#### 450 RUSTIC ROAD

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.	✓

## 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.

The property at 450 Rustic Road is a rare and representative example of a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse incorporating Georgian and Italianate elements, which was constructed between c.1843, and c.1855. It is the oldest remaining structure in the area and one of only three remaining 19th century structures from the historic community of Downsview included on the City of Toronto Heritage Register.<sup>1</sup> The two other 19th century structures are Downsview United Church (1870), a local landmark located at 2822 Keele Street, and the George Jackson House (after 1885), located at 2950 Keele Street.

Constructed in phases, the property features a one-and-a-half storey structure which was built c.1843, and a later c.1855, two-storey structure which was added to the early, c.1843, section of the building. The final phase of construction on the property finished in 1976, when a one- and two-storey nursing home building was added to the north elevation of the 19th century structure.

John Perkins Bull constructed the 19th century structure on land that at the time was owned by his parents Bartholomew and Elizabeth Bull, immigrants from Ireland who arrived in the area c. 1818. The property originally formed part of Lot 8, Concession 4 West of Yonge which was granted by the Crown to Robert J.D. Gray in 1798. In 1830, Lot 8 was purchased by Bartholomew Bull from Robert Gray's estate.<sup>2</sup>

In 1842, after graduating from Victoria College, in Cobourg, Ontario, John Perkins Bull returned to the area and settled on his father's property - Lot 8, Concession 4 West of Yonge Street (WYS) and cleared the land and constructed a cabin on the property.<sup>3</sup> By c.1843, he had replaced his cabin with the one-and-a-half storey side gable dwelling which still stands today, to the west of the larger c.1855, two-storey structure.<sup>4</sup> Between the construction of these two buildings, c.1844, Bull married Caroline Amelia Carpenter, who is credited with giving the 200-acre farm its name "Downs View House" because of its position on a high point of land, which afforded it view of its surroundings, or downs.

As well as being a farmer, John Perkins Bull was a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Reeve for York Township. A devout Methodist, Bull was instrumental in the founding of the York Methodist Church, the precursor to Downsview United Church. Founded in 1844, the congregation met at Downsview until a church was built in 1850 along Keele Street near Wilson Avenue.<sup>5</sup> The current church building, on the west side of Keele Street, north of Wilson Avenue, was constructed in 1870 and is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. When the first Post Office in the area was opened on the northeast corner of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue in 1869, it adopted the name

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1 Heritage Register, City of Toronto

2 Ontario Land Registry, Office 80, Book 156.

3 Bull, 1941

4 Toronto Heritage Register; Goldenberg, 2023.

5 Ibid, Bull, 1941.

Downsview after Downs View House three Lots south on the opposite side of Keele Street.<sup>6</sup>

While residing at Downsview, John Perkins Bull served as a Justice of the Peace for 35 years, acquiring the nickname of "Squire Bull". It was during this time that he was also referred to as J.P., which were both his initials and the abbreviation used for Justice of the Peace, which can be seen on the 1861 Tremaine Map which also identifies Bull's property as Downsview.<sup>7</sup> Various accounts of the history of J.P. Bull note that as Justice of the Peace, he would often try cases at Downsview, rather than travel on the poor country roads. These accounts also note that Bull constructed an addition to the house to serve as a courtroom, while the house's basement served as a makeshift prison.<sup>8</sup>

In 1870, John Perkins Bull's grandson, William Perkins Bull, was born at "Downs View House" where he would live until his father, Bartholomew Hill Bull, moved the family to Chinguacousy Township. After attending Osgoode Hall Law School, William Perkins Bull became the youngest Kings Counsel in 1896. After establishing a successful law practice where he served as the solicitor for Timothy Eaton. William expanded his business interests to include oil, lumber and land speculation. While living in England during the First World War, he and his wife Maria (nee Brennan) Bull (1876-1934) established the Perkins Bull Convalescent Hospital for wounded and recovering Canadian officers. After the war William returned to Canada where in the 1930s, he began to assemble a library of rare books by Canadian authors, subsequently researching and publishing ten books on the history of Peel and the surrounding area. In 1941, he published his last book: From Oxford to Ontario: a history of the Downsview community, which includes a sketch of the Downsview house by another grandson of J.P. Bull, prominent architect Forsey Pemberton Bull Page.

Recognizing his contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage, in 2007 the Ontario Heritage Trust unveiled a plaque honouring William Perkins Bull in front of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum, and Archives in Brampton. The plaque states that, "Perkins Bull was considered ahead of his time in recognizing the historical value of oral and written accounts, photographs, everyday objects, and the built environment. He collected pioneer artefacts and Canadian art and much of this collection, including his research, is preserved at the Peel Heritage Complex in Brampton."<sup>9</sup>

In 1879, John Perkins Bull sold 150 acres of the property to Joseph Lennox, retaining ownership of the house and fifty acres, which he would later sell to Lennox in 1886.<sup>10</sup>

In 1944, Lilyan P. McColl purchased the property and it first appears as Hallam Nursing Home in 1962 before appearing as North Park Nursing Home in the 1966 Directory with the property being granted to Dundee Rustic Holding Ltd. that same year. After operating for more than sixty years as a nursing home, in May 2024, it was announced

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6 City of Toronto, 2008.

7 Ibid, Tremaine, 1860

8 Bull, 1941.

9 Ontario Heritage Trust, William Perkins Bull, K.C., LL.D. 1870-1948, 2007

10 Ontario Land Registry, Book 156.

in the Toronto Star that North Park Nursing Home would be closing by the end of the year.

## **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 property at 450 Rustic Road contains a Pre-Confederation brick farmhouse. The property is defined by a historic structure that Bull had constructed in two phases, with the one-and-a-half storey section dating from c. 1843, and a two-storey section dating from c. 1855. (See figures 14 and 15). It is also the location of a large, modern one-, and two-storey residential care addition which was built to the north of the historic farmhouse in 1976. (See figure 13).

The first phase of construction occurred c.1843 on what was then Bull's main dwelling. The building's rectangular massing, moderately pitched side gable roof, balanced window openings topped by brick voussoirs, and multi-paned flat-headed windows separated and supported by wooden muntin bars are all elements reflective of the Georgian architectural style. It is probable that this section of the farmhouse started out with a balanced, three-bay front (south) façade, with a fourth, six-over-three window on the east side of the second floor, completing the third bay. The typical Georgian style balance was lost when the c.1855 section of the building was constructed.

The second phase of construction occurred c.1855 when John Perkins Bull added a grander section to the c.1843 dwelling. With this new main house addition, the earlier section became the west wing. The c.1855 design is defined by its two storey, square massing; shallow pitch hipped roof with deeply overhanging eaves decorated with ornamental brackets; prominent brick and wood clad projecting tower; decorative brickwork including raised brick quoins, decorative stringcourses, and brick voussoirs; segmentally arched windows with hood mouldings, and large, rectangular multi-paned windows, which are all elements reflective of Italianate style villas.

Later alterations and additions to Downs View House have concealed or removed several typically Italianate features of the historic farmhouse. An undated sketch of Downs View House, drawn by Forsey Pemberton Bull Page, one of John Perkins Bull's grandsons, provides evidence that the c.1855 main house section once included a widow's walk, or monitor, on the flat portion of the hipped roof, and that an elaborate full-length verandah, protected by a bell cast roof supported by decorative posts on the building's side (east) elevation once provided shelter and shade to the residents.

This same sketch shows that the south elevation of the c.1855 main house was originally the principal elevation, and the location of the formal front entryway. Hidden behind the two-storey brick and wood clad projecting tower lies the farmhouse's formal entry vestibule. The ornate front entryway remains intact with its carved wooden door, multi-pane transom, ornate sidelights, and carved wooden dado panels reflecting the door's design.

On the interior, Downs View House still retains its side hall plan layout and its J-Plan, or double-winder, stairway on the west wall of the foyer. Set back within the space, towards the north wall of the c.1855 section, the stairway's balustrade is supported on turned balusters, and a moulded hardwood handrail which ends in a whorl. The stairway's open stringer is decorated with S-shaped brackets and the wall below is embellished with a series of vertical moulded panels. Both floors of the c.1855 main house include non-functioning fireplaces with classically-inspired mantels and simple incised carving on flat pilasters. The main floor of the c.1855 section of Downs View House boasts exceptionally high and lavishly decorated ceilings. Plaster cornices are largely intact, with some damage due to utilities being run on the outside of walls. The structure's ceiling medallions include exceptionally fine sculpted acanthus leaf centres.

Despite these alterations and additions to the historic farmhouse, this heritage property retains its architectural integrity and ability to convey its cultural heritage value.

### **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 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

450 Rustic Road sits on a large lot surrounded by c.1960s residential dwellings. Immediately east of the property is St. Behnam Syriac Orthodox Church, and to the west lies St. Fidelis Early Learning Centre. Access to the property is from the south via Rustic Road.

When it was constructed, Downs View House was situated on a 200-acre parcel of land, which John Perkins Bull cleared for farming. The historic structure was oriented eastwards towards Keele Street, which was the property's original access point. Rustic Road likely started out as the farm's laneway and was known as Bull('s) Lane, an acknowledgment of the property's owner. The house, whose principal (south) elevation is oriented toward this road, was situated on a high point, affording it views of its surroundings, or downs, and inspiring Caroline Bull to name the property "Downs View House".

As the oldest surviving structure in the area and one of only three remaining 19th-century structures from the historic community of Downsview included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register, Downs View House continues to define the Pre-Confederation era, rural character of the area.

The City of Toronto Property Data Map attached (Attachment 2) shows the site of the property at 450 Rustic Road.

## 4. VISUAL RESOURCES

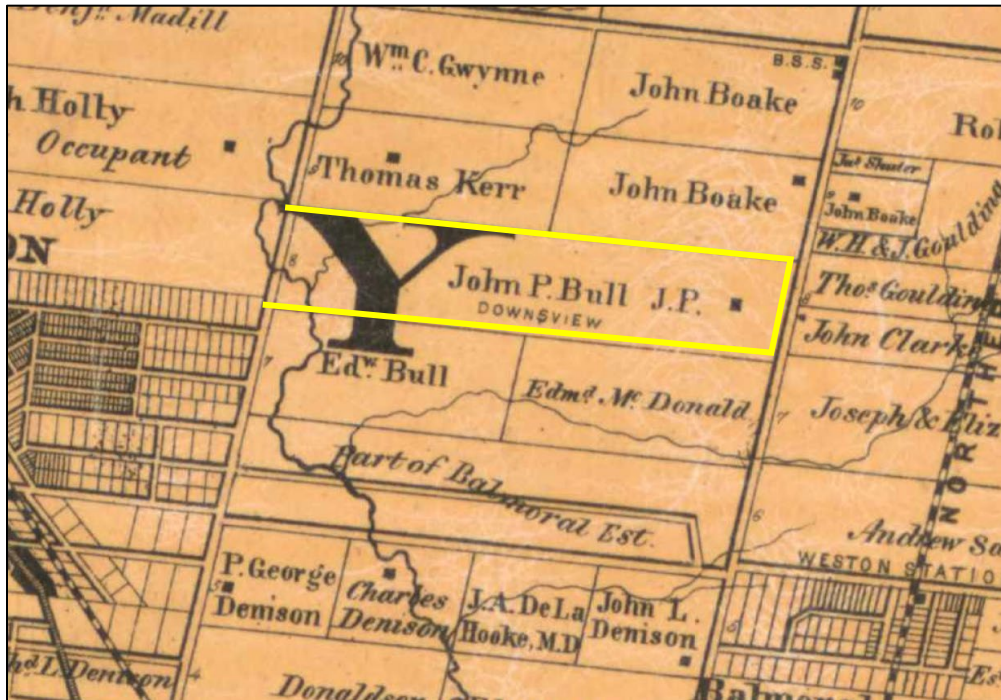


Figure 4: 1860, Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West, showing John Perkins Bull's Lot 8, Concession 4 West property and home in York North Township, York County, outlined in yellow. (University of Toronto, Map and Data Library Storage)



Figure 5: 1878, York County Atlas, showing John Perkins Bull's Lot 8, Concession 4 West property in York North Township, York County, outlined in yellow. The farm laneway and orchard are depicted lying to the south and north, respectively, of Downs View House. (McGill University, The Canadian County Atlas Digital Project)



Figure 6: 1953 aerial photo showing the Downs View House property, indicated with a yellow arrow, south of the newly opened Highway 401 and west of Keele Street, in a landscape that is still predominantly agricultural. (City of Toronto Archives, 1953)



Figure 7: Current location and configuration of 450 Rustic Road, outlined in red. (2025)

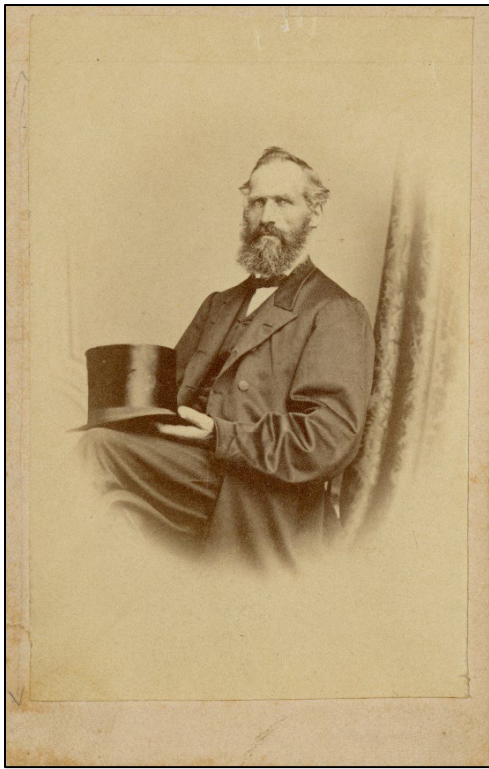


Figure 8: Cartes de visite for John Perkins Bull and his second wife Harriet (nee Bishop) Bull, undated. (Region of Peel Archives, Wm. Perkins Bull fonds)



Figure 9: Undated images of Downs View House, showing, from top to bottom, the south and east façades, the farm laneway entrance, and the east façade, as seen from across a large expanse of lawn. (Region of Peel Archives, Wm. Perkins Bull fonds)



Figure 10: Forsey Pemberton Bull Page's sketch of Downs View House, undated.  
("From Oxford to Ontario: a history of the Downsview community")

Page's sketch shows a widow's walk, or monitor, on the flat section of the hipped roof, a full-length verandah with bell cast roof supported by decorative posts on the east façade, and obscured by the tree, the two-storey entryway vestibule on the south façade. By 1964, the Italianate section of the farmhouse had lost its widow's walk, or monitor, and its full-length verandah with bell-cast roof typical of Italianate architecture.



Figure 11: Downs View House, 1964.  
(North York Historical Society, via Toronto Public Library)

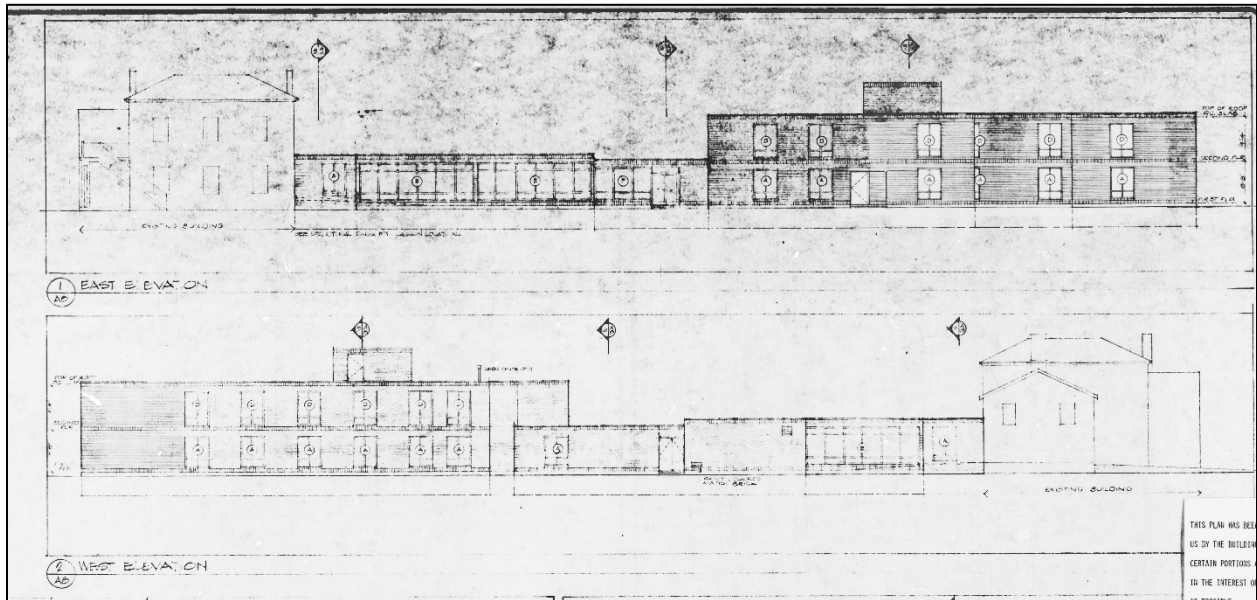


Figure 12: East and west elevations, existing and proposed, 1975.  
(Robinson & Heinrichs Architects)

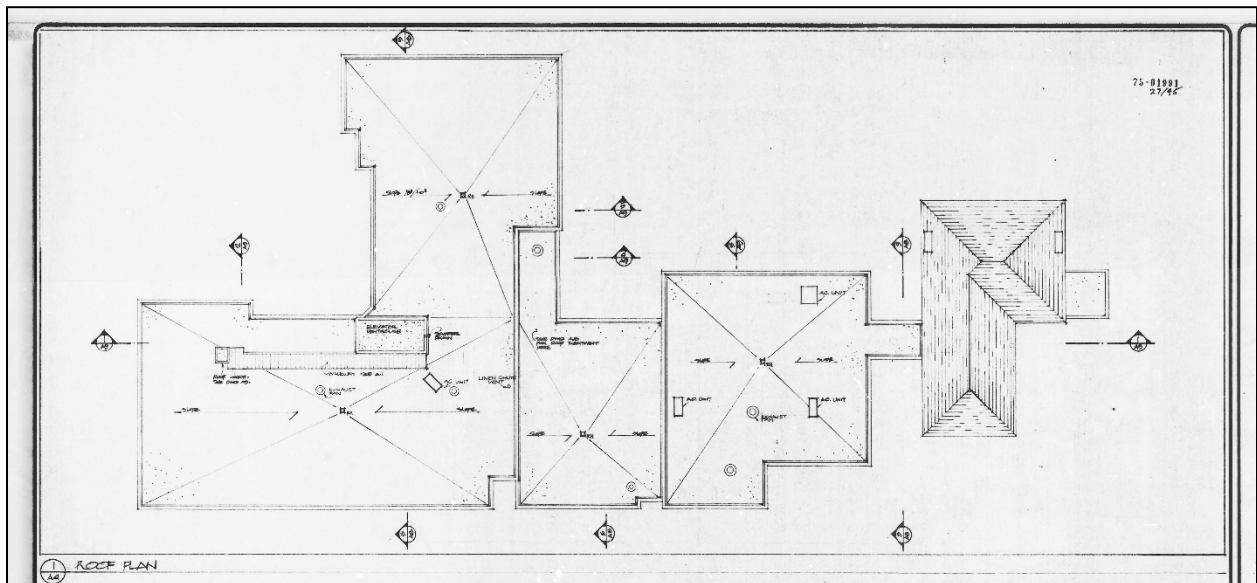


Figure 13: Roof plan, existing and proposed, 1975.  
(Robinson & Heinrichs Architects)

Downs View House's combined gable and hip roofs are shown on the right, in dashed lines. The then proposed nursing home's footprint extends from the north of the historic structure.



Figure 14: Downs View House elevations, 1984. (A. Pruss, North York Historical Board). Annotated by Heritage Planning, 2025.

The c.1843 house is shown in blue and the c.1855 extension is shown in red.



Figure 15: Downs View House floor plans & cornice detail, 1984.(A. Pruss, North York Historical Board). Annotated by Heritage Planning, 2025

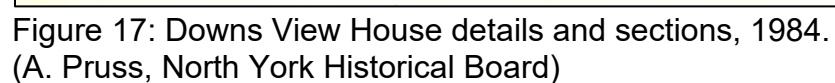
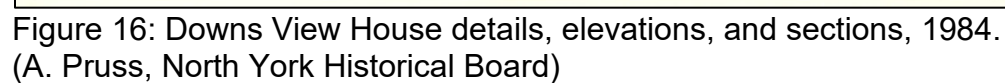




Figure 18: Downs View House, south and east elevations (Fayle Associates, 1994)



**Figure 1.** Front (south) facade.

Figure 19: Downs View House, south elevations (Fayle Associates, 1994)



Figure 20: Downs View House, south and west elevations (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figure 21: Downs View House, east elevation. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figure 22: The c. 1843, Georgian influenced section of Downs View House likely started out as a balanced three-bay configuration, with a fourth, six-over-three window on the east side of the second floor. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figure 23: Downs View House, west elevation. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figures 24 and 25: Left: One of the c. 1843, Georgian influenced section's six-over-six wood windows. Right: one of the c. 1855 Italianate influenced section's round-headed windows on the building's north façade. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figures 26 and 27: Left: Interior photo of the Italianate influenced round-headed windows in the c. 1855 section's north façade. Right: On the south elevation, in the c. 1855 two-storey projecting tower, are two Italianate influenced round-headed windows.



Figures 28 and 29: Left: On the first floor of the c. 1855 section's two-storey projecting tower, lie one of the two painted windows. Right: Same area, the historic structure's intact formal front entryway, including its ornately carved wooden door, transom, sidelights, and surround. (Fayle Associates, 1994, and Heritage Planning, 2025 respectively)



Figures 30 and 31: Left: the c. 1855 section's J-Plan, or double-winder, stairway, and its side-hall plan layout. Right: On the landing looking south towards the first and second floors of the two-storey projecting tower (c. 1855 section). Visible in the distance is one of the two painted-glass windows, located on the first floor of the tower. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



**Figure 21a. Stairway.**

**Figure 21b. Stair detail.**



**Figure 32: Details showing the c. 1855 formal J-Plan, or double-winder, stairway. (Fayle Associates, 1994)**



Figures 33 and 34: Details of the c. 1855 formal stairway showing that, except for the railing being painted white, little else has been altered since 1994. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figures 35 and 36: Left: Detail of the c. 1843 fieldstone foundation wall, taken from inside the building. Right: Detail of the c. 1855 fieldstone foundation wall, under the verandah floor. (Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figure 37: Detail of the plaster medallion and cornice moulding in the c. 1855 section's formal front entry hall. (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figures 38 and 39: Hidden fireplaces on the first (left) and second (right) floors. All that is visible is part of the flat pilaster (left) and the corner of the mantel (right) (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figures 40 and 41: Details of the c. 1843 section's six-over-three windows and plaster walls. (Heritage Planning, 2025).

## 5. LIST OF SOURCES

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- Region of Peel Archives, William Perkins Bull fonds
- Toronto Public Library Digital Archives
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