



# St George-Grosvenor Heritage Conservation District Study

*Volume II Appendix A, [2016]*

*City of London*



**London**  
CANADA

# APPENDIX A: HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ST. GEORGE-GROSVENOR HCD STUDY AREA

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# HISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ST. GEORGE-GROSVENOR HCD STUDY AREA

The St. George-Grosvenor HCD Study Area has long been identified as an area of outstanding architectural, historical and natural character. These characteristics are linked through the history of the area. The following appendix outlines the history of the Study Area in order to provide historical context for the St. George-Grosvenor HCD Study.

## NATURAL HISTORY

The landscape and City of London has been shaped and continues to be influenced by the Thames River, 273 kilometers in length, which drains a watershed of 5,825 square kilometers.<sup>1</sup> Two branches, the North and South meet at the Forks in London and the combined Thames River drains an area west and south to Lake St. Clair. The river valleys from the two branches of the Thames River above London were carved out by glaciers and meltwater spillways from the retreating Wisconsinan Glacier 14,000 - 10,000 years ago while the Thames River downstream from London carved its path across the flat landscape of southwestern Ontario.<sup>2</sup> The underlying bedrock is Silurian and Devonian limestone<sup>3</sup>. The glacial Lakes Maumee, Whittlesey, Warren and Lundy, the precursors to Lakes Huron and Erie, covered the Thames River valley depositing sediments at various times while the Wisconsinan Glacier melted. As these lakes receded the flat clay and sand plains of southern Ontario were left behind.<sup>4</sup> As the climate warmed the landscape changed from tundra with shrubs and herbs, to spruce forest to pine forest and eventually to deciduous, Carolinian forest and grasslands. The temperate climate, good drainage and soils meant that the Thames River valley was ideal for agriculture. The Thames River watershed is a biologically diverse area including 88 species of fish, approximately 30 species of freshwater mussel, 36 species of mammals, and approximately 157 species of bird live and breed in the watershed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Crins, William J., *et al.* *The Ecosystems of Ontario, Part I: Ecozones and Ecoregions*. Peterborough Ontario: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 2009, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Chapman, L.J. and D.F. Putnam. *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*. Third Edition. Ontario Geological Survey Special Volume 2. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Crins, The Ecosystems of Ontario, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Quinlan, Cathy. Chapter 3 Physiography, in Part 1-Natural Heritage: Thames River Watershed. In: *The Thames River Watershed: A Background Study for Nomination under the Canadian Heritage Rivers System*. London Ontario: The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). *Thames River*. [web-page] Accessed at: [http://www.chrs.ca/Rivers/Thames/Thames-F\\_e.php](http://www.chrs.ca/Rivers/Thames/Thames-F_e.php). 2011.

# LONDON INDIGENOUS HISTORY

## PALEO-PERIOD (C. 9,000 BCE - 8,000 BCE)

The first human occupation of the London area can be traced back to Paleo Period just after the end of the Wisconsin Glacial Period. Evidence suggests that early Paleo peoples moved about in small bands of 25-35 individuals seasonally over large territories. Archaeological sites from this period are usually located in elevated locations on well drained areas and may have been placed to intercept migratory animals such as caribou. These sites were likely communal hunting camps used over many years. In the early Paleo Period the population of southwestern Ontario was low with perhaps only 100-200 people in the area.<sup>6</sup>

Near the later part of the Paleo Period the environment had changed to include more dense coniferous forest and many of the large game species had become extinct, such as the mammoth and mastodon, or had moved further north. Projectile points are more numerous from this period indicating an increase in population.<sup>7</sup>

## ARCHAIC (C. 8,000 BCE – 950 BCE)

The Archaic Period covers a vast span of history and saw significant change in the nature of human settlement in Ontario. This period has been divided into three sections: the Early Archaic Period (8000-6000 BCE), the Middle Archaic Period (6000-2500 BCE), and the Late Archaic Period (2500-950 BCE).

During the Early Archaic Period (8000-6000 BCE.), the jack and red pine forests that characterized the Late Paleo Period environment were replaced by forests dominated by white pine with some associated deciduous trees<sup>8</sup>. Technology changes with the appearance of side and corner-notched projectile points and the introduction of ground stone tools such as celts and axes. The introduction of these tools, some of which are large and heavy, suggest the beginnings of a woodworking industry and some reduction in the degree of seasonal movement of the people.

During the Middle Archaic Period (6000-2500 BCE) the trend for a more diversified toolkit continued. The presence of netsinkers suggests that fishing was becoming an important aspect of the subsistence economy. It was also at this time that "bannerstones", ground stone devices that served as a counterbalance for spear-throwers, were first manufactured. Tools related to subsistence changed and people began to rely on local and often poor quality chert for projectile points. This trend indicates that people could not travel to the high quality chert sites as easily and may have been constrained by smaller territories than earlier times. This reduction in territory size was probably the result of gradual region-wide population growth which led to the infilling of the landscape. This process resulted in a reorganization of Indigenous subsistence practices, as more people had to rely on resources from smaller

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<sup>6</sup> Ellis and Deller 1990: 54

<sup>7</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 12

<sup>8</sup> Ellis, Kenyon and Spence 1990:68-69

areas. During the latter part of the Middle Archaic, technological innovations such as fish weirs have been documented as well as stone tools especially designed for the preparation of wild plant foods.

During the latter part of the Middle Archaic Period that long distance trade routes began to develop, spanning the northeastern part of the continent. In particular, Indigenous copper tools manufactured from a source located northwest of Lake Superior were being widely traded.<sup>9</sup> By 3500 BCE the local environment had stabilized in a near modern form.<sup>10</sup>

During the Late Archaic Period (2500-950 BCE) the trend towards decreased territory size and a broadening subsistence base continued. Late Archaic sites are far more numerous than either Early or Middle Archaic sites, and it seems that the local population had expanded. "It is during the Late Archaic that the first true cemeteries appear".<sup>11</sup> The appearance of cemeteries during the Late Archaic has been interpreted as a response to increased population densities and competition between local groups for access to resources. It is argued that cemeteries would have provided strong symbolic claims over a local territory and its resources. These cemeteries are often located on heights of well-drained sandy/gravel soils adjacent to major watercourses such as the Thames River.

This suggestion of increased territoriality is also consistent with the regionalized variation present in Late Archaic projectile point styles. During the Late Archaic distinct local styles of projectile points appear. Also during the Late Archaic the trade networks which had been established during the Middle Archaic continued to flourish. Indigenous copper from northern Ontario and marine shell artifacts from as far away as the Mid-Atlantic coast are frequently encountered as grave goods. Other artifacts such as polished stone pipes and banded slate gorgets also appear on Late Archaic sites. One of the more unusual and interesting of the Late Archaic artifacts is the "birdstone". Birdstones are small, bird-like effigies usually manufactured from green banded slate. While the function of these artifacts is presently poorly understood, they are especially common in the London area.

## **WOODLAND (C. 950 BCE – 1650 CE)**

The early Woodland Period (950 BCE – 400 BCE) saw the introduction of ceramics and trade goods from new places including projectile points made from high quality raw material out of the American Mid-West. By the middle Woodland Period (400 BCE – 900 CE) ceramics were an established tool and fish became more important in peoples diet. Densely occupied sites that were used repeatedly over several hundred years developed in river valleys. These appear to have served as base camps occupied on and off over the year with smaller special purpose camps in upland areas.

Corn may have been introduced as early as 600 CE and became a staple in people's diet by 1000 CE. Settlement and subsistence

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<sup>9</sup> Ellis, Kenyon and Spence 1990:66

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, Kenyon and Spence 1990:69

<sup>11</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 16

patterns shift over this period to increasingly rely on corn horticulture.<sup>12</sup> The first agricultural villages appear around 900 CE on well drained sandy soils on the tablelands above the river valleys. These early villages share many features described by later European explorers and traders. Early long houses were small, averaging 12.4 metres in length. Over the next few centuries the organization of longhouses in villages becomes more formal and the size of longhouses grows perhaps indicating the development of the clan structure characteristic of historically known Iroquoian peoples.<sup>13</sup> After 1450 CE the size of longhouses decreases to around 30 metres. Throughout this period changes in village structure, artifacts and subsistence patterns can be observed in the archaeological record. Small sites may have amalgamated into larger villages for defence and new crop foods such as beans are found on later Woodland Period sites.<sup>14</sup> Material culture, settlement and subsistence patterns change over this period exhibit a shift towards larger and more permanent villages due to an increasing reliance on cultivated plants such as corn, beans, squash, sunflower and tobacco.<sup>15</sup>

The London area had a relatively large population until around 1525 CE when communities of pre-contact Iroquoian peoples who had formerly lived throughout southwestern Ontario as far west as the Chatham area moved further east to the Hamilton area. At some point before the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century Algonquian speaking peoples who had formerly lived much further south in Ontario and in Michigan moved into the London area.<sup>16</sup>

## **POST (EUROPEAN) CONTACT INDIGENOUS HISTORY (1650 CE – 1826 CE)**

Algonquian peoples were established in the London area by 1650 CE but few specifics are known about settlement at this time. At the time Governor Simcoe travelled to the area in 1793 evidence of Indigenous peoples living in the area was documented.<sup>17</sup>

The location of the present Study Area first enters the Euro-Canadian historical record as part of Treaty No. 2. Treaty Number 2 is a conveyance by the Principal Chiefs of the Odawa, Chippewa, Pottawatomi and Huron to His Majesty King George the Third on May 19, 1790. Treaty Number 2:

*... was made with the O[dawa], Chippew[a], Pottawatom[i] and Huro[n] May 19th, 1790, portions of which nations had established themselves on the Detroit River all of whom had been driven by the Iroquois from the northern and eastern parts of the Province, from the Detroit River easterly to Catfish Creek and south of the river La Tranche [Thames River] and Chenail Ecarte, and contains Essex County except Anderdon Township and Part of West Sandwich; Kent County except Zone Township, and Gores of Camden and Chatham; Elgin County except Bayham Township and parts of*

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<sup>12</sup> Fox 1990: 185; Smith 1990; Williamson 1990: 312

<sup>13</sup> Dodd et al 1990:358

<sup>14</sup> Dodd et al 1990:357

<sup>15</sup> Dodd et al. 1990; Foreman 2011; Fox 1990; Lennox and Fitzgerald 1990; Murphy and Ferris 1990

<sup>16</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 28

<sup>17</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 28

*South Dorchester and Malahide. In Middlesex County, Del[a]ware and Westminster Townships and part of North Dorchester [are included].*<sup>18</sup>

In 1793 Sir John Graves Simcoe travelled through the area camping at the forks of the Thames. Early European settlement of the London area began shortly after this visit. Delaware Township was the first to be surveyed and the village of Delaware with a mill was established by 1800.<sup>19</sup> Settlement followed the early roads, Longwoods Road, Commissioners Road and North Talbot Road. London Township was surveyed by Mahlon Burwell during the War of 1812 and after 1815 the pace of settlement increased. Colonel Talbot brought a group of Irish immigrants to the London area in 1817-1818. In 1826 Mahlon Burwell surveyed the town plot and settlers moved to the village.<sup>20</sup>

## HISTORY OF THE CITY OF LONDON

### SIMCOE'S ENVISAGED CAPITAL

London, Ontario, began its life as Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe's chosen site for "the metropolis of all Canada," a position he had selected through consulting maps and reports before even visiting the area. When he confirmed his choice in a visit to his "metropolis" in 1793, he found a landscape "eminently calculated" for its assigned purpose. At the point where two branches of the river formerly known as "La Tranche" met to travel west towards the St. Clair River, the site possessed easy access to transportation by water. It also boasted "luxuriantly fine" soil, strong lumber for building, and accessibility to Indigenous traders.<sup>21</sup>

Simcoe took some significant steps towards enabling his vision to materialize. He had purchased land south of the forks from the Chippewa in 1790; in 1796, he purchased land north of the forks from the Chippewa. A Crown reserve of 3,850 acres was established to protect the site for the capital; a sketch then drawn by Lady Elizabeth Simcoe shows a plan for an elegant Regency town situated on the southwest corner of the forks where the rivers joined. He had already re-christened the river the "Thames", and he named his new town London (or sometimes New London) as a fittingly noble tribute to England's most renowned city.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Morris 1943:17

<sup>19</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 28-30

<sup>20</sup> Wilson and Horne 1995: 30

<sup>21</sup> The quotations are from Major Littlehale's journal, quoted in Bremner 14,15. See also Ermatinger, "Simcoe's Tour,"13. In connection with Simcoe's ambitions, see Campell, "Beginning," 61-67; Craig 20-41; Landon 307; Mealing 50-62; Mombourquette 1-30.

<sup>22</sup> Armstrong 21, 22; Tausky, *London: From Site to City*, 9.

## A DISTRICT TOWN

London never served as the capital of "all Canada" or even of what became the province of Ontario; despite Simcoe's recommendation. The British Secretary chose York (later renamed Toronto) as the capital of Upper Canada. The Crown reserve nevertheless remained mainly unsettled until, after the London District Courthouse at Vittoria burned in 1825, the provincial government decided the more central site of London would be better suited as an administrative centre for the large London District, which spread from Lake Erie to Georgian Bay, as far east as Simcoe, and as far west as Grand Bend.<sup>23</sup> In 1826, London was officially designated a District Town, and its history of development began. Surveyor Mahlon Burwell was commissioned to survey a town plot, with four acres reserved for a courthouse and jail, and five commissioners were appointed to plan the Courthouse, including Burwell and Thomas Talbot.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Talbot was the younger son of an Anglo-Irish baron who had grown up in the family seat, Malahide Castle north of Dublin. He was serving as Simcoe's charming and competent private secretary on Simcoe's journey to London, but he returned to Europe to fight with the Irish against Napoleon. When he returned to Canada in 1801, he was more eccentric, more inclined to adopt the manners of a backwoodsman, and, simultaneously, possessed of a determination to establish his own fiefdom on this side of the Atlantic. He regarded his log cabin at Port Talbot, along the north shore of Lake Erie, as the

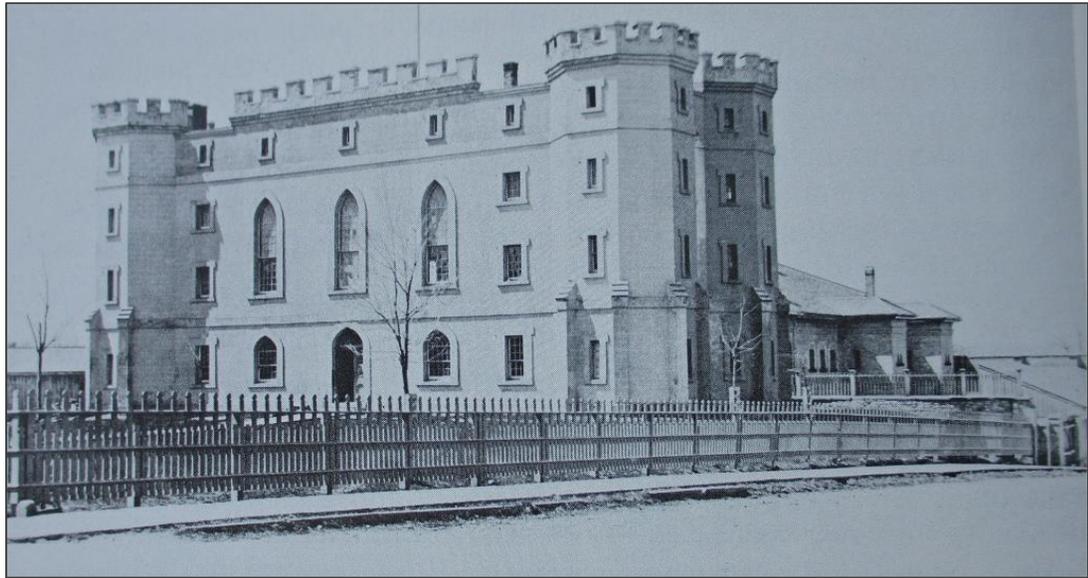


*Image A1: Detail from Plan 30 showing Thomas Talbot's allocations of lots in the Study Area (Courtesy of the Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library).*

<sup>23</sup> The only European settler given permission to inhabit any part of the 3,850 acres during the next years was Joshua Applegarth, who gained permission to grow hemp for the British Navy on a large parcel on 300 acres just north of the forks of the Thames (Brock, "Applegarth," 10-14). The Applegarths were later joined by the William Montague family (Goodspeed 34, 215; Evans 71; Brock, "Talbot," 129). In order to facilitate access through the Crown Reserve, Talbot instructed Burwell to survey the Wharncliffe Highway from Commissioners Road to Richmond Street north of London (Armstrong 29).

<sup>24</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 3-5, 10; *Site to City*, 13,14;

"capital" of his "principality." Through land grants and purchases he acquired a large acreage under his own name, but through positions involving the development of roads and the settlement of large tracts of Upper Canadian land, he gained control of an area extending along the north shore of Lake Erie towards Windsor and as far north as London Township. He kept maps in which he wrote in the names of those to whom he assigned lots (Image A1), and, though his power over those on "his lands" was in fact limited, he regarded them as his "subjects."<sup>25</sup> That the Gothic Revival London Courthouse bore a resemblance to Malahide Castle (Images A2, A3 and A4) indicates much regarding Talbot's understanding of his relationship towards the new District Town. Talbot also chose the site of the Courthouse and the town, situated on the east bank and looking down over the main branch of the Thames as it headed west (Image A5), in contrast to Simcoe's earlier siting.<sup>26</sup>



*Image A2: Photograph of the London District Courthouse by John Kyle O'Connor, 1875. Architect John Ewart's design for the Jail, with its dramatic bow in the river facade was dramatically changed with the addition of a larger jail, seen here behind the Courthouse, added in 1843-1846 after serious crowding in the original Courthouse/Jail during the 1837 Rebellion. (Courtesy, Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library).*

<sup>25</sup> Hamil, *Lake Erie Baron*, 49, 54; Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 5-9.

<sup>26</sup> See Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 10, 44-46; Talbot to Hillier, March 7, 1826; Cl. T. Campbell, 'Settlement of London,' 13.



**Image A3:** Malahide Castle, County Dublin, Ireland, drawing by Francis Wheatley, 1782, from Desmond Guinness and William Ryan's *Irish Houses and Castles*, 1971.

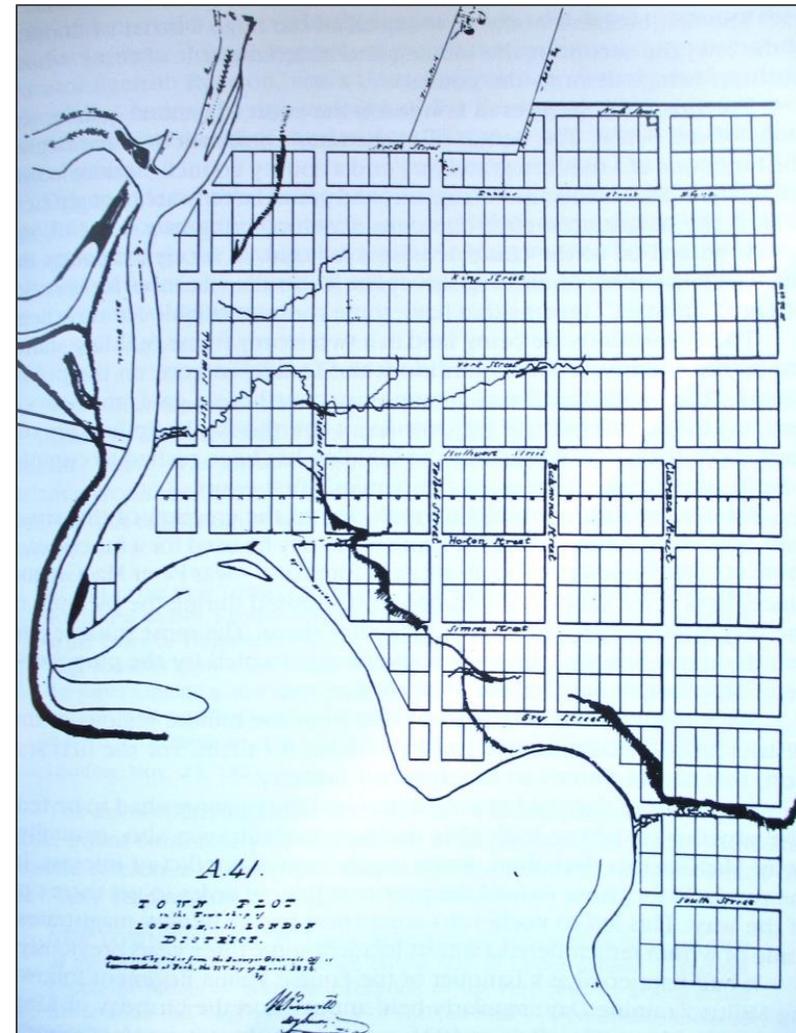


**Image A4:** The Middlesex County Courthouse. The present Ridout Street facade dates from 1878, when the size of the Courthouse was approximately doubled. The design, by London architect Thomas H. Tracy, was in many ways very sympathetic to the original building, 2015.



**Image A5:** Looking west where the north branch of the Thames River flows into the main branch, near the foot of the Courthouse, 2015.

Burwell's survey followed an insistent grid system (despite then very uneven terrain) and gave the new London boundaries of the river on the south and the west, Queens Avenue (then North Street) on the north and Wellington Street on the east (Image A6). Well before the Courthouse was completed in 1831, settlers had rushed to populate the village. Passing through around 1830, John Richards admired somewhat less than "40 or 50 houses, all of bright boards and shingles."<sup>27</sup> One bright wooden house, erected soon after, in 1834-35, was the Harris family's Eldon House (481 Ridout Street North), built overlooking the Thames just north of the Courthouse (Image A7). John Harris was a navy officer who served as the Treasurer of the London District, and, under the influence of his characteristic bonhomie and the liveliness of his wife, Amelia, and their children, their residence served as the natural focal point for London society and for all visiting dignitaries.<sup>28</sup> London society was given a more glittering, aristocratic character with the arrival of the British garrison in response to the 1837 Rebellion, which saw over 200 prisoners crammed into the Courthouse/Jail. The military organized a wide range of activities -- balls, picnics, concerts, hunts (Image A8), etc. -- for more exotic entertainment in the village, but they also made substantial contributions to the material welfare of the community -- road building, firefighting, and policing among them. Their presence also created more commercial opportunities, in both the areas of general spending and military contracts, and it almost doubled the population. In 1840, with a population of 1,716, London gained the legal as well as the nominal designation of town.<sup>29</sup>



**Image A6:** Plan of the "Town Plot in the Township of London in the London District," surveyed by Mahlon Burwell in 1926. (Reproduced from *London 200: An Illustrated History*, by Orlo Miller).

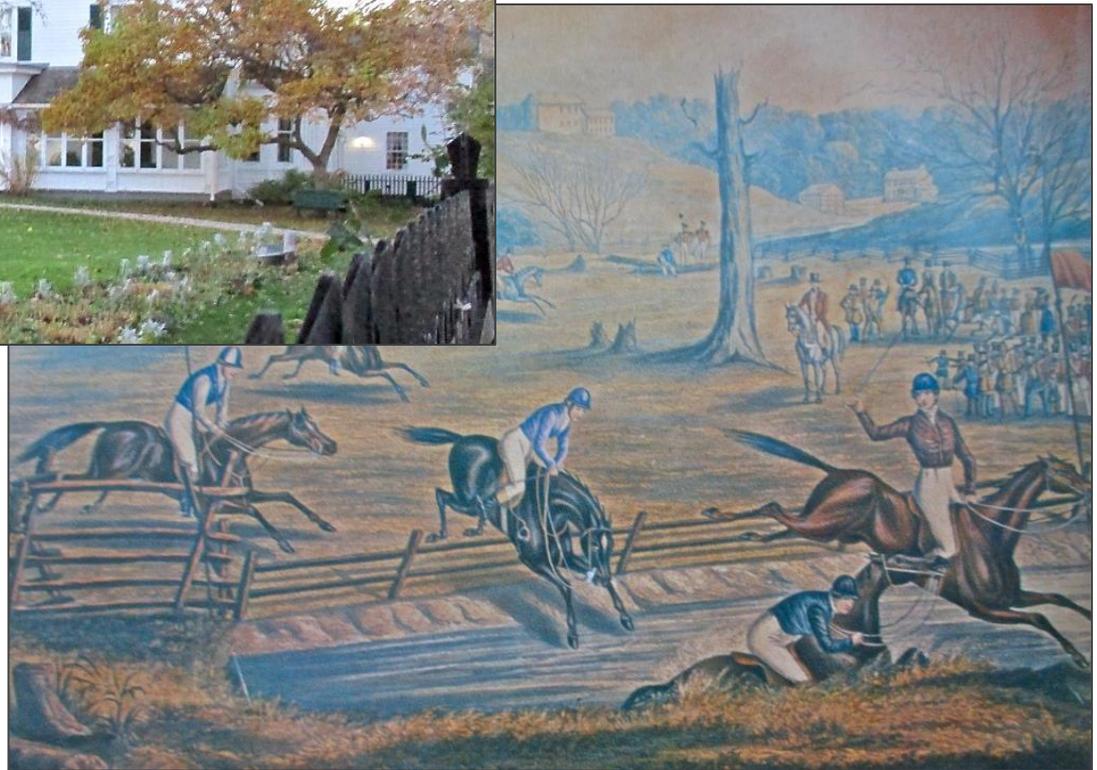
<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Views of Canada*, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Ermatinger, *Life of Talbot*, 86-89; Armstrong 82, 83; Tausky, *London*, 32. See, too, *The Eldon House Diaries*, ed. Robin S. Harris and Terry G. Harris.

<sup>29</sup> Tausky, *London*, 10; Armstrong 63, 65.



**Image A7:** *Eldon House, once the home of the Harris family. The dormer, verandah and glassed-in porch along the front of the house are later additions. The home originally featured a porch with Greek Revival columns in front of the main entrance, 2015.*



**Image A8:** *"The Grand Military Steeplechase," painted in 1843 by Lady Eveline-Marie Alexander, wife of military officer Sir James Alexander. (Courtesy of Museum London).*

Already in 1836, just ten years after the formation of the District Town, at the instruction of the Acting Surveyor General, Peter Carroll completed the "New Survey," greatly expanding London's boundaries, to Huron Street in the north and Adelaide Street in the east (Image A9); this area was formally incorporated into the Town of London in 1840.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the legal and administrative population that grew up around the Courthouse, London's position in the middle of a fertile agricultural hinterland ensured its function as a distributor of agricultural produce, from the crops themselves to the seeds they generated and to the agricultural implements needed to grow them. The village had been granted the right to hold a public market in 1835. Among the related manufacturers that became established in London's early history were Leonard's and McClary's agricultural tools and Carling's and Labatt's beer; Labatt's grew out of William Balkwill's London Brewery, which had its beginnings in 1828.<sup>31</sup>

Owing in large part to the efforts of Londoner Hamilton Hartley Killaly, appointed Commissioner of Public Works for Canada in 1841, the town had achieved good roads for transporting goods; the arrival of the Great Western Railway from Hamilton in 1853, and of other railways heading south, west, and north soon after, London's position as a transportation hub cemented its future as a market centre. Two years later, in 1855, London gained the status of a City, with a population of approximately 12,000 persons.<sup>32</sup>



**Image A9:** London, Canada West, by William Robinson, 1840-41. The map shows the New Survey of 1836, undertaken in part, at least, by Peter Carroll. (Courtesy, Western Archives, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University).

<sup>30</sup> Peter Carroll to John Radenhurst, April 5, 1836; Armstrong 163

<sup>31</sup> Tausky, *London*, 11; Armstrong 48.

<sup>32</sup> Tausky, *London*, 11; Armstrong and Brock, "Rise of London," 91

## THE CITY

Over the next half century, London continued to solidify its economic base in numerous areas and to grow from a pioneer town into a sophisticated urban centre. The legal and administrative community surrounding the Courthouse continued to grow, even as the geographical boundaries of its jurisdiction became smaller with increasing population. The London District had been reduced in 1837 and again in 1841; in 1849 counties replaced districts, and London became the seat of Middlesex County.<sup>33</sup> It still holds that position today.

A historic photograph of a financial district along Richmond Street (Image A10) shows a handsome and substantial Italianate streetscape, indicating London's growing position as a financial centre by that time. In addition to the London branches of provincial banks, locally founded savings and loan societies were prospering, as were locally formed insurance societies. Shown in the photograph are a federal Custom House, the Bank of British North America, the Bank of Montreal, and the Merchant's Bank of Canada.<sup>34</sup> Two particularly long-lasting financial institutions, Canada Trust<sup>35</sup> and the London Life Insurance Company, originated in local companies founded in 1864 and 1874 respectively.<sup>36</sup>



**Image A10:** *Photograph of Richmond Street, London, c. 1875, by John Kyle O'Connor. The Custom House and the Bank of British North America can be seen on the left, the Bank of Montreal, the Merchant's Bank of Canada, and the Post Office on the right (Courtesy of the Western Archives, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University).*

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<sup>33</sup> Armstrong and Brock, 'The Rise of London,' 89.

<sup>34</sup> See Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 125, 126.

<sup>35</sup> Canada Trust grew out of Huron & Erie established in 1864 and began as a subsidiary in 1901. In 2000 Canada Trust joins with TD, becoming TD Canada Trust.

<sup>36</sup> Armstrong, *Forest City*, 122.

The area east of Adelaide Street and south of York Street became a regional centre for the refining of oil after its discovery, in the 1850s and 1860s, near London and in Lambton County; Imperial Oil was founded in London in 1880. Although most refineries followed Imperial Oil to Sarnia before the end of the century, London had a strong industrial base in numerous other areas. Around 250 employees worked at the Great Western Railway car shops by 1874.<sup>37</sup> By 1882 the City boasted over thirty wholesale firms sending travellers, according to the *London Free Press*, from Winnipeg to New Brunswick.<sup>38</sup> After the federal government placed a tariff on German cigars in 1879, a sizeable cigar-making industry developed in London; twenty-one cigar manufacturers were located in the city by 1912.<sup>39</sup> In the years around the turn of the twentieth century, many local and even international companies expanded into London, among them the McCormick Manufacturing Company and the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company, which contributed to a handsome manufacturing sector along the eastern part of Dundas Street (Image A11).<sup>40</sup>



**Image A11:** Illustration of the McCormick Manufacturing Company (1156 Dundas Street) from London, Ontario (1914). The building was described at the time as the "snow white . . . sunshine palace," because of its white terra cotta facing.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, in Old East HCD Study, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Tausky, *London*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 434; see Baker, 'Steam, Stoves, and Cigars,' 118, 119.

<sup>40</sup> Tausky, *London*, 11, Armstrong, *Forest City*, 126, 148, 282

London's range of service enterprises also made impressive strides during this period. Already in 1844 a series of public schools had been established throughout the town; in 1849 the formation of the central Union School allowed all students to participate in a graded system. Seeing in London the potential makings of second Oxbridge, Isaac Hellmuth, who became the second Bishop of Huron, founded a series of secondary and post-secondary schools. Hellmuth raised money in England to found Huron College as a theological college,<sup>41</sup> then founded Hellmuth Boys' School (formally, The Collegiate Institute, 1864) and Hellmuth Girl's School (1867; Images A12 and A13) as private secondary schools. Finally, he encouraged the founding of The Western University of London Ontario (later the University of Western Ontario and now Western University) in 1881.<sup>42</sup> One of the faculties of the original university that was to make major contributions to London was Medicine. All three of the current teaching hospitals in London, Victoria Hospital, University Hospital, and St. Joseph's Hospital (Image A14) grew from institutions founded in the late nineteenth century and reflect the medical faculty's early and continuing interest in medical research.<sup>43</sup>



**Image A12:** *Illustration of Dufferin College, formerly known as The Collegiate Institute (informally, as Hellmuth Boys School), from City of London and County of Middlesex Directory, 1882-1883. Hellmuth Boys' College was located just two short blocks east of the Study Area, on St. James Street between Wellington Street and Waterloo Street.*

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<sup>41</sup> Armstrong, *Forest City*, 111

<sup>42</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 144-149; Crowfoot, *This Dreamer*.

<sup>43</sup> Tausky, *London*, 12. For more detailed treatments, see Gwynne-Timothy, *Western's First Century*, 92-114, 381-398; Stephen and Smith, *History of St. Joseph's Hospital*.

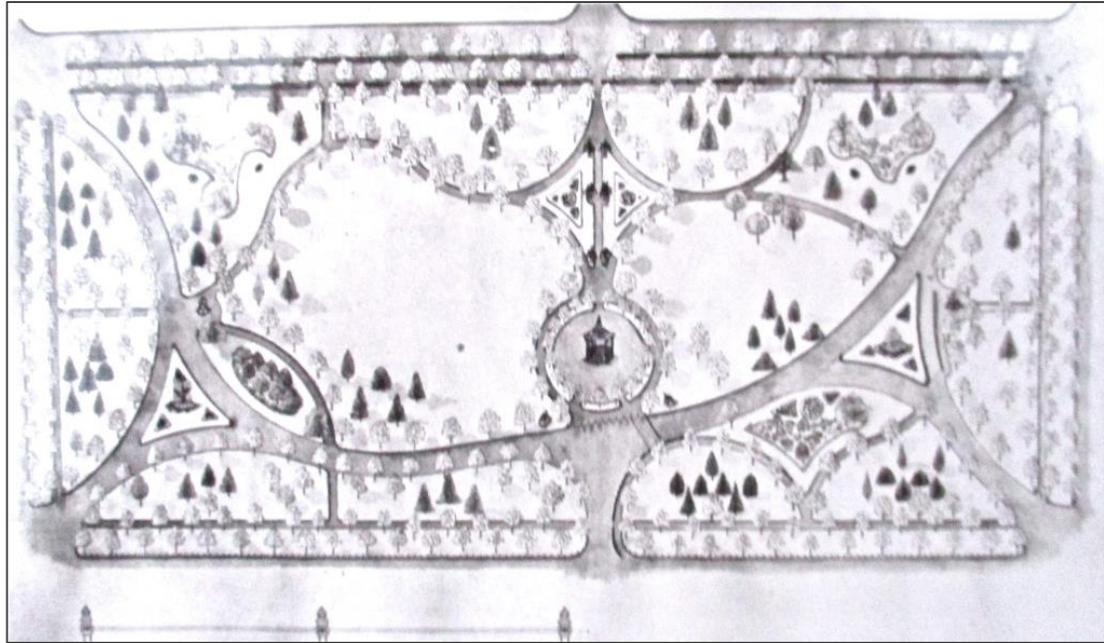


**Image A13:** *Hellmuth Ladies' College, as illustrated in City of London and County of Middlesex Directory, 1882-1883.*



**Image A14:** *St. Joseph's Hospital, built in 1892. The hospital was located directly across Richmond Street from the Study Area, facing Grosvenor Street between Richmond Street and Wellington Street, (Photograph courtesy of Western Archives, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University).*

London's heady days as a garrison town ended in 1853 when the British garrison withdrew from the Town, though the Fenian threats of the 1860s necessitated their temporary return. In the mid-1870s new buildings for the Canadian militia were built on the north-east block of the old garrison grounds. This may have been due to the influence of London's MP and brewer, Sir John Carling. Later, Carling negotiated to have the downtown military buildings traded for his farm east of Adelaide Street, where in 1883 the federal government decided to locate an Infantry School Corps,<sup>44</sup> ensuring a long military presence in the city. As part of these complex negotiations over military property, Carling became the winning advocate in a conflict over what should happen with the remainder of the downtown military property: arguing in 1874 that London should provide for its future residents "an expansive pleasure ground, "a breathing place for its citizens, where they and their children may assemble and breathe purer air," he arranged for the creation of Victoria Park, London's downtown oasis and now home to numerous festivals over the course of the year (A15).<sup>45</sup>



*Image A15: Photograph of William Miller's plan for Victoria Park, circa 1878. (Courtesy of Western Archives, D.B, Weldon Library, Western University).*

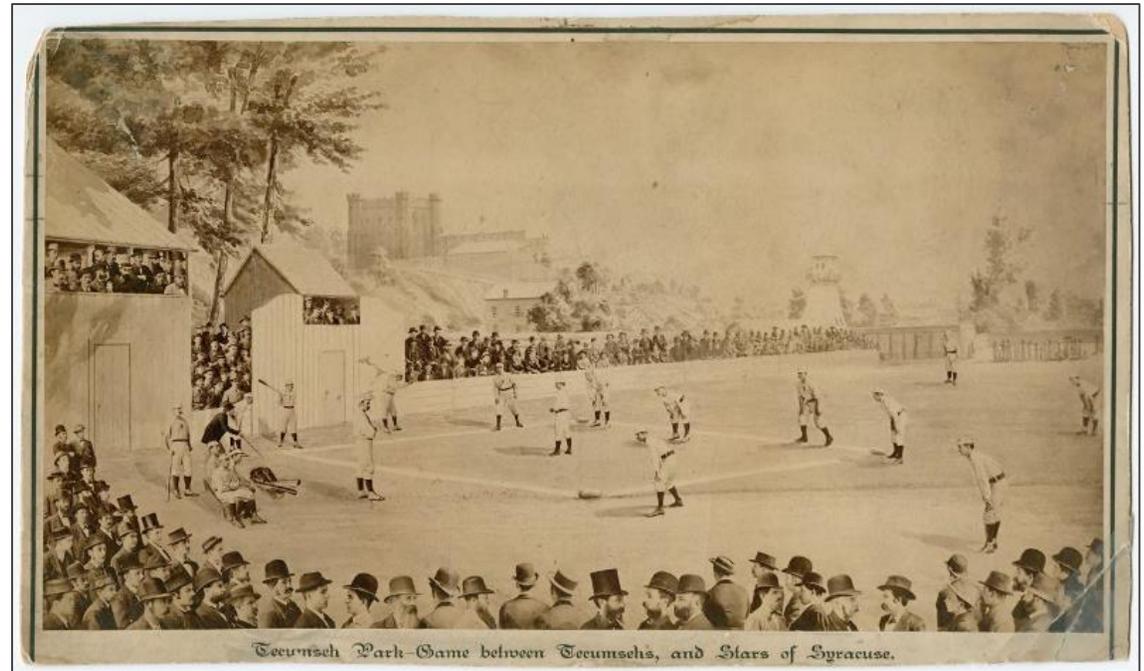
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<sup>44</sup> Armstrong, *Forest City*, 161.

<sup>45</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 124. See Gibbs 152, 153.

Other forms of recreation also prospered during the period. Labatt Park, on the northwest corner of the forks of the Thames, is recognized as the oldest baseball park in North America to be in continuous use, though it loses that rank in the *Guinness Book of World Records* because the positions of the bases have been changed.<sup>46</sup> The famed local Tecumsehs defeated the Chicago White Stockings there in 1877 and went on to win the International Association championship that year (Image A16).<sup>47</sup>

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century was also a period when clubs flourished and a lively arts scene developed in London. By 1880, 457 students were enrolled in courses at the Western School of Art and Design, many specializing in china painting, which became an important means of employment for women during the period. Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith, a distinguished painter who taught art in local schools, attracted a group of talented young painters to the Western Art League, which flourished during the 1880s. Paul Peel, probably London's best-known Victorian painter, returned to London in 1890, though the fact that no one purchased works at his first major exhibition suggests that he was not yet appreciated in his home town.<sup>48</sup> The Grand Opera House, part of the Masonic Lodge built in 1880-81, brought a broad range of entertainment to the city, ranging from minstrel shows to Shakespeare and Sardou's *La Tosca*: Londoners could see Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Lionel Barrymore, and Sarah Bernhardt (Image A17).<sup>49</sup>



**Image A16:** Composite photograph of Labatt Park during the 1870s, when London's famed Tecumsehs baseball team was an international star. Later developed into a well-equipped modern facility, the park can still claim to be the oldest site in North America continuously devoted to playing baseball (Courtesy of Western Archives, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University).

<sup>46</sup> E.g., see Wikipedia entry for "Labatt Park, London, Ontario."

<sup>47</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 238.

<sup>48</sup> Poole 25-29, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 239-143



**Image A17:** Tinted illustration of the Masonic Temple and Grand Opera House from Picturesque Canada, 1882. The scene looks north along Richmond Street from the corner of King Street. (Collection of N. Tausky).

As the accompanying view of Richmond Street suggests, the City of the 1870s and 1880s was also sophisticated in its architecture, which was a preeminent source of the City's pride. Most prominent in the view is the Masonic Temple and Opera house, designed by acclaimed local architects George Durand and Thomas Tracy. At this time, and for decades afterward, the booster books in London used architecture as their main argument for the City's appeal. *London, Ontario 1914* waxes lyrical about the City's homes:

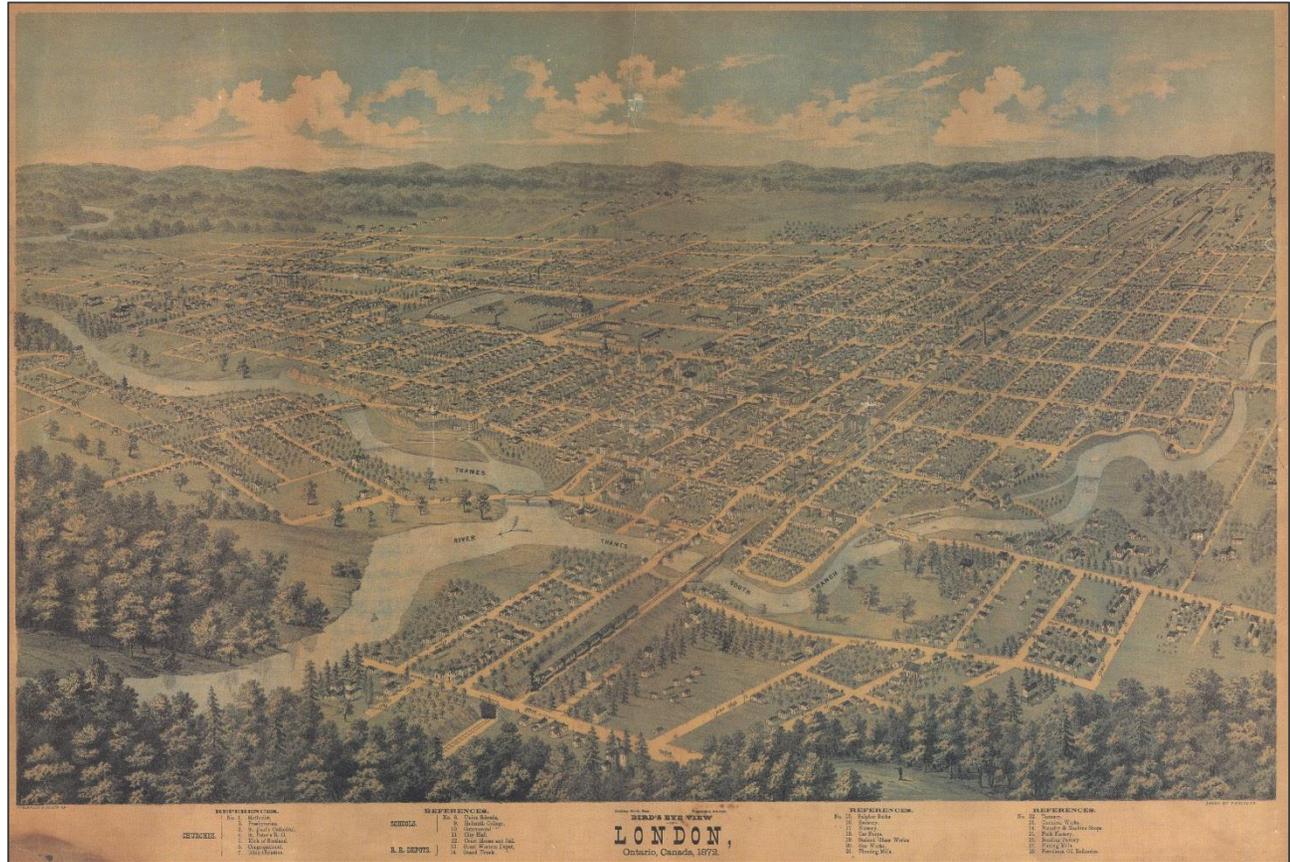
Miles of beautiful residential avenues, with their costly mansions, magnificent lawns and boulevards and spreading maple trees ..., the whole forming scenes of unsurpassed beauty and indicating the prevailing prosperity. Nor are the evidences of comfort confined to the central portion. Farther out in all directions are to be found the homes of the artisans; less costly it is true, than those of the central portion, but a style of architecture pleasing to the eye as well as useful has been adopted...<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gardner 4

## EXPANSION AND ANNEXATIONS

A comparison of Bird's Eye Views of London dating from 1873 and 1893 respectively shows a great deal of growth in the City between those two dates, filling up most of the 1836 New Survey and extending beyond those borders to the south, west, and east (Images A18 and A19). The City had indeed generated very handsome suburbs both within and without its borders: they included a notably handsome Italianate development north along Talbot Street; fine Italianate and Queen Anne homes in what are now East and West Woodfield; smaller artisans' homes south of Bathurst Street, including those of many black families that had fled the United States before emancipation; a large, mainly middle class community, known variously as New Brighton, Askin Village, and St. James Park, which had developed just south of the Thames River in the northern part of Westminster Township; modest artisans' homes in the flood plain to the northwest of the river forks, now known in part as Blackfriars/Petersville; and what became, for a brief period, an independent town east of Adelaide Street, now known as Old East Village, greatly enlarged by homes for the workers employed in the many industries located there.

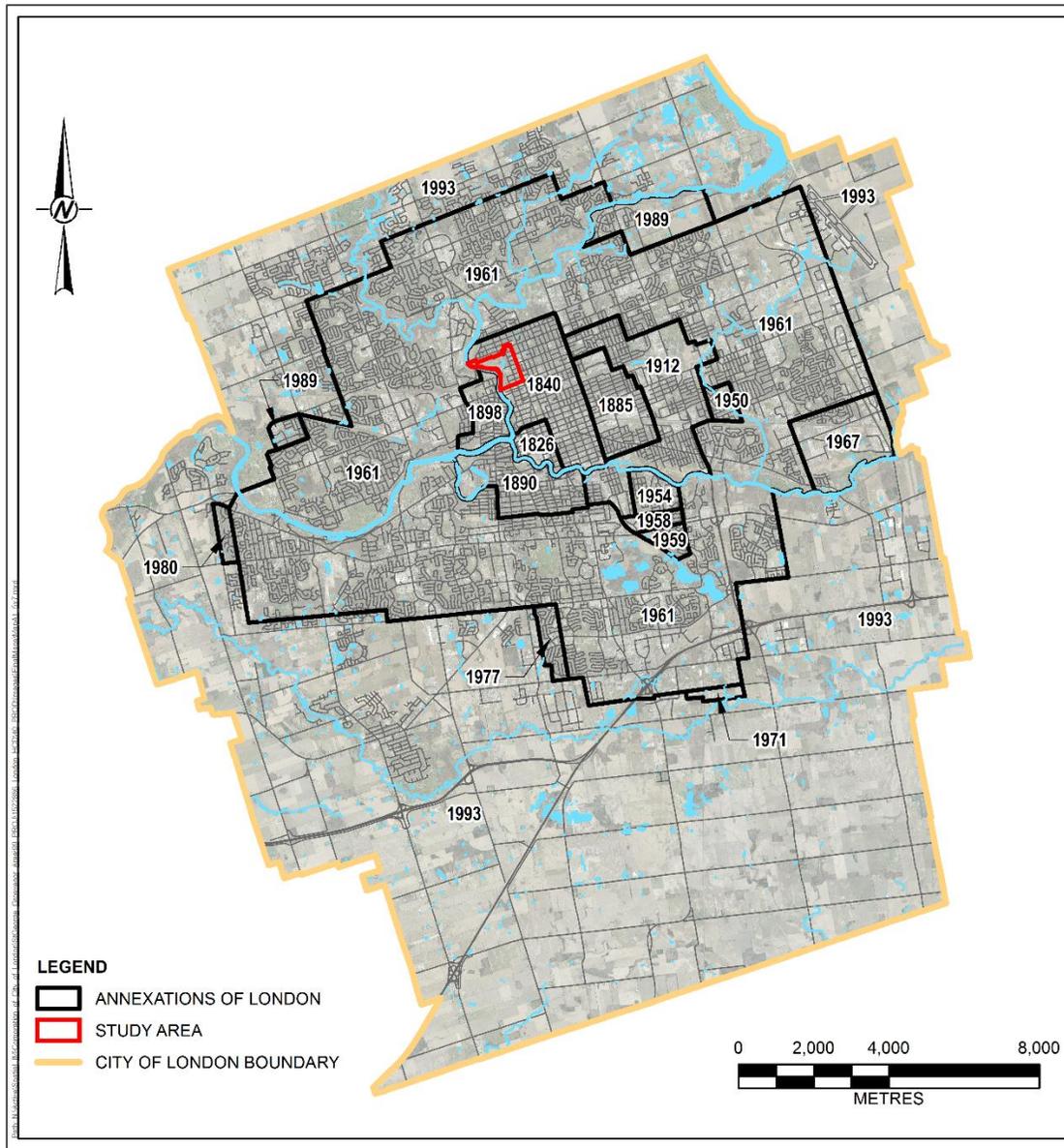


**Image A18:** 'Bird's Eye View of London, Ontario, Canada, 1872,' lithograph delineated by E.S. Glover and printed by Strobridge & Co., Lith. Cin.



*Image A19: Bird's Eye View of the 'City of London, Canada,' 1893, lithograph printed by Toronto Lithographing Company.*

By the time of the First World War, many of these communities had been annexed to London, almost tripling its size. The Town of East London was annexed in 1885, and in 1912 a much larger area to its east, north and south. The community just south of the Thames River, now known as South London, voted to join London in 1890, and the lands in the flood plain to the west, then known as London West, were annexed in 1895. Together, they nearly tripled the size of the 1836 city (Map A1).



Somewhat curiously, while London had grown far beyond its borders in other directions, most of the land in the north part of the 1836 New Survey, including the Study Area, remained largely undeveloped by the time of the 1893 Bird's Eye View (see Image A19) although several homes were built in the Study Area from the 1850's through the 1870's. It was mainly in the period between around 1895 and World War II that the Study Area took on its current form, during which it became increasingly prestigious. Its claim to uniqueness lies largely in the exceptional architectural forms the Study Area's homes took during this period and in the histories of the community leaders who had them built. The Study Area also reflects the earlier period when landowners aspired to develop fine estates in the attractive countryside of the undeveloped land there and when important local institutions took root there.

**Map A1:** Map showing dates when parts of London were annexed. The Study Area is marked in red as part of the 1840 annexation.

## POST WORLD WAR II

London has mushroomed in size and population since the middle of the twentieth century. In 1929, London's population numbered 69,742; after the annexations of the 1950s, the City's population had more than doubled, to 165,815 residents in 1961;<sup>51</sup> it now numbers over 380,000 citizens and boasts an urban area at least three times as large as the 1912 city, with annexed land beyond the urban borders capable of more than doubling its size again. Until close to the end of the twentieth century, London continued to develop along the lines established a century before, retaining many of the same commercial enterprises, industries, and head offices. Much has changed in the last few decades as head offices, such as those of Labatt's, have moved elsewhere; major businesses, such as London Life Insurance Company, have been bought by former competitors, and companies that had been here for nearly a century, such as Kellogg's, have closed their doors.

Many of London's historical institutions and businesses continue to enrich the city, however. The 1826-31 Courthouse (enlarged in 1878) still holds Middlesex County administrative offices, though most reside in a new office building next door. All contemporary courts serving the County, the various Superior courts and the criminal court, meet in a new multi-storey courthouse nearby. The burgeoning health and educational institutions, including Western University and Fanshawe College, have remained mainstays of the local economy, through the numbers of persons they employ, the students they attract, and the offshoots of their research and training programs. The City also retains an active role in food processing: McCormicks and Labatt's operate plants here, along with recent arrivals such as Nestle and Natra. The City has developed strong ties with various transportation industries and is promoting ties with green energy manufacturers. An influx of small information technology businesses is making downtown London a new tech centre, and the City is making some efforts to encourage and enlarge its active arts community.<sup>52</sup> Many new ethnic groups are making the City more multicultural. Despite, and because of, some significant changes in its economic and cultural profile, London appears set to continue its history of growth and general prosperity. Its challenge will be encompassing its complex past as it moves towards a promising future.

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<sup>51</sup> Armstrong, *Forest City*, 163, 207.

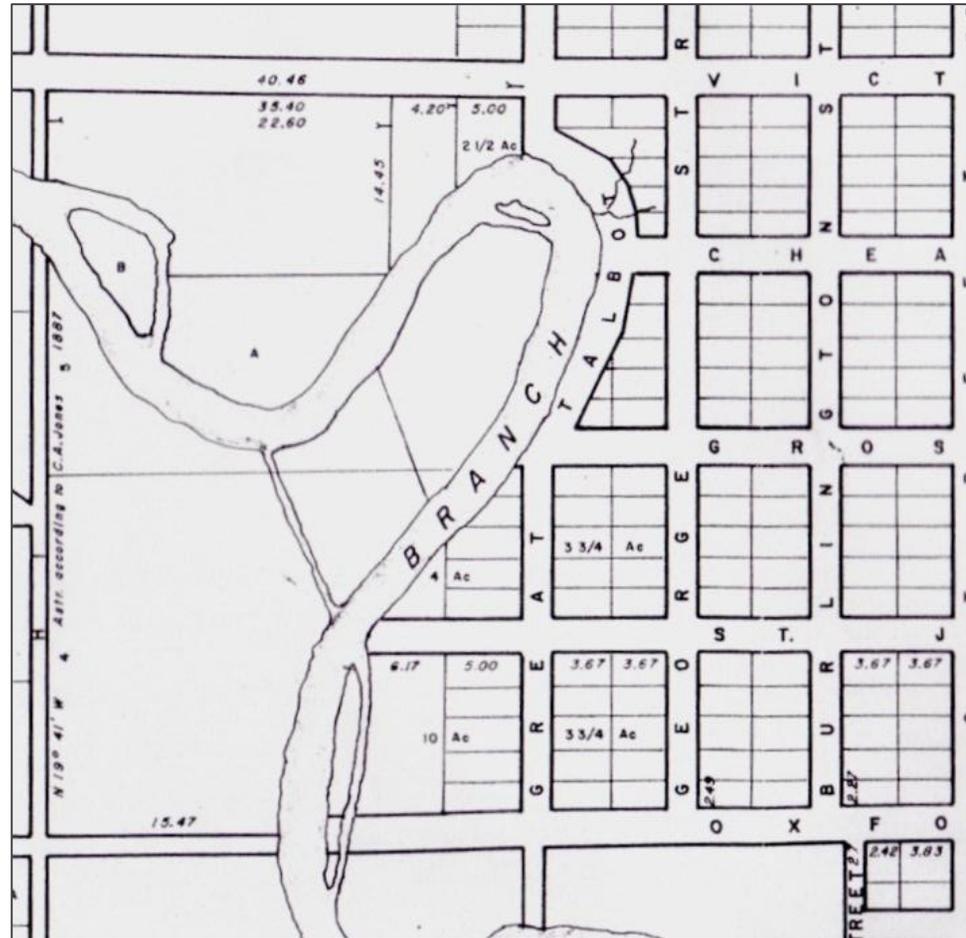
<sup>52</sup> See the City of London website.

## HISTORY OF THE STUDY AREA

### SETTING THE STAGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

#### Peter Carroll's New Survey

Mahlon Burwell's 1810 Survey of part of London Township established Huron Street and Oxford Street as Concessions 2 and 3 respectively and Wharncliffe Road and Adelaide Street as north-south lines. In 1835-36, at the request of Acting Surveyor General John Radenhurst, surveyor Peter Carroll carried out what came to be called the "New Survey," which allowed for a large expansion of the Village of London to the east and north and located roads and lots within the expanded area. Although Carroll submitted his completed survey, now Registered Plan 30, to Radenhurst on April 5, 1836; the New Survey, including the Study Area (Image A20), was formally incorporated into London only in 1840.<sup>53</sup> Within and bordering the Study Area, the New Survey charted Burlington (later Richmond) Street, George (later St. George) Street, and Great Talbot (later Talbot) Street as the major north-south thoroughfares; north of Oxford Street East, St. James Street, Grosvenor Street, Cheapside Street, and Victoria Street as the main east-west routes. Whether Carroll's choice, Radenhurst's, or possibly the Town's, these are all good Imperialist Tory street names, echoing street and place names in England, British Royalty or lords, the single exception is

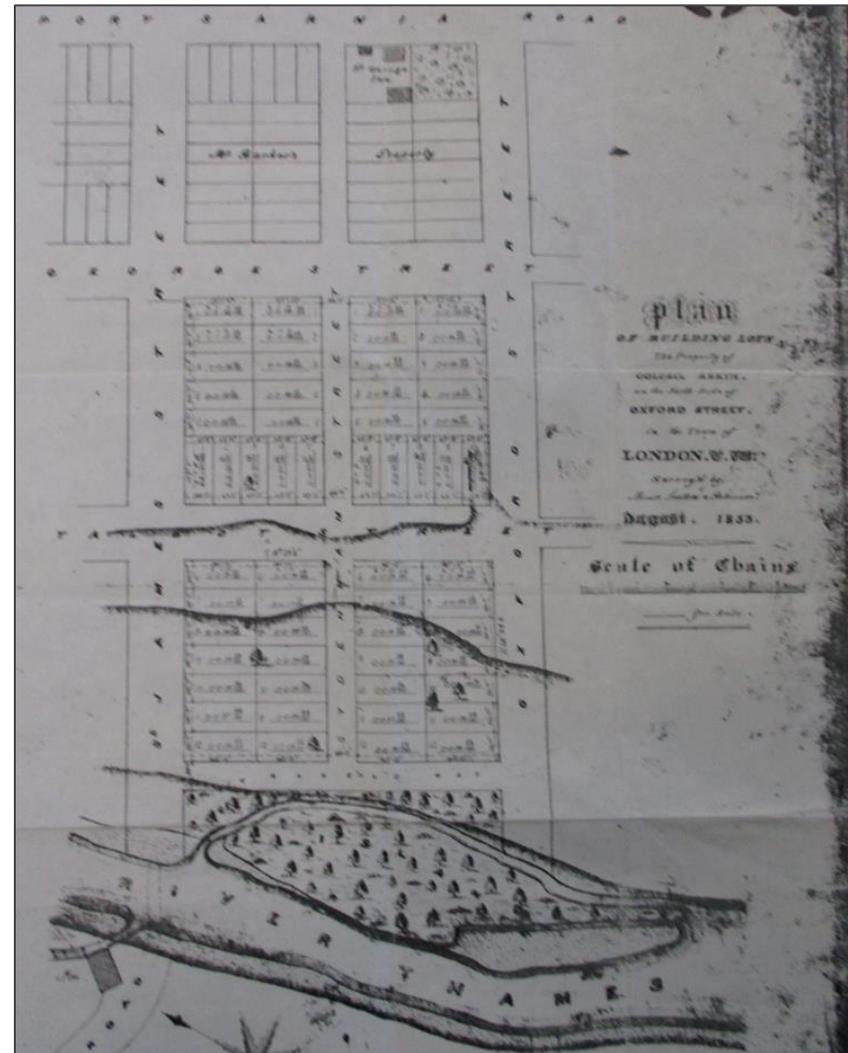


**Image A20:** Detail of Registered Plan 30. This copy of Plan 30, the only one now available in the Middlesex County Land Records, shows a few details, accumulated over time, that were not present in Carroll's original survey.

<sup>53</sup> Ontario. Lands and Forest, Surveys, Small Books, Field Notes and Reports. Written Volumes, Reel #5, 399-459 (Western University, D.B. Weldon Library microfilm holdings CA2ON LF S76).

Great Talbot Street, which is a continuation of Talbot Street, named after Thomas Talbot, the man who guided London's early settlement. The "Great" probably refers to the fact that, like the other streets in most of the New Survey, Great Talbot Street is substantially wider than Talbot Street south of Oxford Street East (see Image A20). Carroll designed streets that were two chains (132 feet) wide. He seems to have been planning for a very busy metropolis, with elegantly broad streets, in London's future.

Carroll's survey notes, focused on the streets, noted a gentle incline as one headed north from Oxford Street East towards St. James Street on both Burlington Street and George Street, then a levelling off until Cheapside Street, when a gentle decline led towards Victoria Street. Great Talbot Street was more complicated. Between Oxford Street East and St. James Street, one first encountered level land along the foot of a bank, then ascending land, descending land, then level land, still along the foot of a bank. After crossing St. James Street, he found gently descending land until he came to the bank of the Thames River at Grosvenor Street (see Image A21). At this point the Thames River formed an oxbow reaching northeast towards the corner of Victoria Street and Grosvenor Street, with Great Talbot Street theoretically curving around the southeast side of the Thames River; because the street was crushed between steep banks and the Thames River, it seems never to have been formally opened. As Carroll moved along what he planned as Great Talbot Street north of Grosvenor Street, he found the land gently ascending, with the Thames River on the left, then descending towards Cheapside Street, after which it descended to a rill and then to a spring marsh before he reached Victoria Street. Following the river along the northwest side of the oxbow, Carroll encountered low flats that flooded in high water.



*Image A21: Registered Plan 65, showing Colonel Askin's subdivision of the lands bordered by the Thames River, St. James Street, Oxford Street East, and what was then George Street. The western block of the survey obviously involved some wishful thinking, given the topography.*

The curious unevenness of the southern part of Great Talbot Street is at least partly explained by the survey, Registered Plan 65, showing the 1852 subdivision of Colonel Askin's land in the blocks between the Thames River and George Street, St. James Street, and Oxford Street East (Image A21). It shows the westerly descent towards the Thames River occurring in three abrupt drops: one in the middle of the street, one behind the lots along its western side, and one along a channel of the Thames River. This escarpment becomes steeper and its rise less gradual as it travels north, along the southeast bank of the oxbow and then, south of what became Bridport Street, moving east, along the east side of what is now St. George Street and, beyond Victoria Street, further east towards Richmond Street (Map A2). The shape of the escarpment was in large part responsible for the course of development in the Study Area. The views that the escarpment offered over the plain below the east and later the west sides of St. George Street became especially prestigious, and the high ground above the escarpment was less prone to floods than the land northwest of the oxbow. Historians John Lutman and Christopher Ives note that "the Tipperary Flats . . . were the home of several Irish families. . . . The area had a rough reputation, for the young fellows were eager to engage in donnybrooks".<sup>54</sup>

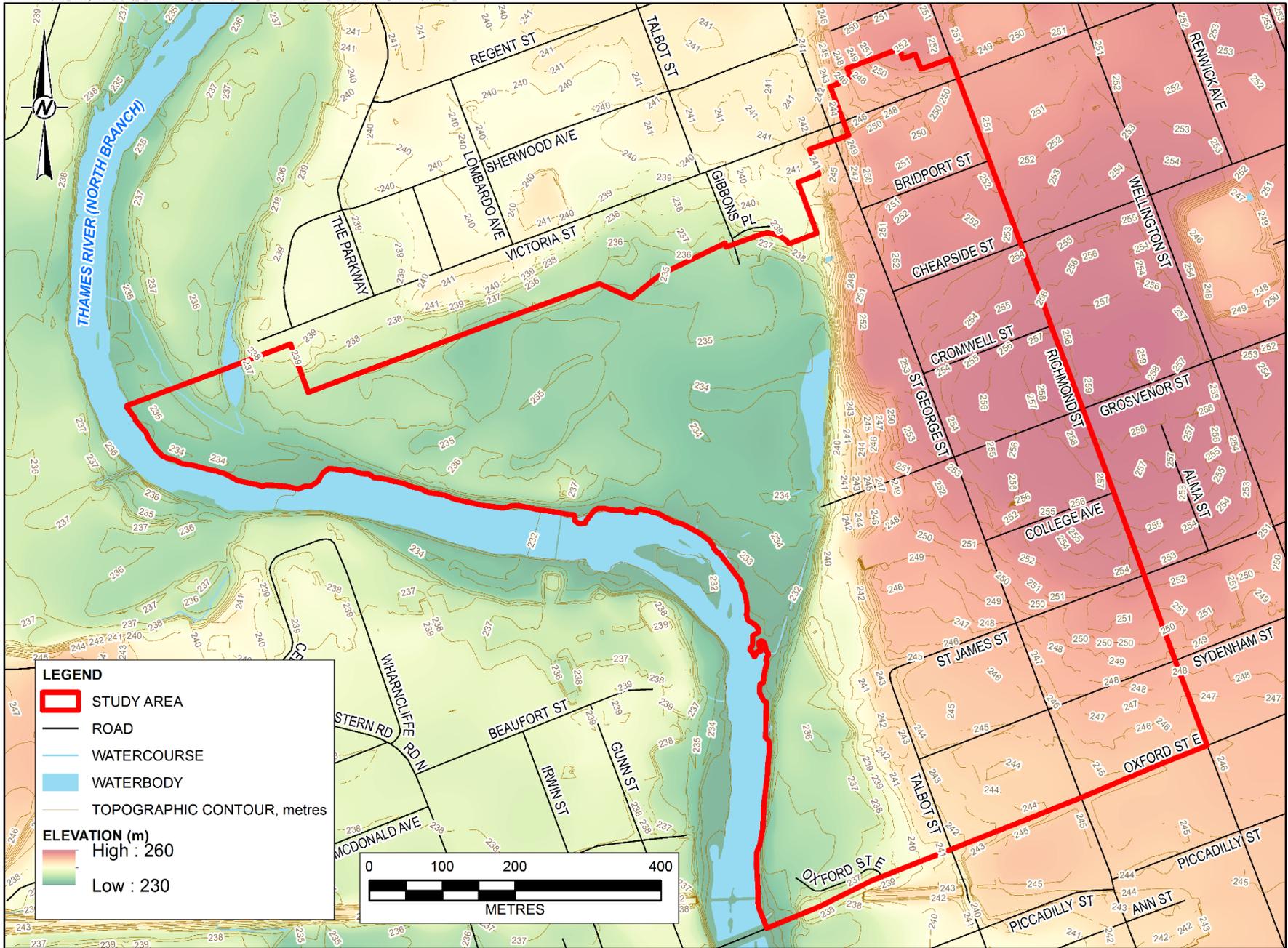
Between the streets within the Study Area, Carroll established blocks that, where perfectly rectangular in shape, consisted of 3 and 3/4 acres divided into ten lots, five facing east and five west. The surveyor found good land throughout the area of his survey, and numerous stands of maple, beech, and white oak trees. Interestingly, he also noted "cleared" and "improved" land along St. George Street north of what became Cromwell Street and south of St. George Street along St. James Street. That some land has been worked on suggests the presence of squatters in the area, as, more definitively, does the single house he mentions, along the east side of Talbot Street near St. James Street.

The land within the Study Area but west of the north branch of the Thames River, where Gibbons Park is located, was not included in the New Survey and was not annexed to the City of London until 1898. It was included in Carroll's survey, however.<sup>55</sup> Because of the sinuous path of the Thames River, this land did not readily lend itself to division into the standard rectangular park lots. South of the Thames River and north of Oxford Street East, Carroll laid out two irregularly shaped pieces; Lots 4 and 5 east of the Proof Line. Just north of the Thames River, he laid out three more irregularly shaped pieces, Park Lots A, B (an island in the Thames), and C. Then, south of Victoria Street and east of the Proof Line, he laid out three additional Park Lots. Between them, in a large looping meander, flowed the Thames River, overflowing its banks every spring. The road allowance for Great Talbot Street crowded tight against the east bank of the Thames River, abutting the bottom of a hill beneath lots on George Street. Parts of all of these lots would eventually comprise Gibbons Park, as it is known today.

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<sup>54</sup>Lutman and Hives 4, 5. City directories lists many Irish names in the "Tipperary Flats" in the years between 1858 and 1875. Most present development in the area below the escarpment dates from the last half of the twentieth century.

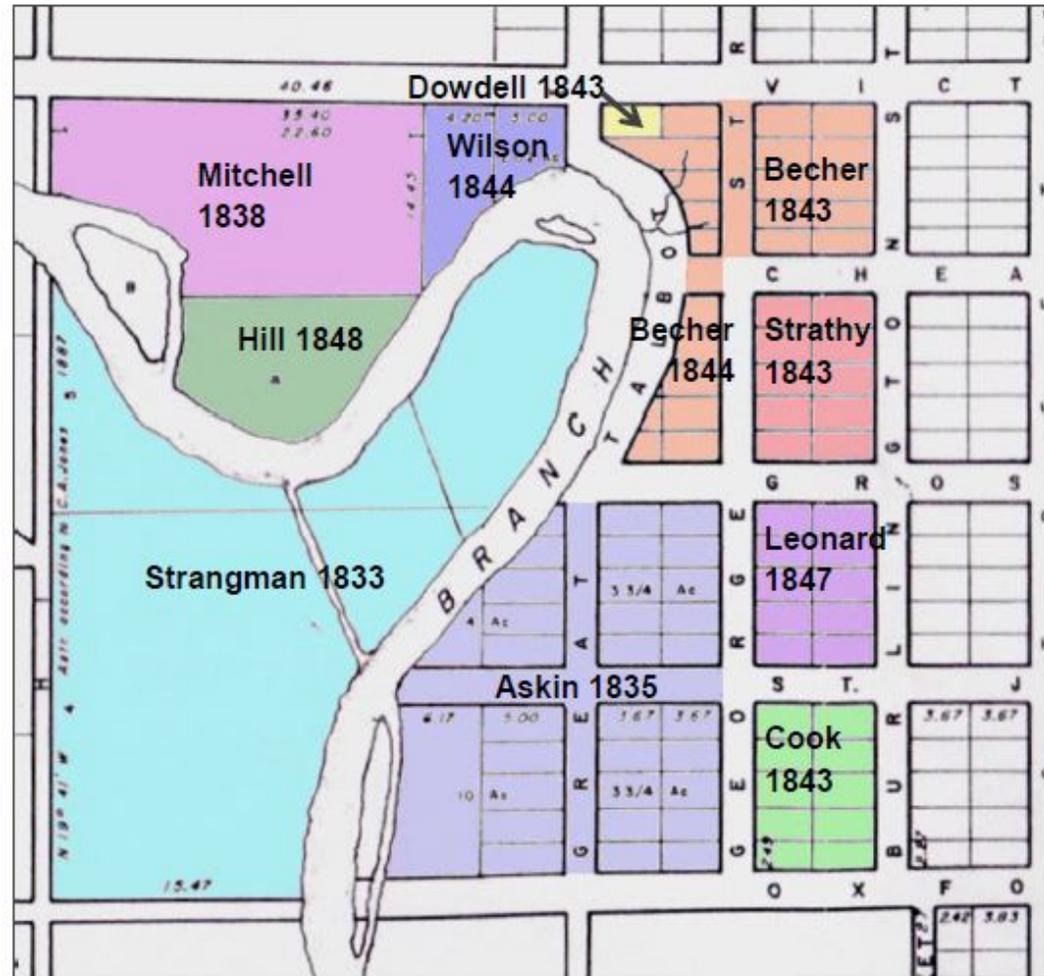
<sup>55</sup> Ontario. Lands and Forest, Surveys, Field Notes, Small Books, Field Notes and Reports. Written Volumes, Reel #5, pp. 399-459. (UWO, D.B. Weldon Library microfilm holdings CA2ON LF S76.)



Map A2: Map of Study Area illustrating topographical features.

## PATENTS AND PLANS OF SUBDIVISION

Before Carroll's survey was barely underway, Joseph Strangman had been located on Lots 3 and 4 by Thomas Talbot in 1833, and sometime thereafter his business partner, Jeremiah Hill, built a woolen mill west of the Thames River there. Among the other significant features of Plan 65 (Image A21) is that it shows the grist mill run by Jeremiah Hill, in the bottom left corner of the plan, with a fragment of the long head race that extended some distance east across the base of the oxbow (note Image F21; the mill and mill race came to play an important role in connection with the development of the land to the northeast). Hill received the patent to parcels A and the islands B and C in 1848. London District Clerk Colonel Askin petitioned for land that was owed "to each District Officer whose removal from Vittoria to London became necessary"<sup>56</sup> when London was chosen as the new District Town. He was granted 27 and 1/4 acres, bounded by Oxford Street East, George Street, and Grosvenor Street and the Thames River, on October 15, 1835.



**Image F22:** Patents of land assigned using the divisions in Registered Plan 30. The patentees are, in order of dates when the patents were granted, Joseph Strangman (1833), Colonel John B. Askin (1835), James Mitchell (1838), Timothy Cook (December 12, 1843), Henry C.R. Becher between Burlington and George Streets (December 14, 1843), John Dowdell (December 14, 1843), John Strathy (December 24, 1843), Henry C.R. Becher west of George Street (1844), Elijah Leonard (1847), and Jeremiah Hill (1848).

<sup>56</sup> Upper Canada Land Petitions, RG1 L3, 1837, Vol. 364, M21, #54. (Reel C-2218)

On the same grounds, James Mitchell, District Court Judge of the London District, was given the patent to a 25-acre lot on the south side of Victoria Street on 18 December 1838.<sup>57</sup> A decade later, patents had been granted for all of the land in the Study Area (see Image A22). Most of those who obtained patents in the Study Area were administrative and business leaders in the regional community. Elijah Leonard, for example, operated a foundry on Ridout Street and was later elected to the Legislative Council of the Province of Canada and to the position of Mayor in London; Timothy Cook's business and civic acumen was demonstrated in Strathroy where he owned a gristmill and sat on the Adelaide Township Council.<sup>58</sup> All of the patentees were practiced land speculators, and most acquired their North London properties in order to resell them at a profit. By 1855 most of the properties east of the Thames River had been sold and/or re-surveyed for development (Image A23).<sup>59</sup> Those lands which were opened for development considerably later belonged to H.C.R. Becher.

Becher was the only patent grantee who chose to live on his land; his home, Thornwood (329 St. George Street), still stands in the Study Area. Becher played an important role in the development of the Study Area. The estate he established stimulated the formation of other estates and substantial homes. The land he acquired west of the Thames River eventually formed the kernel of Gibbons Park. His descendants remained at Thornwood for several generations and influenced the social life of surrounding City blocks throughout most of the twentieth century. Thornwood still stands as a home overlooking much of its historic estate, and provides a tangible bridge between the Study Area's beginnings and its present, a core of stability within the process of history.

## **ESTATES, MANSIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS**

The Study Area is noteworthy for the absence of industry and for possessing only a small commercial area, near the corner of Oxford Street East and Richmond Street and largely still residing in historic houses. Historically, it has been dominated by residences, institutions, and Gibbons Park. There is a close connection between these three entities. Gibbons Park came into being because of the Becher family's possession of land below the escarpment. The institutions, Mount Hope Orphanage, which gradually changed into Marian Villa and is now Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care, and Huron College, which has now been replaced by 1 and 9 Grosvenor Street (Grosvenor Gate) and associated apartment buildings, both began by taking advantage of mansions for sale in the Study Area. Another substantial home provided a setting for Matthews Hall, a private elementary school (demolished in 1979). Exceptions to the institutional tendency to appropriate fine homes for reuse were the Agricultural Hall erected for the 1854 Provincial Exhibition (demolished around 1908) and Trinity Lutheran Church (783 Richmond Street), which built its first church on the southwest corner of St. James Street and Sydenham Street. Map A3 illustrates estates and institutions within the Study Area.<sup>60</sup>

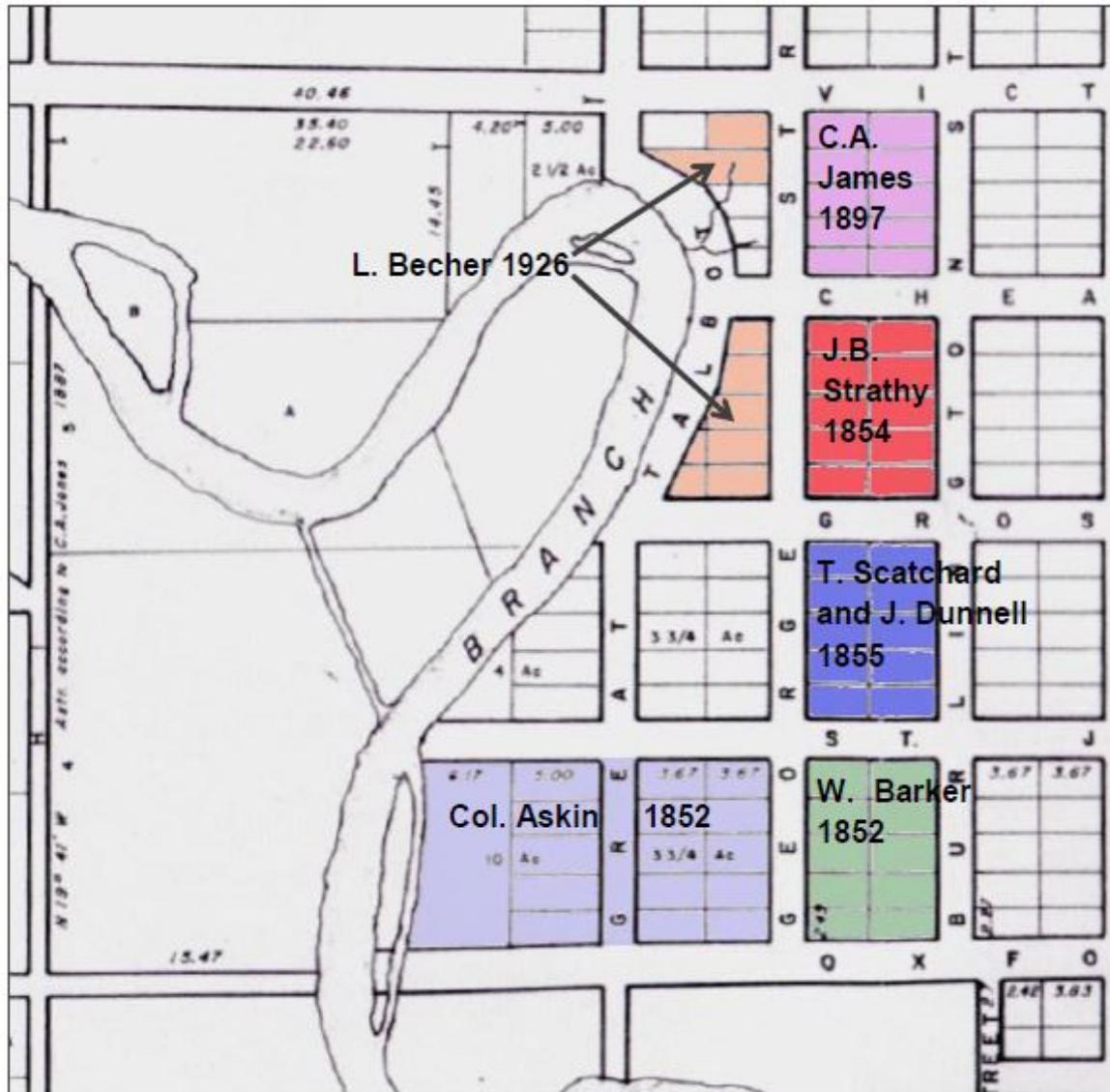
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<sup>57</sup> London Public Library, Crown Patent Register, 1830-1961.

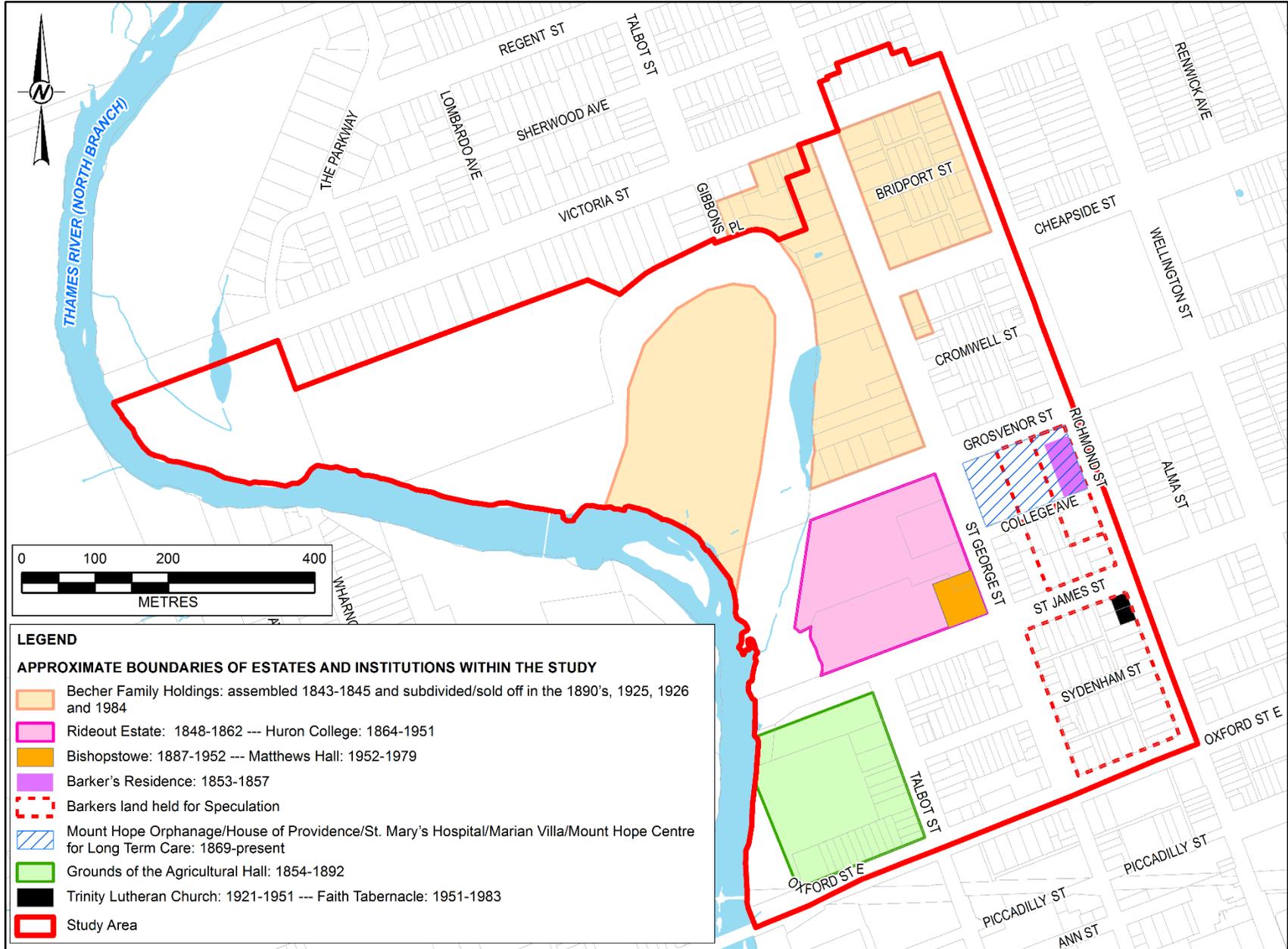
<sup>58</sup> Brock, *Fragments*, 60, 403; Tausky, *London*, 52; Goodspeed 414-15, 448.

<sup>59</sup> Abstracts and Registered Plans, Middlesex County Registry Office

<sup>60</sup> Mark Tovey noted this connection between residences and institutions in the Power Point presentation he made to a Community Information Meeting on November 4, 2015.



**Image A23:** Map showing the areas first subdivided within the Study Area. Patentees Timothy Cook and Elijah Leonard sold their holdings relatively quickly to William Barker and T.Scatcherd/J.Dunnell respectively, and John Strathy's land become the property of a relative. Colonel Askin, along with the new owners, all subdivided their lands in the 1850s, although development did not in most cases follow immediately (see section 3.3.3). The Becher family retained their lands east of the Thames River until Lorne Becher sold the block between Burlington/Richmond Street and George/St. George Street in the 1890s, after which it was subdivided by C.A. James. He subdivided parts of the Becher estate west of St. George Street in 1926, though some lots had been sold off before that time, and part of the subdivided lands were retained.

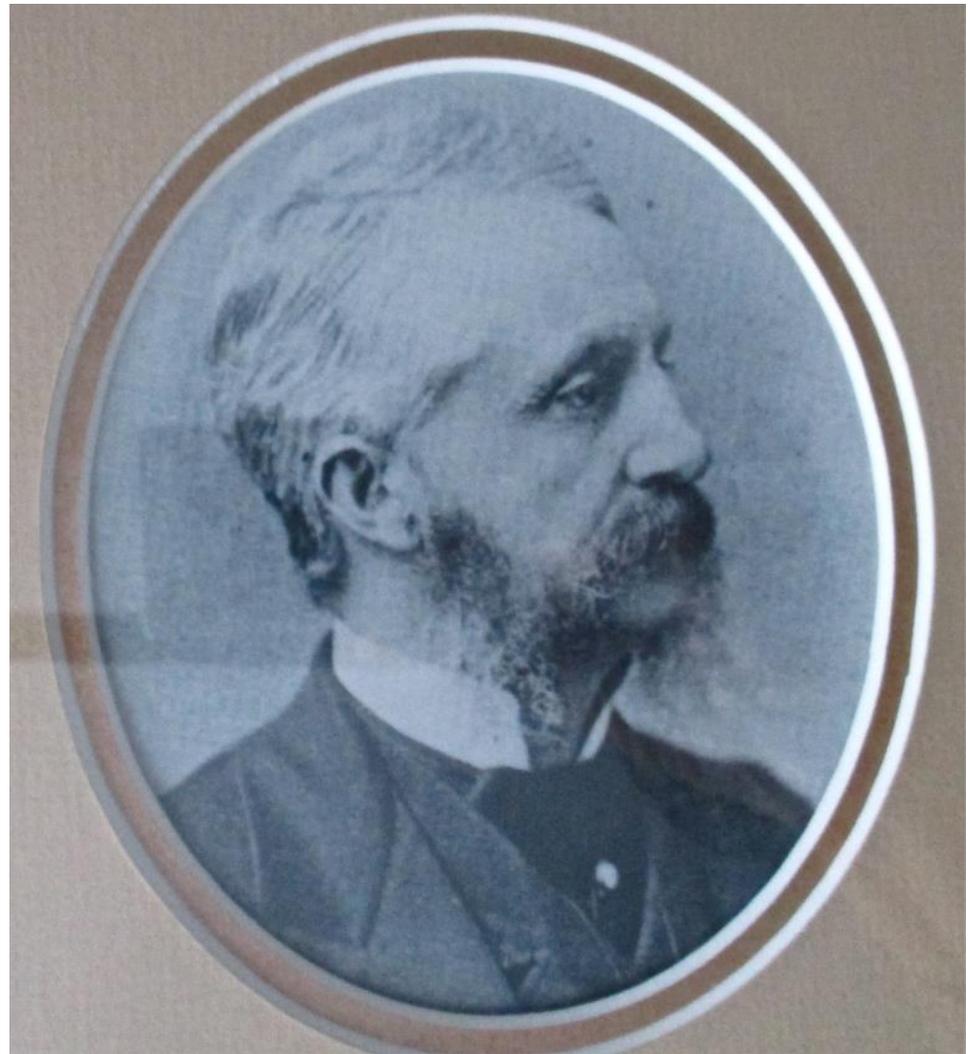


**Map A3: Estates and institutions within the Study Area.**

### H.C.R. Becher and Thornwood

Henry Corry Rowley Becher (1817-1885; Image A24) became one of London's most prominent lawyers, counting among his many clients such important persons as Thomas Talbot, his nephew Richard Airey, and the man known as London's first millionaire, George J. Goodhue.

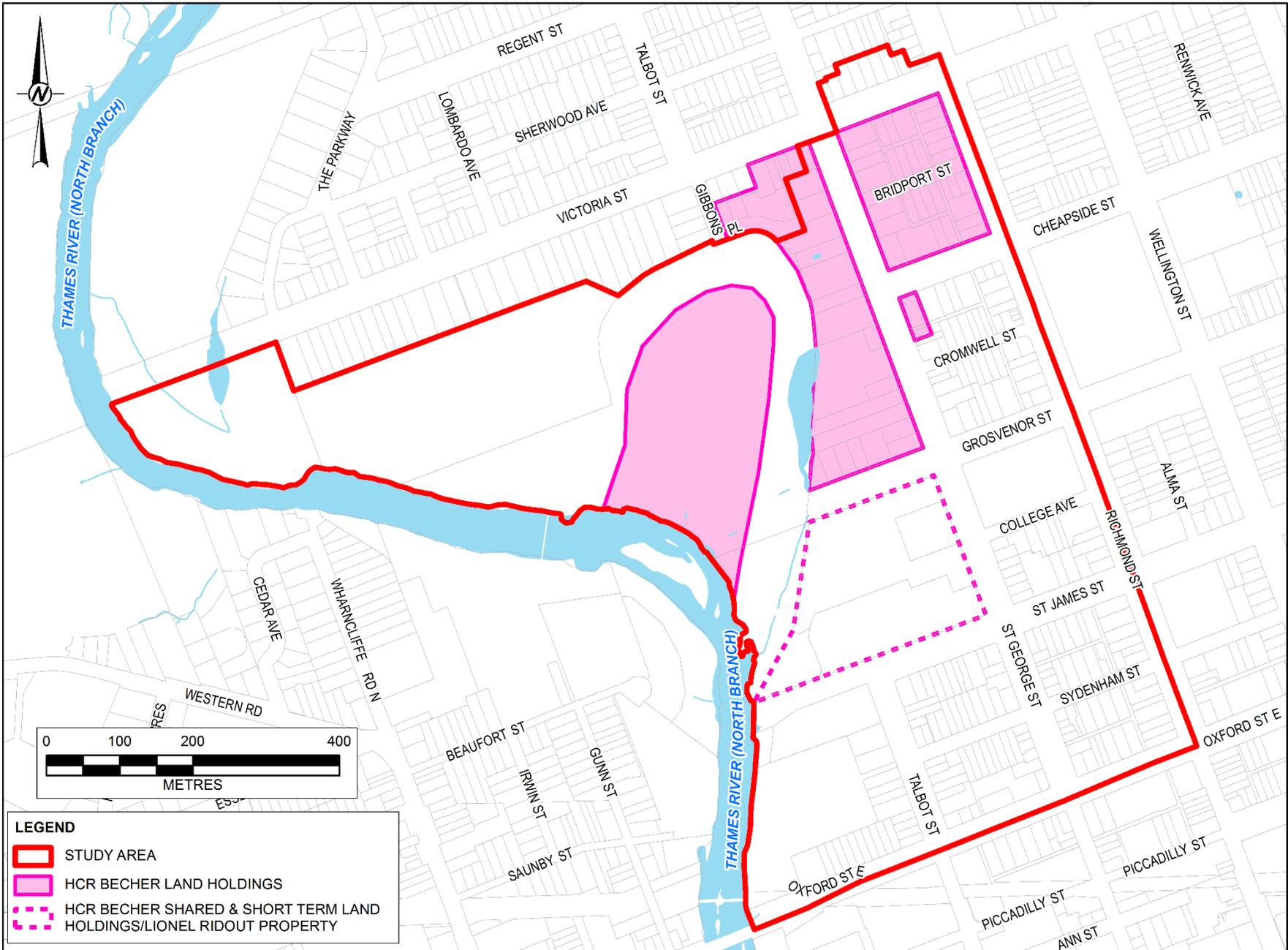
He achieved a benchership in the Provincial Law Society. He was a strong promoter and for many years a director of the Great Western Railway. Although he was unsuccessful in his two bids of a seat in the Upper Canada Legislature, he seems to have been respected by most of his peers, and he contributed to London's welfare in numerous other ways (including serving, at one point, on the Town's Council.<sup>61</sup> He in fact had a great talent for meeting people and for making friends; included among his friends and acquaintances were Sir John A. MacDonald and HRH Albert Edward, Prince of Wales. But when he amassed land holdings that comprised almost half of the Study Area (Map A4), he was a relatively young man, still setting out to make a name for himself.



*Image A24: Photograph of HCR Becher (Courtesy of Peter Becher)*

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<sup>61</sup> Becher, *Diary*; Armstrong, *Forest City*, 41, 81; Tausky, *London*, 48; Campbell, 'Settlement,' 28.



**Map A4:** Map showing Becher's land holdings. The dotted line indicates his very temporary and shared interest in what became Lionel Ridout's property.

Son of a Port Captain in the Royal Navy, Becher emigrated to Canada in 1835, at the age of 18. Having been given a letter of introduction to John Harris of Eldon House by his brother, also in the Navy, He seems to have become an instant protégé and a lifelong friend of the Harrises. He spent his first five years in London calling Eldon House his home and followed the Harrises' advice about entering a career in the law. When, after years of study with very well reputed local lawyer John Wilson and a term at Osgood Hall, he put out his own shingle, it was in an office on Ridout Street that he described as being at the foot of the Harrises' garden. In 1840 he became engaged to Sarah Leonard, daughter of foundry owner and, later, Member of the Legislature, Elijah Leonard, and he found a suitable home for his new family "in a little house the square, King St."<sup>62</sup> The couple was married in 1841, and in 1843 and 1844 he gained the patents to the block surrounded by then Burlington Street, Cheapside Street, Victoria Street, and George Street, as well as the land between Grosvenor Street, Victoria Street, George Street, and the eastern side of the oxbow in the north branch of the Thames River (see Map A4). From this latter parcel, he had a panoramic view of the river flats below (Image A25),

and the following year he managed to obtain part of those flats.



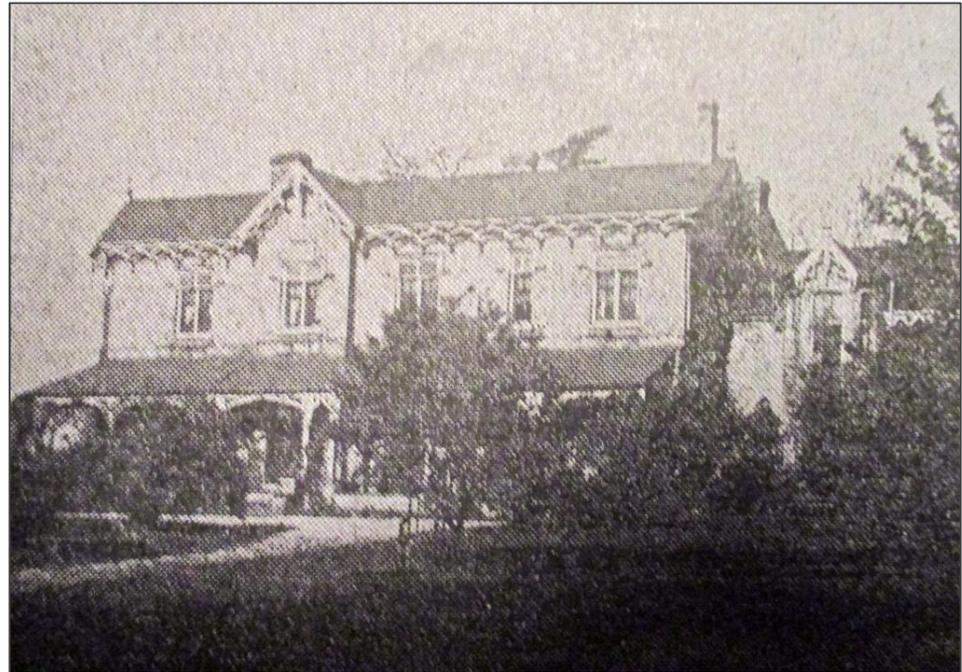
*Image A25: Photograph showing view over the flats from Thornwood, probably dating from H.C.R Becher's tenure there. The oval form was used at the time to indicate a particularly picturesque view. (Courtesy of the Becher FONDS, Western Archives, Western University).*

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<sup>62</sup> Becher, *Diary*, Nov. 2, 1840.

Talbot had assigned lots 4 and 5 to Joseph Strangman, but Strangman died before he actually received his official patents. Laurence Lawrason then received the patent to those lots in 1846, and promptly sold 13¼ acres to Henry Becher, and 33½ acres to miller Jeremiah Hill.<sup>63</sup> The land that Lawrason sold to Becher was almost entirely surrounded by the ox-bow of the Thames, and became known as Becher's Island, the mill race at the foot of the oxbow probably cut the peninsula off from the mainland. In 1847 Becher and Lionel Ridout together bought, from Colonel Askin, the property west of George Street and between St. James Street and Grosvenor Street; a year later Becher sold his share to Ridout, but his diaries suggest that he may have retained a financial interest in Ridout's estate. His diary records that he also owned the lot across from Thornwood on which a log house stood during his lifetime, probably left by a squatter.<sup>64</sup> He and Sarah moved into a house on their estate, which they called Thornwood, in June 1845.

The first house at Thornwood was a 1-and-1/2-storey wood dwelling, which he described as "long,... with a verandah all round." The footprint on a map produced c. 1851 indicates that the building was deep as well as wide, and it faced towards Grosvenor Street, with a long driveway curving up towards the house at the top of a rise. This house burned on February 22, 1852. A little over two months later, on May 4, a new brick house was underway -- or at least part of it, the kitchen, nursery, and cellar.<sup>65</sup> When finished, the house was a 2-and-1/2-storey brick structure in a Gothic Revival style, with a robust gingerbread design lining all eaves, including gables facing north, south, and west; a main entrance faced towards Grosvenor Street, and a broad two-storey bay window overlooked the river and the flats (see Image A26). A map produced by Samuel Peters in 1855 shows the new footprint and the drive towards Grosvenor Street (Image A27).



*Image A26: Photograph of Thornwood published in the London Advertiser in 1936. The photograph shows the original gingerbread along the eaves, much of which has now been removed. (Courtesy Western Archives, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University).*

<sup>63</sup> London Land Registry Office, Instruments #8669 and #8703, both 2 November 1846.

<sup>64</sup> Introductory entry, 3

<sup>65</sup> Becher, *Diary*, 1

Becher's diary suggests that Thornwood was always a work in progress. The verandah was added in 1856 (Image A28). In October 1851, a new "stable" was begun, the Gothic Revival building now referred to as the Coach House (Image A29). In 1877, he "add[ed] to the house," dug a pond, and shored up the Great Talbot Road. The addition could have been the extension at the east end of the house or the extension of the north projection, or both (Image A30).

Neither the diary nor any other surviving family papers mention an architect, and it seems likely that Becher designed the house himself -- both because that was a traditional practice among the British upper classes and because he appears to have had both the literary bias and the artistic interests to have planned a building as sophisticated as Thornwood. He was a member of the



**Image A27:** Detail from "Map of the City of London, Canada West," drawn by S. Peters, 1855 (Courtesy of Janet Hunten).



**Image A28:** Thornwood as seen from the southwest. (Photograph by Leslie Brock, 2014).

Gentlemen Amateurs, a theatrical troupe formed in London in 1844.<sup>66</sup> He was inspired to come to America by Mrs. Trollope's *Men and Manners in America*. He was extremely proud of his connection to novelist William Makepiece Thackeray; his uncle was Thackeray's grandfather. He visited Washington Irving at his New York State home, Sunnyside, and valued the watercolour of Sunnyside that Irving subsequently sent him. He himself wrote stories for the *Albion* early in his career, and, in 1880 published *A Trip to Mexico*, describing a trip he took with members of his family. In his personal copy, he had inserted an album in print of the end of his journey: Thornwood.<sup>67</sup>



**Image A29:** *Becher's Gothic Revival Stable, 2015.*



**Image A30:** *Thornwood as seen from the southeast. The lower part of the building, towards the right of the photograph, is a later addition, 2015.*

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<sup>66</sup> Brock, *Fragments*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> Becher, *Diary*, years 1835, 1843, 1854, 1858. The print of Thornwood is in the copy of *A Trip to Mexico* formerly owned by Walter Eldridge. See a copy of the print in Tausky, *London*, 48.

While evidencing a great deal of affection for Thornwood, the family that lived there, the guests they entertained, and the activities the estate provided, Becher nevertheless offered to sell the estate in 1873 -- perhaps because he was spending so much of his time abroad during his later years.<sup>68</sup> The offer was declined, however, and several more generations of the Becher family resided there before the property was eventually sold to new owners in 1984.<sup>69</sup>

The family maintained Thornwood's traditions of hospitality: Winston Churchill planted a birch tree there when he visited (Image A31).<sup>70</sup> The main house and Coach House at Thornwood have been painstakingly restored by the present owners.<sup>71</sup>



*Image A31: The Churchill Beech in late autumn. The tree was planted on the north side of the house, 2015.*

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<sup>68</sup> Becher, *Diary*, 70-107.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong, *Forest City*, 40

<sup>70</sup> Peter Becher insists that his grandmother, "Topsy" Becher, was an accomplished gardener who would have known how to keep the tree, planted in winter, alive until spring.

<sup>71</sup> L. and G. Brock

## The Rough Park Property

### *Lionel Ridout and Rough Park*

In 1848 Lionel Ridout acquired for himself the property bounded by the Thames River and by Grosvenor Street, St. James Street, and George Street. Ridout was a prosperous hardware merchant, Vice-President of the newly formed London Board of Trade, and, later, a stockholder in the London and Port Stanley Railway. He built a sizeable mansion for himself and his wife, calling his estate

Rough Park (Image A32, Map A3 illustrates the location of the Rough Park estate page 31).



*Image A32: Rough Park. The large bow window faced towards the river. From "Huron College, 1863-1963" by James J. Talman, 1963.*

During the next seven years, three children were born to Ridout and his wife Louisa, and he looked set to enjoy the long-term benefits of his estate when he suffered a premature death in 1859.<sup>72</sup> Ridout left the property to his wife, Louisa, in his will registered 10 May 1859. On 7 July 1862, the executors of Ridout's will, with the consent of his widow, sold the land to the Bishop of Huron, Benjamin Cronyn, and the Venerable Isaac Hellmuth, Archdeacon of Huron, for \$12,000.00. The executors agreed to pay off several outstanding mortgages. The following year, on 25 November 1863, the Bishop and the Archdeacon sold the land to Huron College for \$1.00.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Lutman 4; Brock, *Fragments*, 52; Goodspeed 196.

<sup>73</sup> Instruments 555, 2023, 2581

### ***Huron College***

Bishop Benjamin Cronyn and Archdeacon Isaac Hellmuth had been eager to establish a theological college in London, and Rough Park proved suitable for meeting their increasingly complex needs for some time to come. Huron College opened its doors to its first divinity students in January 1864, having built an addition to Ridout's home and a chapel (Image A33).<sup>74</sup>



***Image A33: Huron College and the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, 1864. From "Huron College, 1863-1963" by James J. Talman.***

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<sup>74</sup> Talman, James R. and Ruth Davis Talman, *Western, 1878-1953*, London, University of Western Ontario, 1953, p. 7.

Under Hellmuth's leadership, the Western University was founded in 1881 in the old Hellmuth Boys' School and Huron College temporarily moved to the new location to form a Faculty of Divinity for the new university. But the large facilities of the Boys' School proved uneconomical, with the result that the Divinity School moved back to its old quarters at Rough Park, and thus for a few years the new university found its home there as well.<sup>75</sup> Over time Huron College attracted more faculties and more students. By 1892, Ridout's former home anchored an extensive wing of classrooms and residences (Image A34). Huron College remained at Rough Park until 1951, when it moved into a new and larger campus on Western Road, across from the re-located University of Western Ontario.



**Image A34:** Huron College in 1892. From "Huron College, 1863-1963" by James J. Talman.

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<sup>75</sup> Talman, p. 18-20; Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 144-149.

### ***Bishopstowe and Miss Matthews School***

Huron College sold the southeast corner (200' by 146') of its spacious grounds to the Synod of the Diocese of Huron on January 10, 1887. Bishopstowe, the home of the Bishop of Huron, was built here (Map A3 page 31 illustrates the location of Bishopstowe. When the Diocese purchased the house of J.J. McHale Sr. at 476 Richmond Street on August 2, 1952 as the Bishop's next official residence, the Bishopstowe property was bought by the Trustees of Miss Matthews School.<sup>76</sup>

Miss Matthews School was established in 1918, shortly after Miss Kate Matthews arrived from England to be governess to the children of the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral.<sup>77</sup> The first location of this private school was Bishop Cronyn Hall on the Cathedral property. Around 1928, it relocated to a house leased from Mrs. E.S. Little at the southeast corner of Richmond Street and Sydenham Street.<sup>78</sup> When Mrs. Little decided to reclaim her home in 1947, the school purchased a house at 562 Waterloo Street. Miss Matthews retired in 1951, and was succeeded by Miss A. Winifred Scott as headmistress.<sup>79</sup>

When Miss Matthews School bought Bishopstowe in 1952, the spacious house was renovated for classrooms and other educational purposes (Image A35) and remained the school's home until 1979, when the trustees of then Matthews Hall purchased the former Katherine Harley School on Oxford Street West from the London Board of Education, for \$338,500.00.<sup>80</sup> During its tenure at 150 St. James Street, Miss Matthews School had the distinction of being the only school in the Study Area.

<sup>76</sup> London Free Press, 2 August 1952.

<sup>77</sup> Fragments, p.196.

<sup>78</sup> London Free Press, 2 August 1952.

<sup>79</sup> City Directory, 1955, p.339.

<sup>80</sup> London Free Press, 22 March 1979.



***Image A35: Photograph of Miss Matthews School, from the London Free Press, June 16, 1954.***

### ***Houses and Apartment Buildings***

In the early twentieth century, Huron College began selling off the land along the north side of St. James Street. A lot, 50' in width to the west of the Bishopstowe property was sold to Harry W. Peel, a furrier, on June 23, 1924. Huron College sold land to the west to Herbert E. Gates, an insurance agent, on July 17, 1907.<sup>81</sup> None of the homes along the side of the Rough House property still stand.

When Huron College left Rough Park and moved to a new building on Western Road across from Western University in 1951, the green campus it left behind on St. George Street seemed ideal for the development of apartment buildings. On 7 July 1952, Huron College agreed to sell that land to Realty Development Company of London, for \$150,000. In this legal agreement, the description was for all lands owned by the vendor bounded by St. James Street, St. George Street, Grosvenor Street and the Thames River "excepting the residence of the Bishop of Huron located at the northwest corner of St. James and St. George Streets."<sup>82</sup>

The first apartments to be built on these lands were two, four-storey apartment buildings, 124 and 128 St. James Street. Constructed at the west side of the block, with twelve and eleven flats per floor respectively, the strangely-named Huron Park Apartments

welcomed tenants in 1957 at 124 St. James Street, and in 1959 at 128 St. James Street. The buildings were demolished in 1980-81, and to date nothing more has been built. Next to be constructed in the block were the three-storey Grosvenor Apartments at 291, 295 and 301 St. George Street (Image A36).



***Image A36: Grosvenor Apartments, 2015.***

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<sup>81</sup> Instruments 25353, 12696

<sup>82</sup> Instrument 46700

Tenants in those buildings were first listed in the city directory in 1962. The Grosvenor Gate Apartments at 9 Grosvenor Street, a six-storey building with 8 apartments per floor, was opened in 1964. Grosvenor Gate (at 1 Grosvenor Street) overlooking Gibbons Park (Image A37), was constructed later in that decade, with its first tenants listed in the city directory in 1970.



*Image A37: 1 Grosvenor (The Esplanade), viewed from the northwest, near the entrance to Gibbons Park, 2015.*

### William Barker and the Mount Hope Orphanage

William Barker was a grocer and, in 1856, Mayor of London.<sup>83</sup> Though sometimes credited with founding one of North London's great estates, William Barker was interested in amassing land for speculation rather than for establishing a landed home. He bought, subdivided, and sold off lots in the block surrounded by Oxford Street East, Burlington Street, St. James Street, and George Street (see map A3 page31), and then moved on to purchase lots in the subdivision immediately to the north (see Images A22 and A23, pages 28 and 31). There in 1853, he built a substantial home facing Richmond Street (Image A38), but, characteristically, he resided there only briefly. In 1857, he sold the house and his property between College Street and Grosvenor Street to Regis E. Hamilton.<sup>84</sup>



*Image A38: Half of a Stereoscopic View of the Barker house on Richmond Street (Courtesy of the Western Archives, Western University).*



By 1869, Roman Catholic Bishop Walsh had purchased the house for use as an orphanage, a home for indigents, and a home for the elderly, to be run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. It also served as a Motherhouse for Novitiates (Image A39).

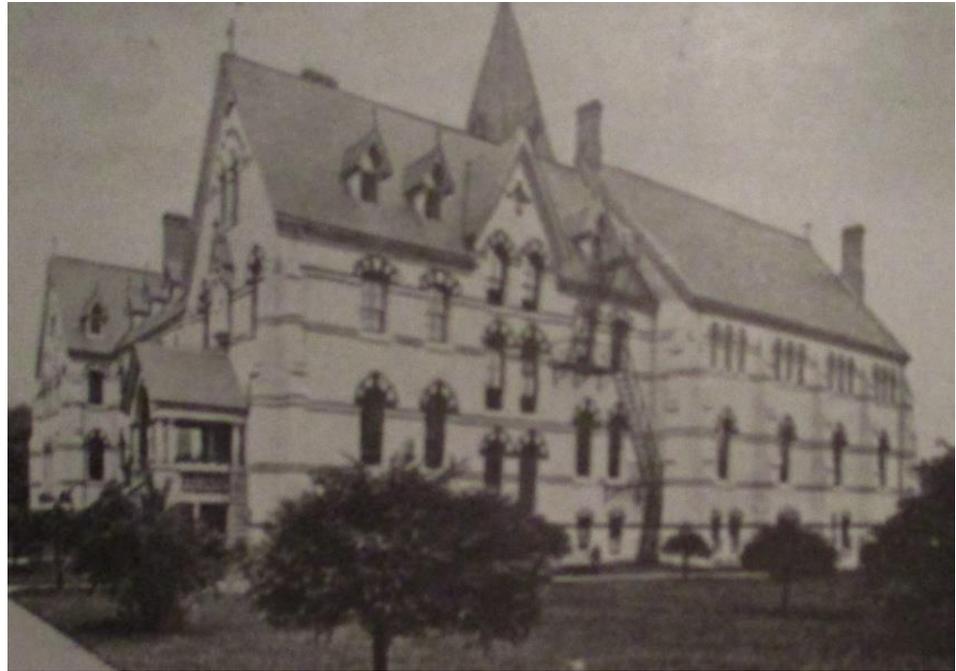
*Image A39: Half of a Stereoscopic View of Children and Caretakers at Mount Hope Orphanage (Courtesy of the Western Archives, Western University).*

<sup>83</sup> Lutman 4; Brock, *Fragments*, 403

<sup>84</sup> Instrument 8401

In 1877 a large addition was made to the original house. In a High Victorian Gothic style, with high gables, pointed windows, and dichromatic brickwork (Image A40), it made no attempt to blend with it Barker's Classical Revival mansion.

In 1899, the facility was renamed the House of Providence as it was rededicated exclusively to caring for the elderly. The nineteenth-century buildings provided residences and medical care for the aged until the last half of the twentieth century, when both were demolished (the Barker House in 1963 and its Gothic addition in 1977) to make room, eventually, for the much larger St. Mary's Hospital (Image A41) and Marian Villa (Image A42).<sup>85</sup> In recognition of the historic building torn down in 1977, the shadow of one of its gables was incorporated in the east wall of the new structure (Image A43). The tradition of stylistic variety has been maintained.



*Image A40: 1877 addition to Mount Hope Orphanage. From "The North and the East", by John H. Lutman and Christopher L. Hives.*

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<sup>85</sup> Lutman 9, 10.



*Image A41: St. Mary's Hospital, facing College Street, 2015.*



*Image A42: Marion Villa, Grosvenor Street, 2015.*



*Image A43: The light patch on the east wall of Marian Villa recollects the former House of Providence, 2015.*

## The Provincial Exhibition Building

Between 1846 and 1857, the Provincial Agricultural Association for Canada West held an annual exhibition that circulated to a variety of towns. In 1854, the exhibition was held in London.<sup>86</sup> In order to ensure a respectable showing, the local Agricultural Association bought the land bordered between Great Talbot Street and the Thames River, south of St. James Street from Colonel Askin (See Map A3 page 31). Located near the west end of St. James Street, a rather sophisticated Italianate structure, with twin towers in front, was erected as the centre of the exhibition (Image A44). On show within were displays of the best samples of various kinds of produce and flowers, new industrial products, and prized examples of crafts and cooking.

Though erected in 1854, the building remained a Talbot Street fixture until about 1908.<sup>87</sup> One possible explanation lies in the uneven terrain of Talbot Street itself (see Map F2 page 27). Even though Alexander Harvey bought the west side of Talbot Street in 1892 and went so far as to re-survey lots there, his failure to build on the lots within a five-year limit resulted in the revocation of his plan.<sup>88</sup> It seems that settling on that side of the road was still a challenge until around the turn of the twentieth century.



*Image A44: The Agricultural Building for the 1854 Provincial Exhibition in process of construction (Photograph courtesy of Western Archives, Western University).*

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<sup>86</sup> Tausky and DiStefano, *Victorian Architecture*, 141.

<sup>87</sup> Lutman and Hives 64.

<sup>88</sup> Middlesex County Land Records

### Trinity Lutheran Church/Faith Tabernacle

Trinity Lutheran Church began life in a hall rented on Pall Mall Street, in October 1920. The Congregation organized 1921 and built its first church on the southwest corner of Sydenham and Richmond Street, 783 Richmond Street (Image A45 and Map A3 page 31). The cornerstone was laid and the church dedicated on October 12, 1924. It remained in this edifice until 1951, when it moved to the

present church on the southeast corner of Colborne Street and Oxford Street East and sold the Richmond Street building to Faith Tabernacle.

A non-denominational church, Faith Tabernacle offered a missionary program; a Sunday School and a half-hour weekly radio broadcast entitled "The Light of the World." In 1983 it also moved away, for a location at 1920 Huron Street that offered more room, better parking, and day care facilities.<sup>89</sup>

After 1983 the church was converted into a commercial building.

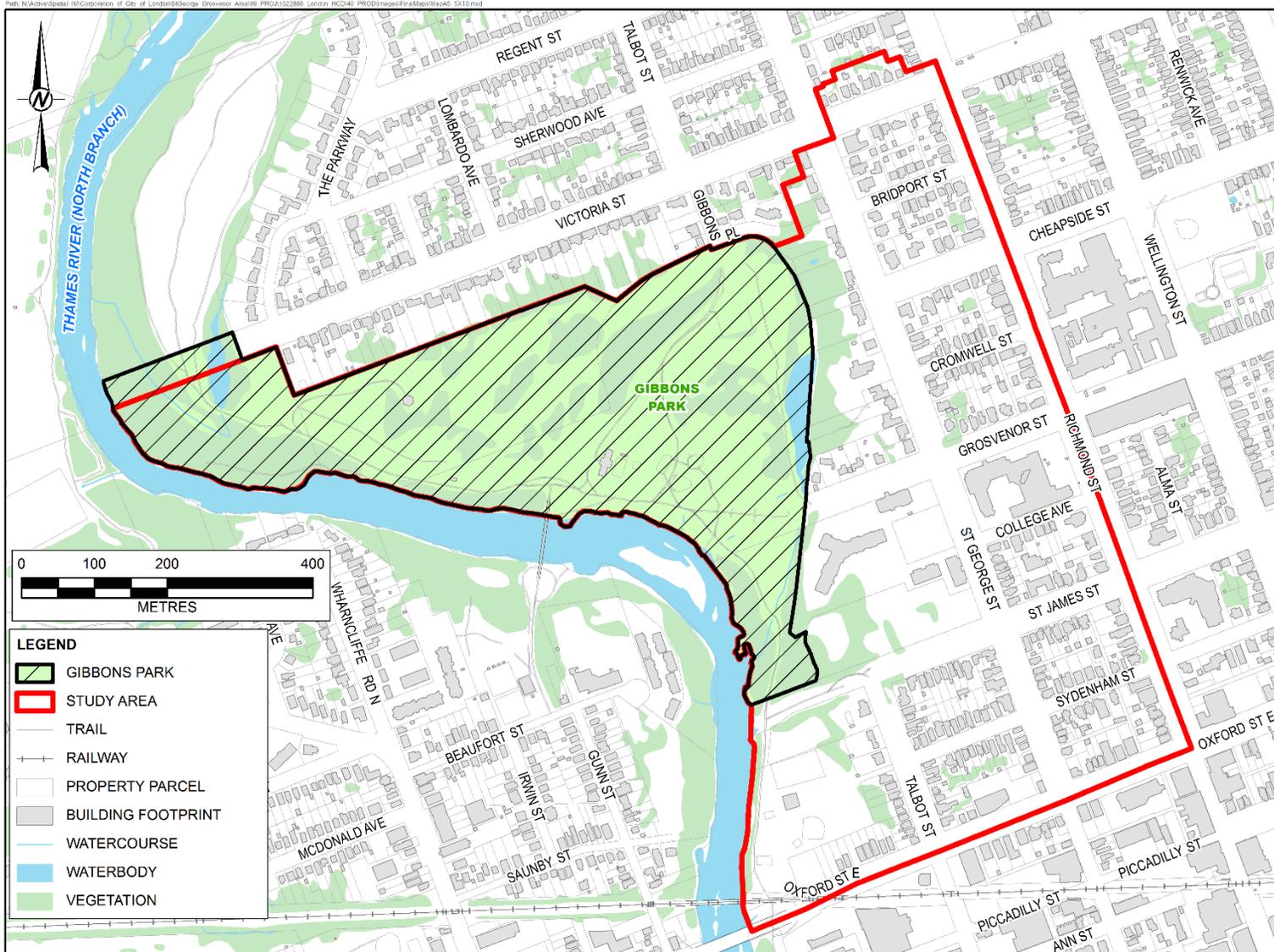


*Image A45: The former Trinity Lutheran Church, at 783 Richmond Street, 2015.*

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<sup>89</sup> The London Free Press.

# GIBBONS PARK



Map A5: Gibbons Park in the HCD Study Area

The early (and later) players in the history of what was to become Gibbons Park were Becher and the various owners of the woolen mill across the Thames River at the end of St. James Street. Becher owned most of the land in the oxbow northeast of the mill race (known as Becher's Island), but access to his estate before the surveyed roads became roads in practice was from Wharncliffe Road. By 1858, Jeremiah Hill's mill had passed into the hands of William Dunn. For ten shillings, Becher purchased a right-of-way over Dunn's land at the neck of Becher's Island and across the bridge over Dunn's mill-race in 1858; this was for himself, "his heirs and assigns and his and their servants with their carts, carriages, horses, and cattle at all-time hereafter forever."<sup>90</sup> The right-of-way agreed upon by William Dunn and Henry Becher was honoured in land transactions relating to the mill site as late as 1984. This was long after the mill had closed, the Becher family had left their home on St. George Street, the Thames River had changed its course, and Gibbons Park had been established. But the bridge over the mill race was situated close to the bridge that now connects Gibbons Park to the land near the end of the old mill race.

Before the establishment of Gibbons Park, the river flats in that area surrounding the north branch of the Thames River were well known to occasional hunters, fishers, hikers, naturalists, picnickers, and adventuresome children. Captain John Smyth is reported, in 1848, to have led his rifle corps from town to the Becher flats for a "picnic followed by target shooting."<sup>91</sup> Besides grazing horses and cattle there, the Becher's ice skated on the river, went tobogganing down the escarpment, and held violet picking parties in the spring.<sup>92</sup>

The milling successors to Jeremiah Hill (Anderson, Hillard & Saunby, Robb Bros., Dexter) operated a profitable flourmill on the west bank: its milldam afforded an excellent place from which swimmers could frolic in the river when its water was better than sluggish. But on the night of July 10 and 11 1883, the Thames River was anything but sluggish as an electrical storm centered over London and the watershed to the north dropped more rain than the ground and river could absorb. A wall of water swept down the north branch of the Thames River, carving a new channel over the neck of the lazy oxbow in the future Gibbons Park, and rushing south to devastate the Blackfriars area of West London and river flats to the west (Image A46). Over succeeding decades, the oxbow nearly dried up, except when spring floods overflowed the new course of the river. That section which lay below the properties on the hill west of St. George Street retained a swampy character, draining in a southwesterly direction into the river. The river flats east of the new channel continued to be known as Becher's Island.<sup>93</sup>

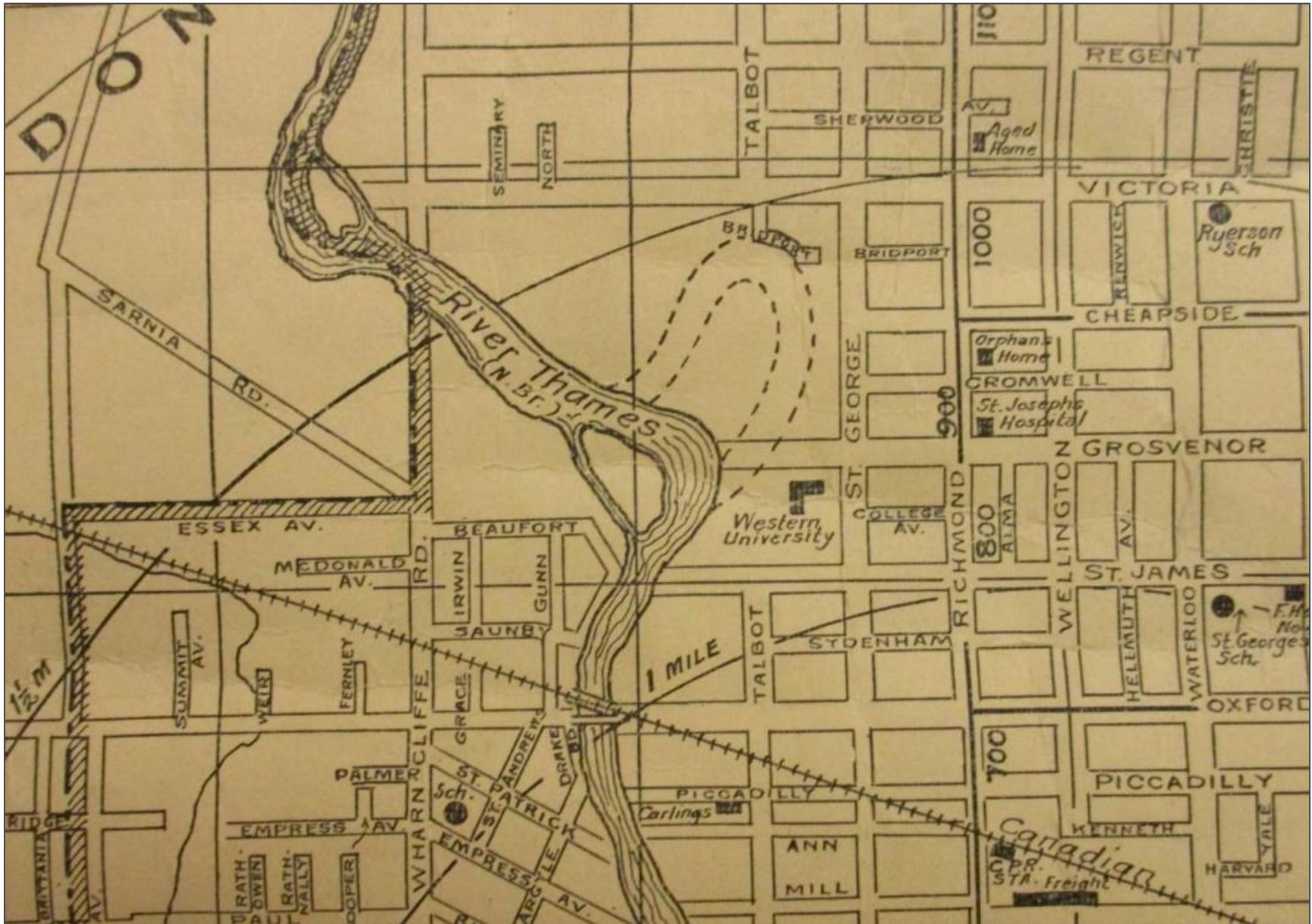
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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, Instrument #5486 20 June 1858. In the Census of 1861, Becher reported owning four horses and four cattle. ([http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1861/pdf/4391537\\_00713.pdf](http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1861/pdf/4391537_00713.pdf)) The 1871 census reported his livestock reduced to two horses and one cow, but one acre of his land on the river flats had produced 2 Tons of hay. (Canada Census 1871, Ontario, District 10, London Ward 7, Sub-district G, page 16. See also schedules 3 and 4. Reel C-9907.)

<sup>91</sup> Brock, *Fragments*, 35

<sup>92</sup> Becher, *Diary*, 69 (among other references)

<sup>93</sup> See Rob Turner's useful photo-story, "The Oxbow in Gibbons Park," *The London and Middlesex Historian*, 18 (Autumn, 1991), 48-53.



*Image A46: Detail, Lloyd's Map of London, Ontario, published by the Map Company, Toronto, Ontario. The dotted line indicates the course of the river before the flood of 1883. (Courtesy of Western Archives, Western University).*

In 1914, the City of London changed the name of the Board of Water Commissioners to the Public Utilities Corporation (PUC), and gave it authority over city parks. In 1922, the PUC began operating a swimming hole in the north branch of the Thames River at Dexter's Dam.<sup>94</sup> By 1923, it was operating three swimming pools; at Thames Park, Birkett's in Chelsea Green, and Becher's Camp at Dexter's Dam, with the last mentioned accessible by the Dundas streetcar. The city did not own the land of "Becher's Camp", but it did maintain the swimming hole in the Thames River with regular dredging, and provided dressing rooms, a laundry room, and a "sand garden".<sup>95</sup> In 1924, a pontoon bridge was installed, "enabling motorists to drive over onto the bank at the west side of the river" and walk to the dressing rooms. A boat, footbridge, diving tower, benches, and life-saving equipment were also part of the camp infrastructure. The City spent \$594.39 in 1923 and \$793.98 in 1924 on Becher's Camp and playground, with outlays covering equipment, construction, operations, and maintenance.<sup>96</sup>

The story of how the land known as Becher's Island or Becher's Camp became Gibbons Memorial Park is legendary. According to Edward V. Buchanan, then General Manager of the PUC, he was visited in his office sometime in 1925 by Mrs. Ronalds Harris (Lorna C.), the daughter of Sir George Christie Gibbons and Lady Gibbons (née Elizabeth Campbell Craig, d. September 25, 1914). Sir George (d.1918) had been a prosperous London lawyer and businessman, and had served on the International Waterways Commission.<sup>97</sup> As Buchanan wrote in his autobiography sixty years later, Lorna Harris explained that, "she and other members of Sir George's family wished to donate a memorial to their father and wanted it to be in the form of a park and playground." "After I expressed my pleasure," he continued,

she told me that she had a definite idea. The home of a very old London family, the Bechers, stood on St. George Street, north of Grosvenor Street. It was well over a hundred years old and the property extended down the hillside and over what was a swamp to the river, covering an area of about 60 acres. She wanted the flat land was swampy and useless for any purpose other than that which she had suggested as it was all in the flood plain and worth only about two or three thousand dollars. She said that old Mrs. Becher was not in good financial circumstances and that through this transaction good could be done in two ways. I was to go and offer to buy the property on the Gibbons family's behalf for not less than \$25,000. Mrs. Becher was not to be told that the Gibbons were buying the land, only that I was buying it on behalf of the city. It was a delicate business getting the price up to twenty-five thousand but I believe I handled the deal with some finesse.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Robert Duff, *London Parks and Recreation, 1871-1973, a history of the Recreation Department, Public Utilities Corporation, City of London*. (London, 1973), p. 17. Thomas Dexter was then the owner of the flourmill on the west side of the river. His dam forced river water into a millrace to power machinery for grinding grain.

<sup>95</sup> Public Utilities Corporation, Annual Report, 1923, p. 58. Hereafter, Annual Report PUC. (Thomas Dexter owned the flourmill on the west bank of the river.)

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 1924, p.50, 58-59.

<sup>97</sup> Peter Neary, "Sir George Christie Gibbons, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography online*: [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gibbons\\_george\\_christie\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gibbons_george_christie_14E.html)

<sup>98</sup> Edward V. Buchanan, *Roses in December (An Autobiography)*. London, Ont.: Galt House, 1986, p.56-7.

Buchanan's dealings with Mrs. Katherine Becher proved to be effective, and the result was what Lorna Harris and her siblings had hoped. Even if extra steps were necessary which were not part of Buchanan's diplomacy, and even if the figures in his memoirs do not match those of the land records, London did acquire a gift of substantial park land in honour of a worthy local family, and Londoners from across the city have been enjoying Gibbons Park ever since.<sup>99</sup>

Katherine Moore Becher, the old Mrs. Becher in Buchanan's tale, first sold the 13¼ acres of Becher's Island to her son, Alexander Lorne Becher, a London broker, for \$4,000 on 16 December 1925.<sup>100</sup> In early March of the following year, Lorne Becher sold that property, as well as a piece of the former road allowance for Great Talbot Street, to Lorna Harris for \$7,500.<sup>101</sup> The next day, Lorna Harris sold Becher's Island and part of the Great Talbot Street road allowance to the city to be used as a public park, for one dollar.<sup>102</sup>

Over the years, the City of London continued to add small pieces of land to Gibbons Park. In 1932, the City bought from Mary Charlotte Dexter, and Thomas Foulds Dexter, miller, Park Lot A on the Thames (9½ acres), parts of Lots 4 and 5 East of the Wharnccliffe Highway including sections of the old river bed, and a few lots and the south parts of several lots in Plan 202 which had been made by William McClary of John Wilson's Park Lots south of Victoria Street.<sup>103</sup> This extended the northern boundary of Gibbons Park by many acres. Additional lands were dedicated for park purposes by the City in 1961 including Park Lot C south of Victoria Street, and the unopened road allowance for the Wharnccliffe Road lying south of Victoria Street.<sup>104</sup> Valued as the parkland was to Londoners, the City did sell Lot One (in plan 202) at the west end of Victoria Street, to the trustees of the Unitarian Fellowship of London in September 1960.<sup>105</sup> By 1964, the area of Gibbons Park had grown to 60 acres: it was the third largest park in London after Springbank Park and the Thames Valley Golf Course.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Peter Becher, nephew of Lorne Becher, points out that, since Lorne was known in the family to be poor at managing money, a separate trust was likely established for his grandmother.

<sup>100</sup> London Land Registry Office, Instrument #27124w, 16 December 1925.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, Instrument #27125w, 2 March 1926. Thomas Foulds Dexter was one of the millers who succeeded Jeremiah Hill.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, Instrument #2127w, 3 March 1926.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, Instrument #31315w, 9 September 1932. John Wilson had purchased the 25-acre Park Lot South of Victoria Street from James Mitchell in 1851. (Instrument #1740, 14 July 1851). McClary's plan for all of Wilson's property on the south side of Victoria Street was made in May 1852 for Wilson's heirs, but not registered until 12 October 1878.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, Instrument #99538, 3 July 1961, By-Law No. P.U.- 89-313.

<sup>105</sup> London Land Registry Office, Abstract Index, Plan 202, Lot 1.

<sup>106</sup> Annual Report PUC, 1964, p. 36. 60 acres equals 24.28 hectares.

Before ink was dry on the land transfers between the Gibbons family and the PUC, E.V. Buchanan wrote an optimistic annual report for 1925. “What kind of Parks and Playgrounds have we in London?” he asked. “Evidence that the public are satisfied with the management of these Departments is shown by the fact that recently the Commission has been offered three Parks or Playgrounds by public-spirited and generous citizens.”<sup>107</sup> The following year, the PUC spent \$9,934.68 on purchase and construction costs relating to Gibbons Memorial Park.<sup>108</sup> Ornamental gates were donated by the Sir George Gibbons family and installed on Grosvenor Street at St. George, with a bronze plaque (Image A47).

Alan Gibbons, one of two sons of George Christie and Lady Gibbons, had died tragically in 1901, as the result of an accident with a revolver. He was seventeen at the time and had just started studies at the University of Toronto.<sup>109</sup> His brother, George Sutton Gibbons, a London lawyer, died in 1919.

The PUC annual report for 1927 listed the Gibbons Playground at the west end of Grosvenor Street, as having an area of 29 acres. That year, Gibbons Park, which offered “such great opportunities for development, received as much necessary attention as it was possible to give during the growing season, grass and weeds being kept under control.” Horticultural work, however, was deemed impossible until the grounds were “in better condition.”<sup>110</sup> The City had graded Grosvenor Street from St. George Street to Gibbons Park, with the intention of paving the “Gibbons Memorial Roadway” the following year.<sup>111</sup>

The generosity of the Gibbons family had only just begun. In 1928, Mary



*Image A47: Plaque at the entrance to Gibbons Park, 2015.*

<sup>107</sup> Annual Report, PUC, 1925, p.7.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 1926, p. 63. This information was provided by the city auditor, Henry B. Ashplant.

<sup>109</sup> *Advertiser*, 7 October 1901, p. 6. *London Free Press*, 7 October 1901, p. 8.

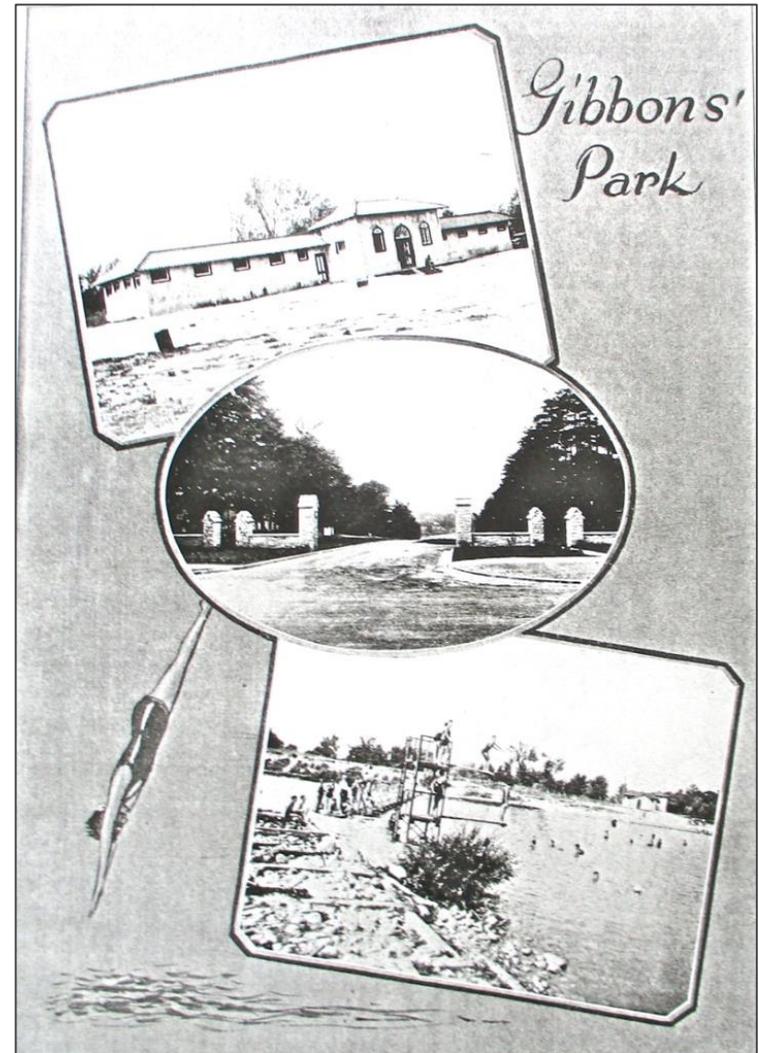
<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 1927, p. 72.

<sup>111</sup> London. City Council. Minutes, 1927, p. 437.

Osler Gibbons, the widow of George Sutton Gibbons, donated \$5,000 toward the construction of a bathhouse in Gibbons Park.<sup>112</sup> The PUC annual report described the building as having a floor area of 3,000 square feet, and accommodation for a thousand visitors per day. It was made of reinforced cement walls on wooden studs, with a cement floor and a metal roof (Image A48).

In 1928, a four-hundred-foot toboggan slide was constructed on the steep hill at Grosvenor Street leading into Gibbons Park, and “a new type of floating bridge was built and erected at the bath-house site,” facilitating “entrance to the Park from London West.”<sup>113</sup>

Parks officials imagined a future Gibbons Park landscaped and planted with many species of trees and shrubs. In 1928, elms were planted along the roadways. Gradually, coarse grass was brought under control and brush was cleared. Grosvenor Street from St. George Street to the bottom of the hill was graded and a culvert filled in.<sup>114</sup> The following year, Lorna Harris subscribed funds to construct a wading pool for Gibbons Park. A skating rink was also installed, and another roadway built. Weekly attendance in the summer rose to 1,499, from the 1928 figure of 1,140, and the supervisor of Playgrounds, G.N. Goodman, reported that, “Thames and Gibbons pools were well patronized by children and adults alike.”<sup>115</sup> In 1931, a lagoon was made at the east end of Gibbons Park, but



**Image A48:** A page from the 51st Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission, showing the bath house, the Grosvenor Street gates to the park, and the swimming area in the river near the mill dam.

<sup>112</sup> “Bathhouse[sic] for Gibbons’ Park”, *London Free Press*, 3 January 1928, p.1. George Sutton Gibbons had died of MS in 1919.

<sup>113</sup> Public Utilities Commission. Annual Report, 1928, p. 77.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 1929, pp. 7, 60, 67, 68.

three years later this action was reversed by filling in the swamp, and leveling the ground to provide “ground enough for baseball, football, parades, etc.”<sup>116</sup> The swimming hole in the Thames River was dredged for a diving well in 1934, and a full-sized hardball field was built.<sup>117</sup> During the Great Depression, much park maintenance and construction was carried out by relief workers. An average of 60 such men worked daily between September 22, 1934 and January 21, 1935 leveling the northwest extension of Gibbons Park. Later that year, the remnants of the former river channel in Gibbons Park was filled in and graded, “creating valuable future ground for future buildings” and for a soccer field the following season.<sup>118</sup>

Daily attendance at the Gibbons pool and playground continued to grow each year, unless cool weather intervened. In 1936, the PUC was ordered to close some of its swimming holes in the Thames River by the Board of Health, but St. Julien and Gibbons remained open since they were both located upstream from points where City sewers issued into the Thames River. A new dredge provided “the deepest water at this pool for years” by removing river gravel and silt. That summer, Gibbons playground scored second in the city point standing in the aggregate of team games, Track4, Twilight meets, and Tournaments.<sup>119</sup>

Several hundred evergreens, trees and shrubs, were planted at the park in 1935, and 880 more evergreens and 200 hard maples in 1937, drawing the happy observation that trees now small in height<sup>120</sup> would in a few years provide shade trees for users. A devastating flood in April of that year caused considerable extra grounds work, and the Parks Department reported that its workers had removed a breakwater there, and used the material salvaged to “fill hollow places in the park”.<sup>121</sup> An outbreak of infant paralysis (polio) closed City pools early in the summer, but average daily attendance was still strong, perhaps because a softball diamond and basketball court were added that year.

By 1940, hay was being grown and harvested in outlying portions of Gibbons Park, and fed to animals at the Springbank Park Zoo, at “a considerable saving for the department.”<sup>122</sup> Needs of wartime stimulated such economies, and explained the decrease in attendance at City pools and playgrounds; in 1941, that drop was deemed to be “due to the employment of so many teen-aged children on farms and in factories.”<sup>123</sup> 1941’s annual report also observed that “evergreens had grown large enough for windbreaks and shade,” so park staff intended “to keep the grass cut with a tractor and gang mower.” This would eliminate “any danger of fire in

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 1931, p. 4; 1934, p. 71.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, pp. 60, 71. The ball diamond was probably constructed at the east end of the park.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, pp. 71, 65.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 1936, pp. 49, 50, 58.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 1935, pp. 58, 71; 1937, p.60.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 1937, pp. 4, 49, 57, 60. Such devastating floods became history once the construction of the Fanshawe Dam on the north branch of the Thames River was completed in 1953.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 1940, p. 49

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 1941, p. 36.

the long grass.”<sup>124</sup> Gibbons Park had become a centre for sport and recreation, so more picnic tables were added in 1942.<sup>125</sup>

The generosity of the Gibbons family was again expressed in 1949, when Helen Beresford Gibbons, one of the daughters of Sir George and Lady Gibbons, donated \$20,000 toward the building of a swimming pool in Gibbons Park. Dedicated to her nephew, the prominent disabled war veteran, John Gibbons Counsell, it opened in 1950 (Image A49).<sup>126</sup> In 1956, Helen Gibbons donated new gates for the Gibbons Park entrance at the west end of Victoria Street (Image A50), and in 1957 she provided funds for a shelter built not far from it (Images A51 and A 52).<sup>127</sup> In 1957 the children of Marjorie Counsell (nieces and nephew of Helen Gibbons) donated a memorial fountain to the City placed in Gibbons Park in her (Helen Gibbons) memory (Image A53).<sup>128</sup>

This charming fountain has disappeared so thoroughly that even its position in Gibbons Park is now unknown, but it did signal the enthusiasm for the great variety of child-centred activities held in Gibbons Park around that time. Other photographs from the *Free Press* depict, for example, a children's costume party (Image A54).



**Image A49:** *The bath house and swimming pool, 2015.*

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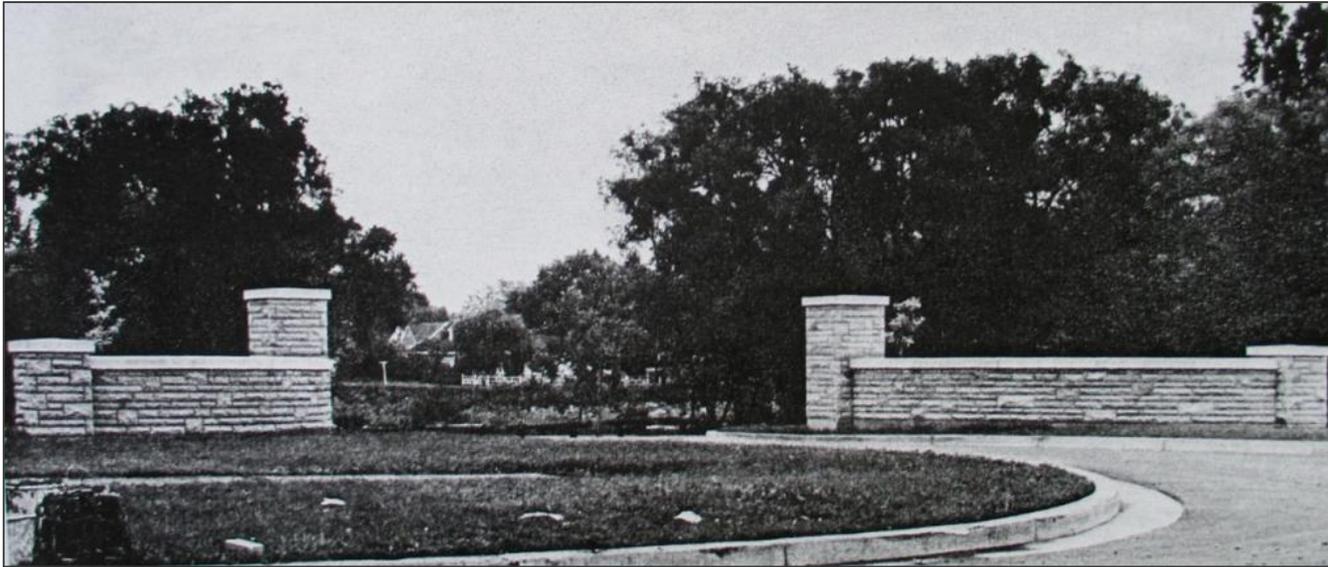
<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 1942, p. 37.

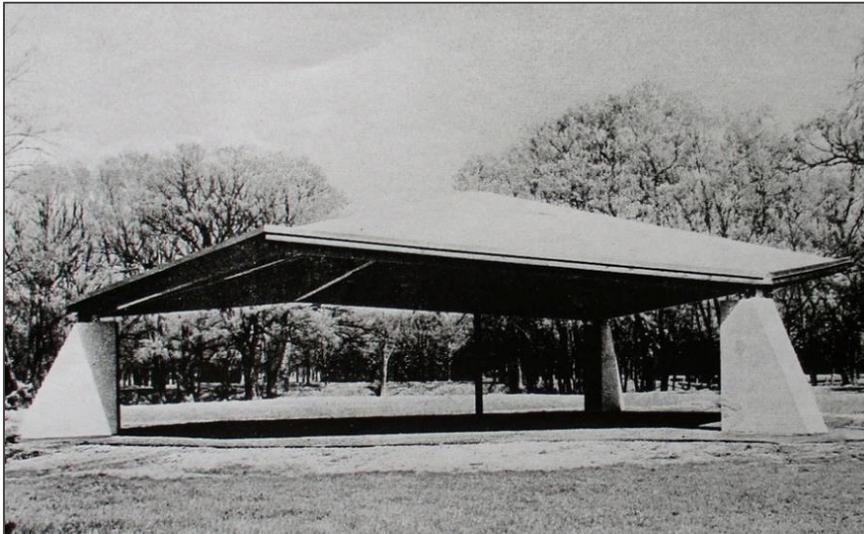
<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 1949, p. 5; 1950, p. 5. John Gibbons Counsell was the son of Marjorie C. Gibbons and John Leith Counsell. He was wounded at Dieppe in the Second World War. Paralyzed for the rest of his life, he became a noted advocate for injured veterans and civilians. The inscription honouring him on the Gibbons Pool bathhouse, was removed during recent renovations, which ironically included making the pool accessible to wheel chair patrons. It has not been replaced. Helen Gibbons also funded restrooms in the park. This generous patron of Gibbons Park died on 9 September 1960.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, and 1957, p. 6. The installation of the gates were completed in 1960. Ibid, 1960, p. 7. The shelter is known as “the pavilion”.

<sup>128</sup> “Give Water Fountain as Memorial for Park”, *London Advertiser*, 6 June, 1957. The donors were Ellizabeth Counsell (Mrs. Walter Gordon, of Toronto), Jane Counsell (Mrs. Charles Mills Drury, Montreal), and John Gibbons Counsell (Toronto).



*Image A50: Photograph of the West End Gates, from the 1960 Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission.*



*Image A51: Photograph of the Pavilion at Gibbons Park, from the 1957 Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission.*



*Image A52: The pavilion, 2015.*



**Image A53:** Photograph of the fountain in Gibbons Park, from the London Free Press, July 8, 1957.



**Image A54:** Photograph of children dressed for costume party in Gibbons Park, from the London Free Press, August 7, 1953.

Tree planting, pruning, and removal, and the seeding of grassed areas continued at Gibbons Park on a regular basis. In 1952, it was still possible to drive along the riverside.<sup>129</sup> But the PUC was coming around to the concept that parking of automobiles should be limited to protect pedestrian safety. This thinking eventually led to the development of parking lots at the Grosvenor Street, Gibbons Place, and Victoria Street entrances (Image A55). In 1955, two or three acres of land were reclaimed at the Grosvenor Street end, an area often subject to flooding. The following year that land was cleaned and leveled, and picnic tables were installed.<sup>130</sup>



*Image A55: Photograph of cyclists on the road near the West Gates, from the London Free Press, 30 July 1957.*

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 1952, p. 4; 1954, p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 1955, p. 6; 1956, p. 6.

Dutch elm disease had appeared in London by this time, and measures to combat a devastating scourge were planned for 1958. Not far from the Gibbons Park shelter stood a very stately elm, long recognized as having been a mere sapling when the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, visited the forks of the Thames in 1793. A bronze plaque had been mounted next to what was called the Simcoe Elm in 1956: its text estimated the age of that venerable tree as 175 years (Image A56). When the Dutch elm disease struck London's stately shade trees in 1957, the PUC did all it could to combat the threat, pumping "DDT, experimental fertilizers and chemicals" into the Simcoe Elm in the hope that one treatment or another would extend its life.<sup>131</sup> But by 1968, PUC foresters knew that the Simcoe Elm, like 4,000 of its sisters already removed from London's streets and parks, would soon face the woodsman's axe. Even after that tree was removed in 1969, patrons of Gibbons Park would visit the site of its stump and plaque, and imagine what the river flats were like when Simcoe visited in 1793.<sup>132</sup>

Later PUC annual reports contain less and less detailed information about City parks, but highlights at least can be gleaned from them. A soccer field was built at Gibbons in 1960, a new wading pool in 1962, and three tennis courts in 1966 (Image A57).<sup>133</sup>



**Image A56:** *The Simcoe Elm. (Photograph from the London Free Press, 18 June 1968).*

<sup>131</sup> Ibid; and Roger Dray, "Disease-hit 'Simcoe Elm' to yield to axe this year", *London Free Press*, 19 June 1968.

<sup>132</sup> Annual Report, PUC, 1969, p.10. The author of this history, Hilary Bates Neary, is one such patron. Like many other plaques in Gibbons Park, this one has recently gone missing, harvested, perhaps, for its metal value.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 1960, p. 9; 1962, p. 10; 1966, p. 8.



*Image A57: Photograph of tennis courts, from the 1966 Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission.*

An ice storm hit London on January 13 and 14, 1968, causing severe damage to trees and shrubs in City parks and along City streets. After recovery from that devastation, the next year brought a wet weather fungus that attacked maples. “Trees throughout Springbank and Gibbons Park were literally under attack from caterpillars, aphids, etc.”, the commission reported, and custom sprayers were hired to help deal with the problem.<sup>134</sup> The Gibbons family continued to take a personal interest in the development of the park, with Sir George’s granddaughter, Lucy Harris Little, wife of lawyer Frank Little, funding the purchase of “some unusual trees.”<sup>135</sup>

Steps were taken in 1971 to further restrict automobile access to Gibbons Park, with the installation of “several fences of the post and cable type”; finally, in 1973, parking lots on Victoria Street and Talbot Street were paved. Meanwhile, the former roadway from the swimming pool to the tennis courts was graded and seeded.<sup>136</sup> In 1974, the pool bathhouse was reconstructed, and the single pool replaced with a new pool and separate

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 1968, p. 8; 1969, p. 8.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 1971, p. 13; 1973, p. 10.

diving well complex that would “more effectively satisfy the aquatic needs of the West London area.”<sup>137</sup> The washrooms were improved in 1979 by the installation of quarry tile floors and new ceilings.<sup>138</sup> Gibbons Park was becoming the pedestrian-friendly oasis it is today. It was also becoming very much a part of London’s growing system of walking and bicycling trails and pathways. In 1983, a province-wide initiative of Hike Ontario, the “Go-to-Blazes Day”, was held in the Gibbons Park area when the Thames Valley Trail Association organized a cleanup. Two years later, that section of the City bikeway from St. James Street to Victoria Street was paved at a cost of \$50,000, enabling a cyclist to travel along the Thames Valley Parkway from the forks almost to Western University.<sup>139</sup>

London’s deepening love affair with the Thames River also included a growing respect for the biodiversity of its ecosystem and an appreciation for the uncultivated landscape of the river lands. In this spirit, the PUC articulated a new plan to “re-naturalize” more of London’s parkland in order to “retain the flavor of the unspoiled countryside.” Through this initiative, selected areas would return to “a more natural, un-manicured look.” This would “also allow the PUC to save money on lawn care and maintenance.”<sup>140</sup> A study commissioned by the PUC in 1989 recommended that the natural area at the northwest corner of Gibbons Park, “be extended to incorporate treed parkland to the east to the parking lot and south of the parking lot to the river.”<sup>141</sup>

In 1993, the City of London annexed substantial portions of adjoining municipalities. Enabling legislation abolished the Public Utilities Commission, and responsibility for parks and recreation reverted to the City.<sup>142</sup> The emerging philosophy of the PUC toward a new respect for the natural character of the river lands was articulated again in a series of documents and public meetings held over the next few years, as the City debated whether to replace the seasonal footbridge which crossed the river in Gibbons Park. As early as 1924, a pontoon bridge had enabled users from either side of the Thames River to enjoy the swimming hole of Becher’s Camp. That bridge suffered damage from ice and high water, and in 1967 several children were thrown into the Thames River when it broke apart. One young girl died of her injuries. The bridge was removed from use in 1969.<sup>143</sup> It was replaced by what was known locally as the Bailey Bridge. Each spring, embankments were constructed of concrete rubble, sand, and gravel to support the short span, steel truss bridge, and a crane was used to lift it into place. Each fall, the bridge was lifted back onto the west bank, whereupon its embankments would partially erode into the river during the winter and spring freshets.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 1974, p. 6. The pool was retrofitted again in 1988.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 1979, p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 1983, p. 10; 1985, p. 7.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 1991, p. 13.

<sup>141</sup> Nancy McMinn, ed., *The Forest City: man made impacts on natural areas in London Parks*, September, 1989, PUC, 1989, pp. 153-154.

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.london.ca/About-London/london-history/Pages/1977-to-2000.aspx>

<sup>143</sup> “Plan study of bridge at Gibbons Park site”, *London Free Press*, 10 July 1969. Cummings Cockburn Ltd. Consulting Engineers, *Gibbons Park Bridge Environmental Assessment*, February 1997. Environmental Assessment, p. 18.

The City and partnering agencies (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and Ontario's ministries of Natural Resources, and Environment and Energy) became concerned about the impact of this seasonal crossing on the natural channel of the river. After undertaking an erosion control project in Gibbons Park in the fall of 1994, the City decided not to install the Bailey Bridge the following spring. Public response was quick: park users on both sides of the Thames River insisted that the bridge was necessary.<sup>144</sup> The City then commissioned a feasibility study for the construction of a permanent bridge.<sup>145</sup> In the meantime, the Bailey Bridge was reinstalled each summer. The resulting environmental assessment pointed out that the erosion of the north bank of the Thames River downstream from the footbridge had been caused partially by the increased energy of the Thames River from its constriction by the bridge embankments. Amongst its conclusions, the study recommended the installation of live cribwall in the north bank. Cribwalls are made with a frame of untreated timbers filled with soil and live cuttings that grow and proliferate, their roots binding the soil and enabling the structure to reduce erosion, as well as naturalizing the river's edge. The study also advised that mowing to the river's edge contributed to erosion, and that park maintenance should be curtailed to at least two meters from the bank.<sup>146</sup>

A new, permanent footbridge spanning the river, its piers not interfering with riparian flow, was completed in 1999. Based on a proposal by a team of University of Western Ontario Civil Engineering students, who won the first annual City of London Design Competition (Image A58); the bridge was designed by Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc.<sup>147</sup>

The bridge was constructed by McLean Taylor Construction Ltd., with landscaping carried out by Ron Koudys Landscape Architects Inc. The completion of a permanent footbridge finally enabled park users to cross



**Image A58:** Student design for permanent bridge at Gibbons Park.

<sup>144</sup> Eva Janssen, "Bailey Bridge likely to disappear for good", *London Free Press*, 25 October 1955, p. B3.

<sup>145</sup> Cummings Cockburn, Feasibility Study, pp. 1-2.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, Environmental Study, p. 32.

<sup>147</sup> <http://www.montgomerysisam.com/projects/Gibbons-park-bridge> The plaque listing city officials and the design team is missing from the bridge at the time of writing.

the Thames River twelve months of the year, for cyclists to expand their routes on both sides of the Thames River, for students from the Waldorf School on the west bank to have greater access to park lands, and for the river bed and banks to revert to a more natural state after 170 years or so of man-made interference.

Since the construction of the Gibbons Park Footbridge, the attention paid by the City of London to increased protection of the bed and banks of the Thames River has been mirrored by an equal concern for grassy meadows, expanses of trees, and the swale or swamp-prone area at the east end of Gibbons Park. Mowing has been curtailed along the banks of the Thames River, which have been allowed to naturalize. A baseball diamond south of the tennis courts, which tended to flood after every summer storm,<sup>148</sup> was removed, and the swampy area beneath the hill on St. George Street at Gibbons Park's east side was planted with indigenous vegetation (Image A59). It is now a haven for birds and other wildlife. Nature London, public name of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists, highlights the flora and fauna of Gibbons Memorial Park in its *Guide to the Natural Areas of London & Vicinity*. Naturalists are encouraged to "look for migrating warblers in the willows in the spring, and for catbirds in the damp bushy areas. Ducks, geese and often a Mute Swan make the Thames River their winter home, joined on occasion by a colourful Wood Duck. Great Horned Owls have been known to nest in the tall trees. The top of the footbridge provides both a fine view and good birding."<sup>149</sup>



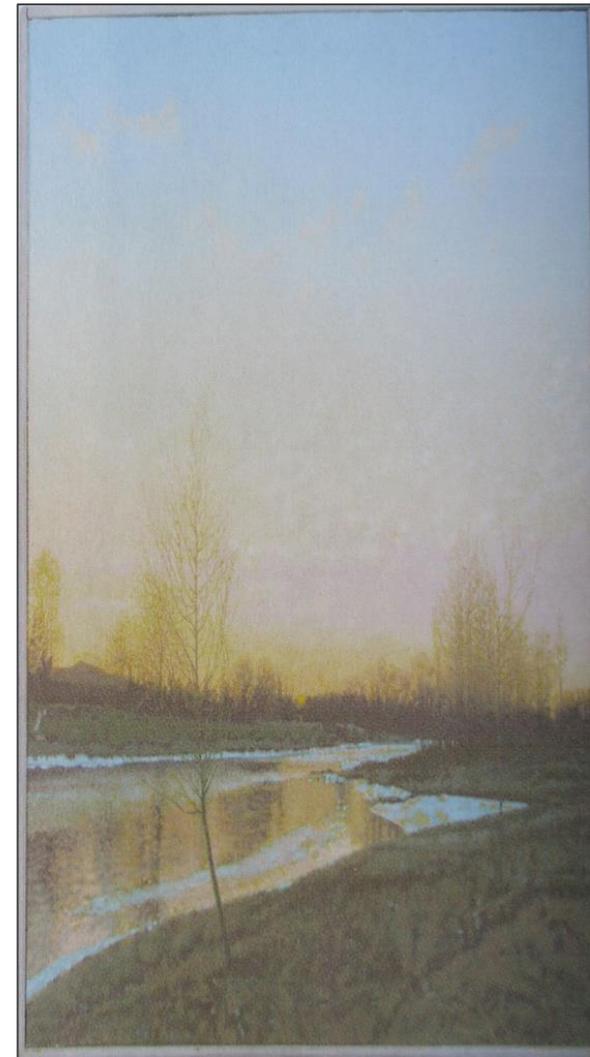
*Image A59: Naturalized area in the swale at the east end of Gibbons Park, 2015.*

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<sup>148</sup> When the Eager Beaver Baseball Association at the diamond in Gibbons Park in the summers of 1990 and 1991, the diamond was frequently far too wet to support safe play.

<sup>149</sup> Shirley Lorimer, ed., *Guide to the Natural Areas of London & Vicinity*, McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London Ontario, Inc., p. 22.

Artists, too, have found the calm beauty of Gibbons Park and the river that flows through it a quiet inspiration. The late Jack Chambers, who lived within a block of the northern limit of Gibbons Park, painted there frequently in his last years (see Image A60).<sup>150</sup> After his death from leukemia in 1978, London artists planted trees in memory of him and his wife, Olga, at the northwest corner of Gibbons Park, close to the Baldwin Flats.<sup>151</sup> The Thames River in its many guises, parks, and places, inspired nineteen London artists to chronicle their inspiration in a touring exhibition and book, *The River Project*, 2008-2009.<sup>152</sup>



*Image A60: Gibbons Park, by Jack Chambers, courtesy of John Chambers.*

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<sup>150</sup> See <http://www.lochgalleries.com/exhibition/jack-chambers>; and Mark Cheetham, *Jack Chambers: Life & Work*, Toronto, Art Canada Institute, 2013, p. 27. [http://www.aci-iac.ca/content/art-books/14/Art-Canada-Institute\\_Jack-Chambers.pdf](http://www.aci-iac.ca/content/art-books/14/Art-Canada-Institute_Jack-Chambers.pdf)

<sup>151</sup> The Baldwin family owned and developed properties on The Parkway and Sherwood Avenue, west of which lies the meadow known as the Baldwin Flats. Plaques honouring Jack and Olga Chambers have not yet been scavenged by metal harvesters.

<sup>152</sup> Herman Goodden, text, *The River Project: 19 London artists turn to the Thames*, London, 2008.

Within the park's 60 acres there is still ample ground for the Saturn Playground, erected in two stages, 2001-02; for new swings added in 2003; for a splash pad (Image A61), which replaced the former wading pool in 2007; for Gibbons Pool which has been wheel-chair accessible since 2010; and for picnic areas, walking and bicycle trails, and many places in which lovers of nature can lose themselves in verdant wonder.<sup>153</sup>



**Image A61:** The splash pad at Gibbons Park, 2015.

Citizens and neighbourhood associations on both sides of the Thames River keep a close watching brief on developments in Gibbons Park, ensuring that their needs as active and passive users of its natural and man-made spaces are protected and enhanced by the city. Local organizations are willing partners with the city in stewardship projects. As part of London's Adopt-a-Park program, maintenance of the Saturn Playground is "enhanced through the efforts of Investing In Children."<sup>154</sup> Volunteers with Reforest London have planted hundreds of trees in Gibbons Park over many years.<sup>155</sup> The Thames Valley District School Board sends students regularly to Gibbons Park for cross country events and field trips, and issues warnings about flood conditions when necessary: its pupils are learning to become stewards of the Thames River lands. Many citizens have endowed benches, or contributed to naturalization planting programs at Gibbons Park. Gibbons Park is also home to an historic plaque, mounted near the footbridge by

<sup>153</sup> See the City of London's 2008 report, *Parkland Dedication Requirements*, for guidelines regarding environmental stewardship of environmentally sensitive areas.

<http://council.london.ca/meetings/Archives/Reports%20and%20Minutes/Planning%20Committee%20Reports/Planning%20Committee%20Reports%202009/2009-01-26%20Report/Item%2016.pdf>

<sup>154</sup> <http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Parks-Volunteering/Documents/2014%20Adopt%20A%20Park%20List%20of%20Parks.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.reforestlondon.ca/search/node/Gibbons%20Park>

the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, commemorating the Boundary Water Treaty of 1909, in the negotiation of which Sir George Christie Gibbons played such a prominent part.<sup>156</sup>

In 1991, Western University licensed the City to build and maintain the paved pathway through the “Baldwin Flats” north of Gibbons Park. Those meadow lands are owned by the University, and the agreement is witness to the collaborative relationship between two corporate bodies regarding what is seen by many patrons of Gibbons Park as the natural extension of its lands north along the Thames River. This relationship is referred to in planning documents of both entities.<sup>157</sup>

For (almost) ninety years Gibbons Park has been fulfilling the aspirations of the family who donated land to the City, and who for decades thereafter made further bequests to enhance park facilities for all Londoners. Residents of the Study Area are some of the closest beneficiaries of that generosity, as are those Londoners who live in the Victoria Street, Regent Street and Huron Street area north of Gibbons Park, together with City residents living west of the Thames River. These citizens are also persistent advocates for its public space.

In September 1932 London purchased four lots on the south side of Victoria Street from Mary C. and Thomas F. Dexter, and in turn passed them on to the Board of Education in July 1954.<sup>158</sup> An annex to the Ryerson School was then built there to accommodate the growing school population in the neighbourhood from Kindergarten to Grade 2. Its catchment area was “bounded by the Thames River, Grosvenor, Richmond and Huron streets”.<sup>159</sup> When the Board of Education closed the annex to the Ryerson School in 1973, in the face of much opposition from the parents of its twenty-two students, many urged that



*Image A62: Ducks in the river at Gibbons Park, 2015.*

<sup>156</sup> This plaque was erected in 1997. At the time of writing it is missing, and Parks Canada has been informed. See the Park Canada website for the plaque text, under Boundary Water Treaty 1909.

<sup>157</sup> Email to Hilary Neary from Julie Michaud, Parks Project Coordinator, Environmental and Parks Planning, City of London, 10 September 2015. <sup>157</sup> University of Western Ontario Campus Master Plan June 2007, p. 21. [https://www.ipb.uwo.ca/documents/campus\\_master\\_plan\\_final\\_sept2007.pdf](https://www.ipb.uwo.ca/documents/campus_master_plan_final_sept2007.pdf) City of London, Thames Valley Corridor Plan, Final Report, December 2011, p. 19.

<sup>158</sup> London Land Registry Office, Instrument #31315, 9 September 1932, and #65302, 20 July 1954.

<sup>159</sup> London Free Press, 7 July 1973.

the land become part of Gibbons Park. “The Ryerson Annex complements the park”, an editorial in the *London Free Press* urged. “Its slope provides the park’s only toboggan and ski run for children in the winter.”<sup>160</sup> Instead, the Board of Education leased the annex to the London Montessori School before selling it for residential development in 1978. The developer was required to provide a walkway from Victoria Street into Gibbons Park.

Gibbons Park is a gathering place for neighbours and all Londoners. Its pavilion and shady areas are ideal for picnics on hot summer days. The Helping Hands for Antigua and Barbuda & Friends hold a picnic each August in Gibbons Park, with several members detailed to claim the pavilion early in the day. Their annual event typifies many such gatherings. The swimming pool and splash pad provide relief from the summer sun: its staff has taught countless children to swim over the years since Helen Gibbons donated funds to build the pool. Although soccer fields and baseball diamonds have fallen victim to soggy ground, the tennis courts seem always to be dry, and well-populated by racquet enthusiasts. Dogs are walked through the park and along the river paths. Canada geese gather to peck at grass and foul the footpaths. Ducks herd their young each spring along the naturalized banks of the Thames River (Image A62).

## **SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE STUDY AREA**

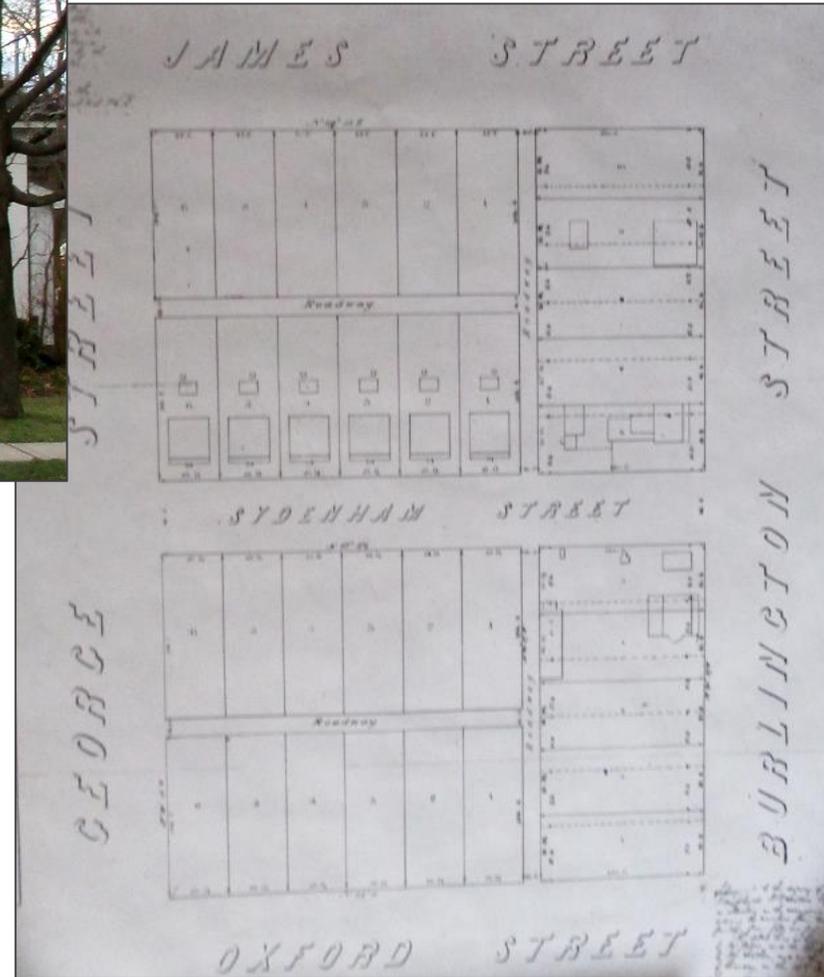
The best way to examine suburban development within the Study Area is by looking at relevant plans and maps. Subdivision plans were created for much of the Study Area in the 1850s (see Image A23, page 31). These plans promoted development, not only by setting out suburban lot sizes, but also, except in the case of Askin's plan, by setting out laneways to provide access to the rear portions of the lots. Usually the creation of a subdivision plan announces the approximate time of development for the land covered by that plan, but within the Study Area the newly divided lots took decades to fill. The Map of London drawn by S. Peters in 1855 shows only a smattering of buildings along Richmond Street. One of these buildings, appears to be still standing at 805 Richmond Street (Image A63), though its roof, gable, and chimneys obviously date from a later time. The Peters map shows it as the dwelling of Judge William Elliott, who is said to be residing as a tenant on the block in the 1855 Assessment Roll. This presumably functioned as the Judge's town house, while his main residence was his large farm near Riverside and Hutton Roads. Barker's plan of subdivision for that block, registered plan 162 (Image A64), dates from 1852 but was altered in 1863 to create narrower lots along Richmond Street. At that time a number of buildings were sketched in on the plan.

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 11 June 1973. The London Room, London Public Library has a clipping file on the Ryerson School containing items relating to the controversy over closing the Annex.



*Image A63: 805 Richmond Street, 2015.*



*Image A64: Registered Plan 162.*

Two of the cottages shown along the north side of Sydenham Street in Plan 162 appear to have survived, at 188 and 204 Sydenham Street respectively (Images A65 and A66), though both have been significantly altered; the former with a raised basement and a new roofline and gable, the latter with brick cladding. Both feature later verandahs.

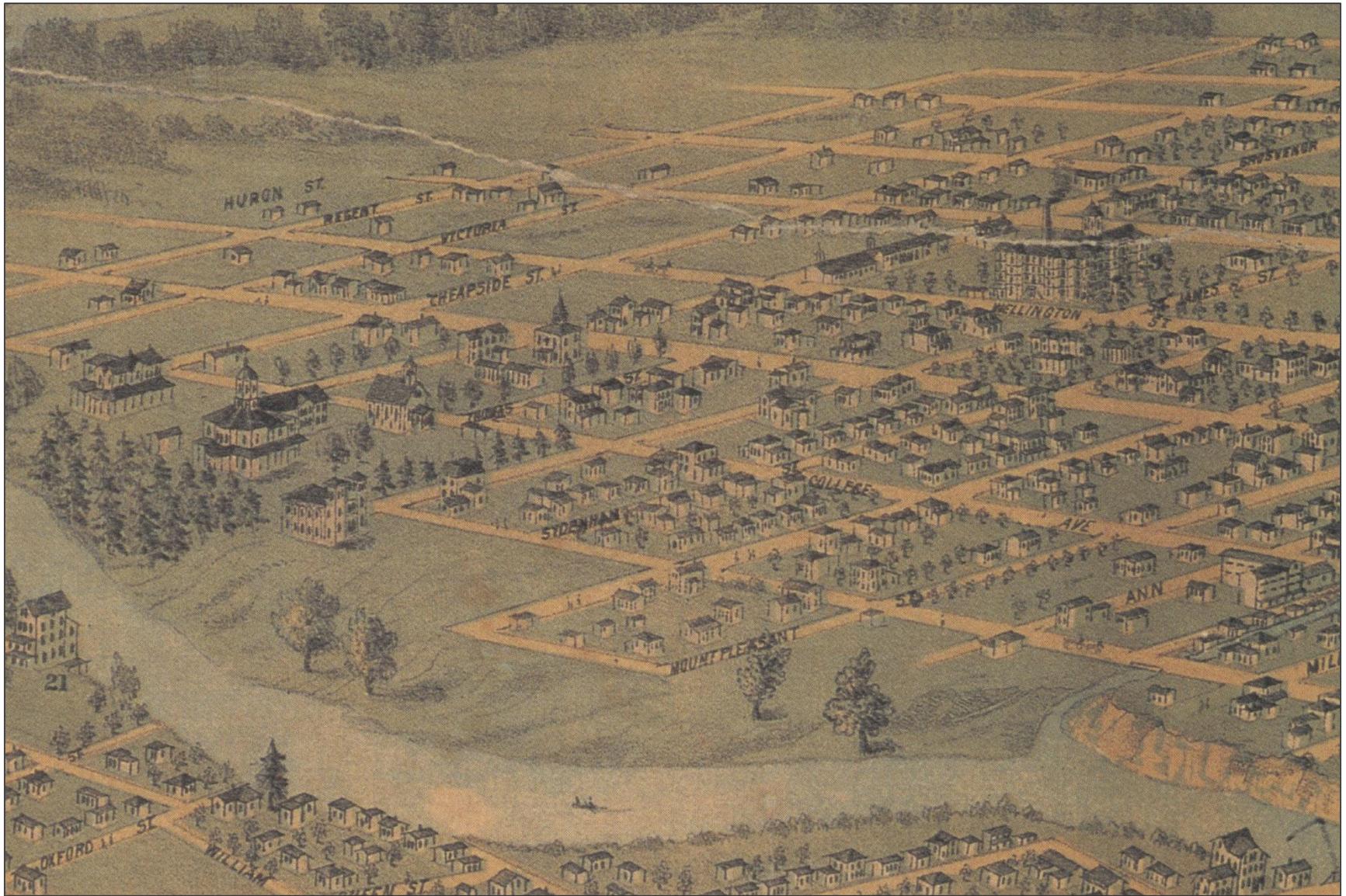


*Image A65: 188 Sydenham Street, 2015.*

The 1872 Bird's Eye View Map of London (Image A67) shows quite solid development along Oxford Street East and Sydenham Street (including the row of cottages sketched on Plan 162), but suburban houses are quite sparse north of that. Thornwood, Mount Hope, Huron College, the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, and the Agricultural Hall take up more than their respective shares of room on the map.



*Image A66: 204 Sydenham St, 2015.*



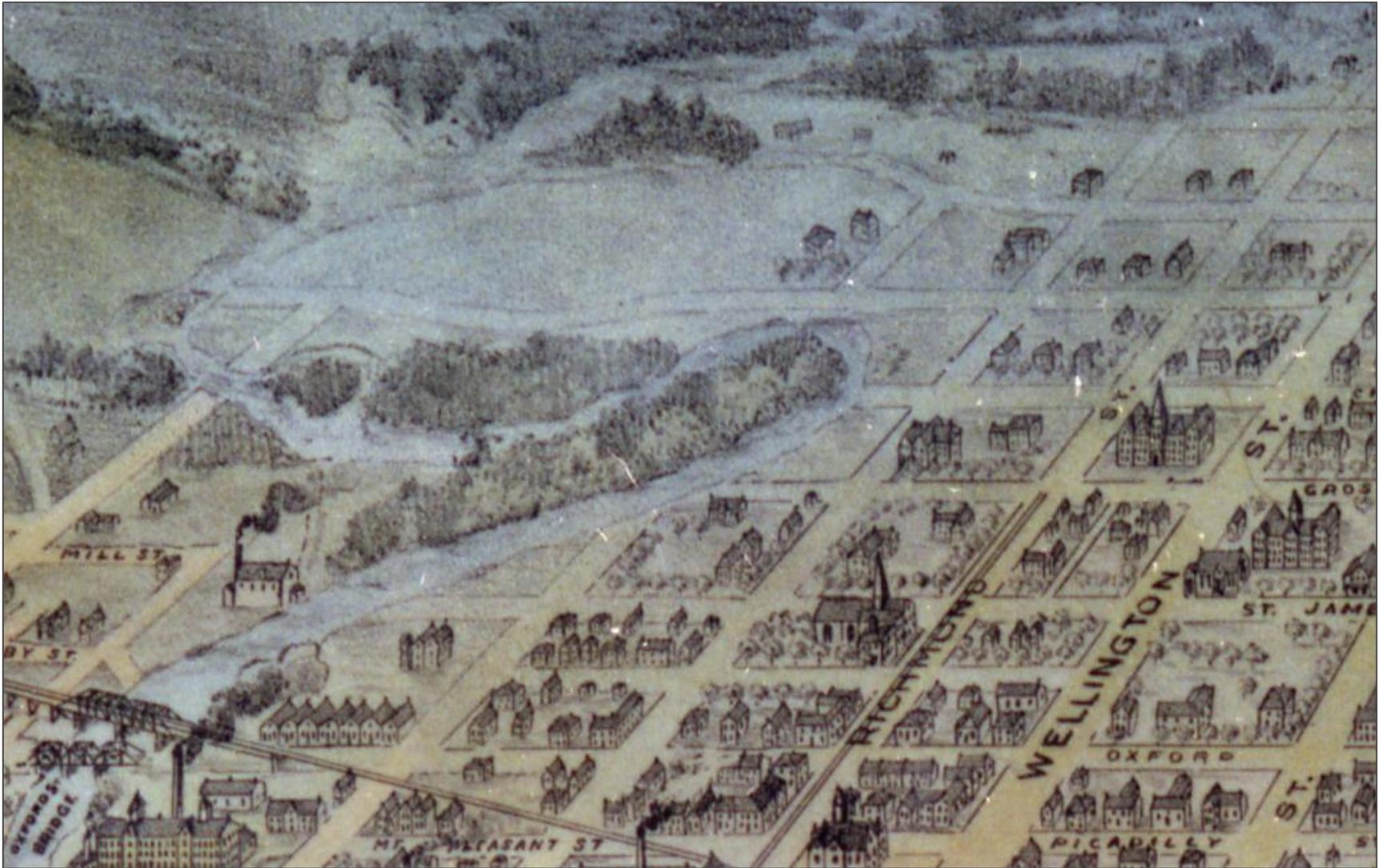
*Image A67: Detail, 1872 Bird's Eye View Map of London.*

A photograph taken just east of the Study Area at around the same time gives an accurate view of the decade's road conditions, and also hints at the then still semi-rural character of the Study Area (Image A68).

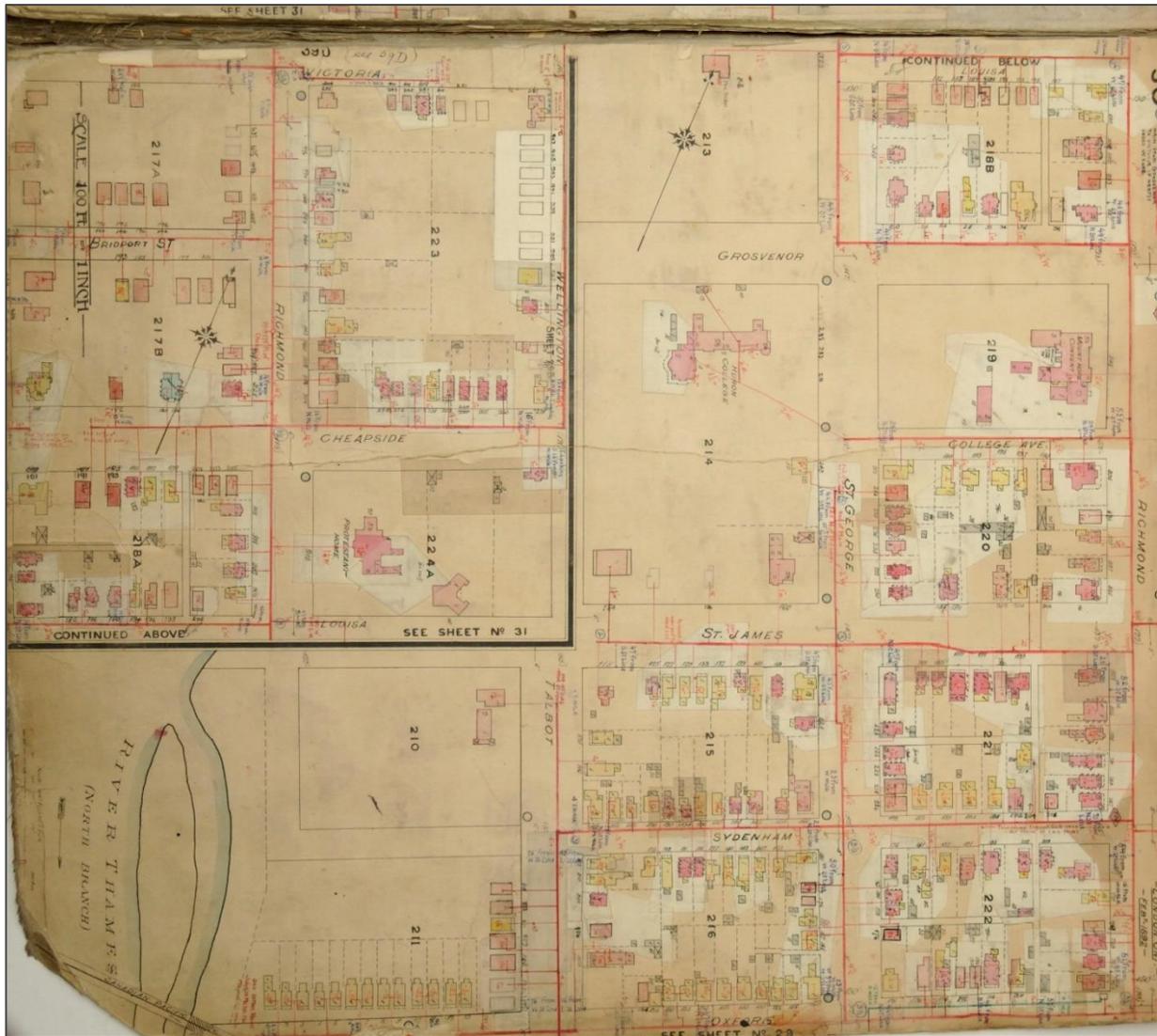
If anything, settlement seems even less advanced on the 1893 Bird's Eye View Map of London (Image A69), though this map tends to be considerably less accurate than its predecessor. The picture presented here suggests that settlement north of St. James Street began to escalate only around the turn of the twentieth century.



**Image A68:** View from the top of Hellmuth Boys' School, circa 1870. The roads crossing in the centre of the picture are St. James Street and Wellington Street. A small part of the Study Area, north of Sydenham Street, can be seen at the far right of the picture. Note the semi-rural quality created by barns, orchards, and a greenhouse (Courtesy of Western Archives, Western University).



*Image A69: Detail, 1893 Bird's Eye View of London. This Birds Eye View is less accurate than the 1872 Birds Eye View: note, for example, that Thornwood is not shown on the map.*



**Image A70:** Fire Insurance Plan 1891 Rev. 1907

Fire Insurance Plans (see Images A70-A72) show considerably greater density within the Study Area in 1907 than in 1893, and a further increase is evident by the 1915 and 1922 Fire Insurance Plans respectively. It should be noted, however, that there is not only an increase in the number of houses, but also in the quality. Many homes seem to have been expanded, re-clad, or replaced.

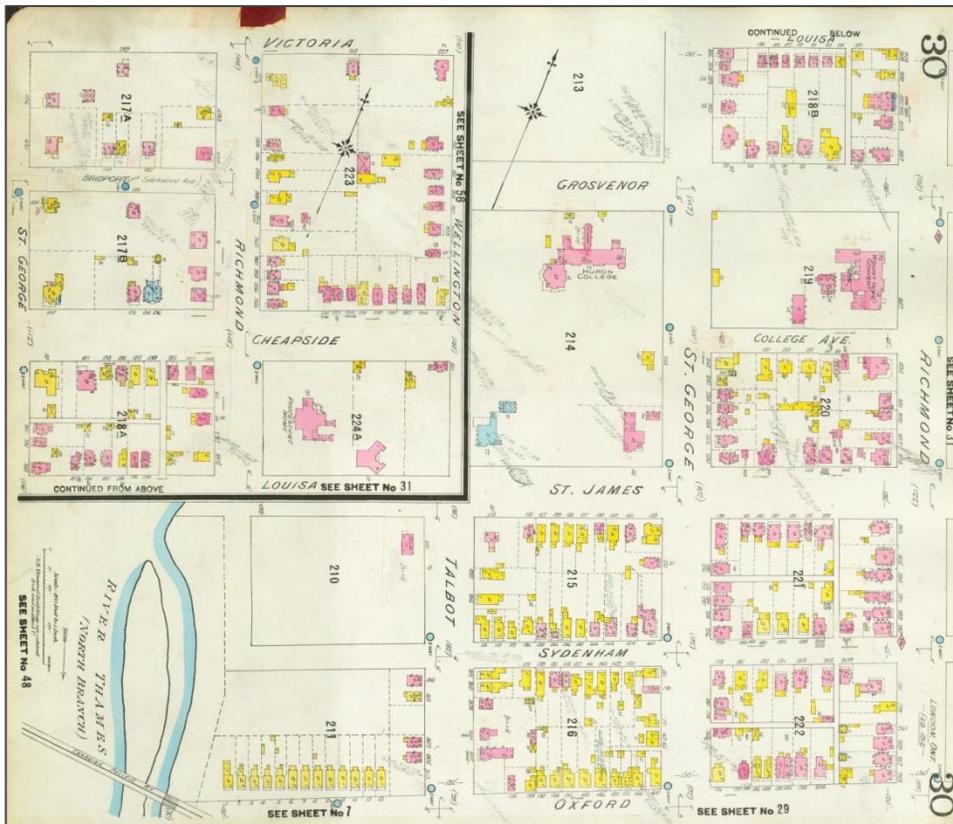


Image A71: Fire Insurance Plan 1912 Rev. 1915

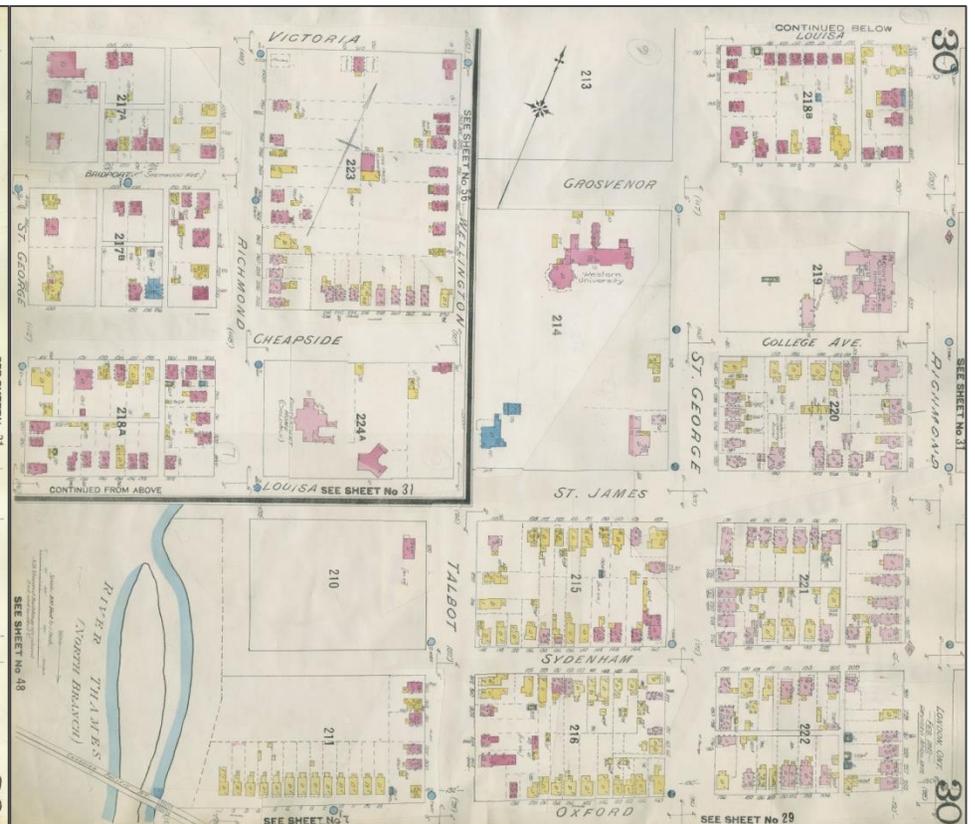


Image A72: Fire Insurance Plan 1912 Rev. 1922



*Image A73: 189 College Street, 2015*

## **INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE STUDY AREA**

The development of residential properties in the Study Area, as in many other parts of London, mirrored the growth of the City itself. What began as a small base of relatively self-sufficient landowners, evolved into a population which relied upon services provided by Municipal government for water, sewage removal, fire protection, roads, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, gas and later electric light, public transportation, parks and playgrounds, and communication systems.

When the London lawyer, Henry Corry Rowley Becher, built his houses west of St. George Street in the early 1850s, he would have been dependent solely upon his own efforts to supply the services listed above. Thornwood would have had its own well, but not one sufficient to provide fire protection, which was non-existent in that part of London. Indeed, his first home was made of wood, and

burned down in February 1852.<sup>161</sup> Arrangements which Becher made with William Dunn, who owned a flourmill on the west side of the north branch of the Thames, allowed him a right-of-way over Dunn's land and the bridge crossing his mill-race to Becher's land on the river flats below Thornwood.<sup>162</sup> One can still see a narrow earthen roadway leading from the shallow east bank of the river up in a northeasterly direction towards the foot of St. James Street. Perhaps Becher's horse and carriage made its long way from court and office in the centre of London up Ridout Street, across Blackfriars bridge and street to Wharnccliffe, then north and east to Dunn's mill and across the river to Becher's Island (now Gibbons Park) and then up the bank to St. James Street and George Street, likely then both in rough condition, and so home to Thornwood. The arrangement which Becher made to gain access to his estate on George Street strongly suggests that what we would consider more direct routes today were not fully open for even rudimentary traffic.<sup>163</sup>

## Roads

Minutes of London's City Council do not relate that body's expectation of what developers of properties in new subdivided Park Lots were required to do regarding the opening and maintenance of road and laneway allowances. By the 1870s, however, residents were petitioning Council on the subject. In 1873, Henry Becher requested that Thomas Street (later changed to College Avenue) be graded from Richmond Street to Huron College, and the following year, D. Glass and 37 others petitioned that Talbot Street be opened and graded to Grosvenor Street.<sup>164</sup>

Although residential streets were the responsibility of the City, between 1849 and 1907 the maintenance of Richmond Street belonged to the Proof Line Road Company. This was a joint stock company empowered by provincial legislation to build roads and impose tolls upon them.<sup>165</sup> The London Town Council had assigned the Richmond Street/Mark Lane/Burlington Street route to the company with the proviso that it grade and gravel the route "within a reasonable time", while not being responsible for making sidewalks or keeping the existing ones in repair.<sup>166</sup> Until 1907, when the Proof Line Road Company was bought out by the councils of London City, Township, and Middlesex County, local complaints about the poor state of Richmond Street resulted in frequent negotiations between the Company and London city officials.

Petitions to City Council relating to local roads also included requests for crossings, culverts and drains. The subtext to these demands is the constant wear and tear on dirt roads before gravel, macadam, asphalt, and concrete were in general use. In 1877, for

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<sup>161</sup> Nancy Z. Tausky, *Historical Sketches of London from Site to City* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1993), 48.

<sup>162</sup> London Land Registry Office, Instrument #5486, 20 June 1858.

<sup>163</sup> George Street was renamed St. George Street in 1898.

<sup>164</sup> London. City Council. Minutes, 1873, p.49; 1874, p.106. Likely this was David Glass, former Mayor of the City in 1858 and 1865-66.

<sup>165</sup> 12 Vic. C.84, 1849. An Act to authorize the formation of Joint Stock Companies for the construction of roads &c. The road extended from London to the northern limit of London Township.

<sup>166</sup> London. Town Council. By-Law #60, passed 14 September 1849, and published in the *Canadian Free Press*, 18 September, 1849.

instance, London's Board of Works submitted to City Council an estimate of \$10,000 for work to be done that year. The list included projects in the Study Area:

“To filling up along the north side of Oxford street, west of Talbot street.

To filling up at Oxford and Talbot sts.

To filling up at St. James' and Talbot streets, where necessary on the west side of Talbot street.

To grading St. James' street, to fill up on west side of Talbot street, south of St. James' street.

To crossing across George street, south side of Sydenham street.

To filling up between crossings on Richmond and Sydenham streets.”<sup>167</sup>

With the development of more graded streets and increased traffic on them, residents also expected City Council to ensure that roads were watered regularly to keep the dust down. In May 1879, J.D. Sharman and 22 others petitioned to have Richmond Street between Dufferin Avenue and the Mount Hope Orphanage at Richmond Street and Grosvenor Street watered daily.<sup>168</sup> In 1910, residents on St. George Street petitioned the Municipal Council for their street to be watered from Oxford Street East to Grosvenor Street, and then from Grosvenor Street to the laneway south of Cheapside Street.<sup>169</sup> The following year their neighbours on St. James Street petitioned for the same service on their road between Talbot Street and St. George Street.<sup>170</sup> Evidence of the growing importance of Talbot Street as a north/south thoroughfare is seen in the By-Law passed in 1912 ordering Talbot Street to be watered from Dundas Street to St. James Street.<sup>171</sup>

Before the City began using macadam as a paving material, streets were often oiled to keep down the dust. In 1912, By-Laws ordering the oiling of Cheapside Street between St. George Street and Richmond Street, St. George Street between Cheapside Street and Oxford Street East, Oxford Street East from Richmond Street to the Thames River, and Richmond Street from Oxford Street East to Huron Street, were passed by Municipal Council.<sup>172</sup> The following year, residents on Sydenham Street petitioned for the same service between Talbot Street and Richmond Street.<sup>173</sup> In 1916, the City Engineer, Henry Brazier, recommended two grades of oil to be used in oiling streets: liquid asphalt, at a frontage rate of five cents, for Cheapside Street between St. George Street and Richmond Street, and for Grosvenor Street between St. George Street and Hellmuth Steet; and 40% asphaltic oil at three-

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<sup>167</sup> Minutes, 1877, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> Minutes, 1879, p. 568.

<sup>169</sup> Minutes, 1910, p. 68, 208.

<sup>170</sup> Minutes, 1911, p. 207.

<sup>171</sup> Minutes, 1912, By-Law #3847, p. 145.

<sup>172</sup> Minutes. These were By-Laws #3847, 3966, 3967, and 3969.

<sup>173</sup> Minutes, 1913, By-Law #4360 and 4361, p. 254.

and-a-half cents per for St. George Street between Central Street and Cheapside Street, Louisa (later Cromwell) Street between St. George Street and Richmond Street, College Avenue, Sydenham Street between Talbot Street and Wellington Street, St. James Street from Talbot Street to Hellmuth Street, Talbot Street between Oxford Street East and St. James Street, and Richmond Street from Oxford Street East to the city limits (then Huron Street.)<sup>174</sup> In 1919, Municipal Council's #2 Committee recommended oiling Victoria Street from Richmond Street to St. George Street, and in 1922 ordered the same for Bridport Street.<sup>175</sup>

Just as oil and water kept down the dust on unpaved road surfaces, spreading gravel on a graded road produced a more reliable surface for wheeled transport, albeit one still subject to seasonal erosion. As its need for crushed rock increased, Municipal Council surveyed local gravel pits, and in 1884 considered several in north London for purchase or lease and acquired a gravel pit from a trustee for the Protestant Orphan Home, William Glass, parallel to Wellington Street.<sup>176</sup>

Using those north London supplies of gravel, #2 Committee recommended in 1911 that Victoria Street from Richmond Street to the Thames River be graded and graveled, and in 1915 that a few loads of gravel be employed on Oxford Street East between Richmond Street and the Oxford Street bridge across the Thames River, "as this road has been used a great deal, teaming gravel for Board of Works on the streets, and is in a dangerous condition."<sup>177</sup>

Local gravel pits did meet some demand for crushed rock, but as the city required more and more for road and sidewalk surfaces, and eventually for paving, it came to depend as well upon gravel deposits in the river. This is reflected in a report that London's former Mayor, Sir Adam Beck, wrote for the City when it was paving Richmond Street in 1917. He studied the work in progress and submitted a report to Municipal Council which assessed both the contractor's work and the materials being used. He observed that all gravel used for the job came from the bed of the north branch of the Thames "from deposits . . . carried down by freshets from gravel banks along the river north-east of London." The eight sites he listed included two above and below the Richmond Street bridge, three where Huron Street, Victoria Street and Grosvenor Street met the Thames River, two above and below Blackfriar's Bridge, and a small one above Kensington Bridge. In his conclusions about the quality of the Richmond Street paving, he noted that there was a "sufficient quantity of gravel in the bed of the Thames River to take care of the requirements of the City of London"; this was "of good quality," and if "screened, washed and re-proportioned," produced the right mixture of sand and stone."<sup>178</sup>

Within twenty years of the adoption of gravel as a road surface, macadamizing became the new norm. In January 1901, the City Engineer, Aquila Ormsby Graydon, was instructed to report to Municipal Council on "the cost per square-yard of asphalt, macadam,

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<sup>174</sup> Minutes, 1916,

<sup>175</sup> Minutes, 1919, p. 167; 1922, p. 117.

<sup>176</sup> Minutes, 1884, pp. 1052, 1065, 1070.

<sup>177</sup> Minutes, 1911, p. 222; 1915, p. 575.

<sup>178</sup> Minutes, 1917, p. 316-319. Beck's report was dated 18 June 1917.

vitrified brick and tar macadam pavement,” and to give an estimate of “the durability of each”.<sup>179</sup> In 1904, the City’s #2 Committee, which concerned itself with infrastructure projects, passed on to Municipal Council Graydon’s recommendations that London invest in a “Tar Macadam plant similar to that in Hamilton,” and that “Tar Macadam roadways with or without curbs and gutters be initiated for construction under local improvement clauses of the Municipal Act.”<sup>180</sup> London finally acquired its own asphalt plant in 1917, when it purchased the Standard Paving Plant at 663 Bathurst Street for \$17,500.<sup>181</sup>

Graydon’s report was followed, in 1912, by another, written by his successor, A.H. Van Cleve, during that official’s year-long tenure as City Engineer. In spite of London being “an important railway center”, and possessing “many large manufacturing establishments”, it was “essentially a residential city”, most of its 134 miles of roads being “used exclusively for dwellings.” Van Cleve advised Municipal Council “that roads which were satisfactory before the advent of the automobile have entirely failed under this class of modern traffic.” In order to prepare London’s roadways for modernity, he went on to describe and compare the various surface treatments for streets which were then available. With respect to how street paving would be financed, he advised that Municipal Council assess the “cost of graveled streets . . . in the same proportion between the city and the property owners as in the case of other street pavements.” His reasoning was sound and simple: “To persist in the laying of pavements which are never good, and which are usually bad appears to me to be poor policy, and one which the property owners would not adopt if the cost of frequent renewals was borne by them. They would prefer more permanent pavement at a greater first-cost, and the city would thus eventually be paved without serious addition to the tax rate.” This recommendation was adopted.<sup>182</sup>

When Van Cleve reported on the condition of London streets, only eight per cent of them were “covered with any permanent form of pavement” and those were confined to “the business sections of the city where . . . traffic was the most dense and a good street surface the most important.” Within a few years of his report, however, demand from citizens grew for the paving of streets in the Study Area. In 1916, on the initiative of Aldermen W.A. Wilson and M.J. Donohue, #2 Committee studied “the matter of paving Richmond Street from Oxford Street to Cheapside Street, as this street is in a bad condition for conveying patients to the hospital, and . . . there is more travel on this street from the north coming to the city than there is from any other section.”<sup>183</sup> Ultimately, the Committee recommended the use of Asphaltic Concrete Pavement on a concrete base, and extended the northern boundary of this paving job to Huron Street.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Minutes, 1901, p. 23.

<sup>180</sup> Minutes, 1904, p. 73.

<sup>181</sup> Municipal Year Book for 1917, London, 1918, p. 94.

<sup>182</sup> Minutes, 1912, p. 73-81.

<sup>183</sup> Minutes, 1916, p. 294.

<sup>184</sup> Minutes, p. 397-8.

In 1919, #2 Committee recommended that Oxford Street East be paved with 36 foot-sheet asphalt on a six-inch base, and that the north side of the street also be fitted with a six-inch curb and eighteen-inch gutter, from Talbot Street to the Thames River. The estimated cost of the pavement was \$8,844, and that of the curb and gutter \$482.46.<sup>185</sup> Pavement on Victoria Street from Richmond Street to St. George Street was funded by debentures authorized by By-Law #6498 in 1921, and residents on Bridport Street petitioned for the same in 1923.<sup>186</sup>

## Sidewalks

Petitions and orders for the construction of sidewalks in the Study Area signal the growth of residential development in the City's north end, and are a reminder that Londoners were pedestrians before becoming motorists. In 1876, the City Engineer, William Robinson, and the Street Commissioner, W. Owen, recommended that Municipal improvements that year include gravel sidewalks on College Avenue, on the south side of Sydenham Street between Richmond Street and George Street, and on the north side of Oxford Street East, also between Richmond Street and George Street. The walk on College Avenue was intended to benefit students making their way to Huron College, then located in Rough Park on St. George Street between St. James Street and Grosvenor Street.<sup>187</sup>

The following year, Municipal Council heard from the Lady Superior of Mount Hope Orphan Asylum and others, asking for a new sidewalk on the west side of Richmond Street from Oxford Street East to Grosvenor Street. The request went to the Board of Works which recommended to Municipal Council that \$600 be appropriated to construct oak sidewalks, 6 feet wide, on the west side of Richmond Street from Oxford Street to Grosvenor Street, and on the east side of Richmond Street from Grosvenor Street to Cheapside Street, thus serving both Catholics and Protestants in what the *British North America Act*, 1867, referred to as "eleemosynary institutions", a term that has long faded into history.<sup>188</sup>

Other sidewalk grading and gravelling that year included work on Oxford Street East west of Talbot Street, on St. James Street west of Richmond Street, and on the west side of St. George Street between Oxford Street East and Sydenham Street.<sup>189</sup>

Once graded, earthen or gravel sidewalks were soon deemed insufficient, uneconomic, and inferior, the City used a very wide variety of materials for the construction of permanent sidewalks. In 1897 alone, City Council Minutes refer to the following types: mosaic sidewalk, cedar block, granolithic walk, flagstone, asphalt pavement, Trinidad asphalt, macadam pavement, and artificial stone. By 1881, the Board of Works recommended that future sidewalks be made only of asphalt, and installed only under the supervision of

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<sup>185</sup> Minutes, 1919, p. 65.

<sup>186</sup> Minutes, 1921, p. 162; 1923, p. 182.

<sup>187</sup> Minutes, 1876, p. 338.

<sup>188</sup> Minutes, 1877, p. 420, 451.

<sup>189</sup> Minutes, p. 4.

the City Engineer and his commissioners.<sup>190</sup> In 1898, Aldermen Jolly and Hunt proposed a By-Law to replace all plank sidewalks with permanent ones, and to use only artificial stone or asphalt in the future.<sup>191</sup> Although some residents of north London petitioned Municipal Council *against* the construction of artificial sidewalks, progress in this matter was unstoppable. In 1899 alone, By-Laws were passed by Municipal Council authorizing the construction of cement sidewalks on the north side of Sydenham Street from Richmond Street to Talbot Street, on the north side of St. James Street from Richmond Street to St. George Street, and on the east side of St. George Street from St. James Street to Grosvenor Street.<sup>192</sup> And public demand for such walks continued as development in the Study Area moved northward. Sidewalks constructed between 1910 and 1913 highlight the northern expansion of residential life in the Study Area. In that period cement walks were laid on the south side of Bridport Street, on Louisa (later Cromwell) Street, on Richmond Street from Cheapside Street to Victoria Street, on St. George Street between Cheapside Street and Bridport Street, and on the south side of Victoria Street between Richmond Street and St. George Street.<sup>193</sup>

Providing sidewalks, crossings, curbs and gutters did not come without incident and accident. On June 15, 1885, Municipal Council received a claim for damages from Francis Love, solicitor on behalf of Mrs. Susan Goldsmith, widow, of 832 Richmond Street, who, it was maintained, had sustained injuries on May 9, 1885 when she had been “tripped at the corner of Richmond and Sydenham streets by a rise in the asphalt walk of the latter street.”<sup>194</sup> The accident happened after dark, and was said to have been caused by improperly built and maintained street curbing, for which the city was liable.<sup>195</sup> The matter was referred to #2 Committee, who ordered the petition to be filed. For her part, Mrs. Goldsmith next went to court, obtaining a ruling in her favour, and the award of damages assessed at \$500.

Lest other citizens be emboldened to claim damages from irregularities in pavement, curbs and crossings, the City appealed this decision to the Divisional Court, and when it lost there went on to the Ontario Court of Appeal. When the Ontario Court of Appeal divided equally, the action was dismissed. In response, City Solicitor, W. R. Meredith, asked Council whether, “since an important principle to corporations” was involved, he “should carry the case further.” The result was an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. The case was heard in Ottawa on October 22, 1888, with judgment given on March 18, 1889. The Chief Justice, Sir W.J. Ritchie, and Justices Taschereau and Gwynne held that the appeal be allowed with costs, with Justices Strong and Fournier arguing for dismissal. One point which the Chief Justice made in his decision would have gladdened the heart of Municipal Council members

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<sup>190</sup> Minutes, 1881, p.813.

<sup>191</sup> Minutes, 1889, p.325.

<sup>192</sup> Minutes, 1899, pp. 156, 187, 215, 230, 243, 270, 357.

<sup>193</sup> Minutes, 1910, Auditor’s Report, p. 116; 1911, Auditor’s Report, p. 114, 115; 1913, p. 483.

<sup>194</sup> Minutes, 1885, p. 1179. R. Hills & Co., *The London City and Middlesex County Directory*, London, 1886, p. 135. Mrs. Goldsmith lived between St. James and Grosvenor on the east side of Richmond Street, across from the Study Area. Yet her story is germane to ours.

<sup>195</sup> Supreme Court of Canada, *London (City) v. Goldsmith*, 16 S.C.R. 231. <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/3809/index.do?r=AAAAQAQOY2I0eSBvZiBsb25kb24B>

and justified their taking the case so far: “While not desiring to relieve municipalities from the duties and responsibilities fairly cast upon them I think we should be careful not to subject them to an action for negligence because as Chief Justice Wilson [of the Ontario Court of Appeal] says, the edge of the sidewalk happens to be four inches higher than the crossing at the point of contact.” Given just how complex the process was of turning land and hills and rocks and water into a tame urban landscape, his point was well taken.

### **Curbs and Gutters**

The construction of curbs and gutters largely followed the same pattern of development as that of sidewalks, with more travelled streets obtaining those finishing elements before streets of a solely residential character. The material chosen for curbs and gutters also became more durable and permanent. In 1903, #2 Committee reported that the price of cedar curbing, commonly used until then, had more than doubled in the past six years, and its quality was deemed inferior. It recommended that cement be used for curbing in the future, as it was lasting, cost only one-quarter more than cedar at sixteen cents a foot, and was better in appearance. Three years later, residents on both sides of St. George Street petitioned for and received cement curbs and gutters between St. James Street and Grosvenor Street, at a cost to the City of \$728.07.<sup>196</sup>

By the mid 1920’s, cement curbs and gutters were being petitioned for and constructed in the northern reaches of the Study Area: in 1921, on both sides of Cromwell Street; in 1922, on both sides of Bridport Street; and in 1925, on the east side of St. George Street between Bridport Street and Victoria Street.<sup>197</sup> In 1926, probably because Gibbons Park was now being developed to the west, a curb and gutter was ordered to be constructed on Grosvenor Street, from St. George Street to a point 150 feet west.<sup>198</sup> The following year, a motion to Municipal Council was adopted “that Grosvenor Street from St George Street to Gibbons Memorial Park be graded in preparation for paving next year.”<sup>199</sup>

### **Local Improvements: Deciding and Funding**

In London’s early years as a City, annual appropriations were allocated to each ward for expenditure upon local improvements. By definition, much of the decision-making regarding which improvements was left to ward aldermen, who used their authority to political advantage. Amongst the citizens demanding drains, culverts, road-grading, and the like there were winners and losers, with outcomes often determined by patronage considerations in a system that was hard to reform.

In March 1874, the Mayor, Benjamin Cronyn Jr., moved in Council that “the present system of ward appropriations be done away with, and that \$10,000 be placed at the disposal of the board of works to be expended in general improvements throughout the city.”

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<sup>196</sup> Minutes, 1906, Auditor’s Report, p. 90.

<sup>197</sup> Minutes, 1921, p. p. 171; 1922, p. 137; 1925, p. 253.

<sup>198</sup> Minutes, 1926, p. 326.

<sup>199</sup> Minutes, 1927, p. 437.

But an amendment was moved, seconded, and carried which set the ward appropriation at \$14,000, and the appropriation to the board of works at \$6,000. Obviously, Aldermen were not yet ready to give up a patronage plum. The following year, though, after some irregularity had occurred “in mixing up a private tender with city work to be done on Victoria Street”, Aldermen Thomas Partridge Jr. and James Egan brought a motion in Council “that all money expended in No. 7 Ward [the ward containing the present Study Area] shall be expended under the engineer and street commissioner, where most needed, with the consent of the majority of the members of the ward.” The motion was carried, although it did not specify how those citizens would make their wishes known.<sup>200</sup>

As Ward 7 went, so went the City. In his inaugural address the following January, London’s new mayor, Duncan Cameron McDonald, noted that “the ward appropriation system has been virtually abolished during the past year, so that improvements would be made under the supervision of the Board of Works.”<sup>201</sup> That direction took several more years before it was finally agreed by City Council that ward appropriations be abolished altogether and that “all street improvements irrespective of Wards, shall be reported by the City Engineer and Commissioners to your Board of Works to be ratified by the Municipal Council.” This new system was to take effect on January 1, 1882.<sup>202</sup>

But while it was one thing for City officials to achieve rational planning in improving city infrastructure; it was quite another to persuade citizens to pay for needed works. In February 1882, Municipal Council passed a By-Law, to be submitted to the voting public, that improvements be paid for by means of a frontage tax. One thousand copies of the proposed By-Law were printed. The result of the vote was 57 citizens for and 754 against.

While questions of governance and funding were still being worked out between citizens and City, it was not at all unusual for those residents applying for improvements to carry out the work themselves. July of 1883 was an extremely wet month in the Study Area, resulting in severe flooding on the Thames River. At the Municipal Council meeting of 23 July, #2 Committee recommended the granting of a drain on George Street and Talbot Street, petitioned for by E. H. Hayne and others. The City would furnish the tile, but the “work of laying the same” would be undertaken by the petitioners “under the supervision of the Engineer.”<sup>203</sup> It was also not unusual for property owners to carry out the work of connecting their dwellings to local drains and sewers. In March 1884, William Henderson asked Municipal Council for permission to tap into the sewer on Sydenham Street “in order to drain a dwelling at the corner of George.”<sup>204</sup> That same year brought a flurry of petitions from the Protestant Orphans Home and residents around Grosvenor Street and Alma Street east of Richmond Street wishing to lay tile drains from their land on the east side of Richmond

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<sup>200</sup> Minutes, 1875, p. 246.

<sup>201</sup> Minutes, 1876, p. 299.

<sup>202</sup> Minutes, 1881, p. 813.

<sup>203</sup> Minutes, 1883, p. 995-6.

<sup>204</sup> Minutes, 1884, p. 1051.

Street to drains on the west. These requests were granted often at the expense of the petitioners, and always “under the supervision of” or “to the satisfaction of” the City Engineer.<sup>205</sup>

The construction and financing of a tile drain on St. James Street in 1885 illustrates the complex issues that could arise when city and citizens shared the work of local improvements. On June 1, 1885 Municipal Council received a communication from Verschoyle Cronyn, Chancellor of the Diocese of Huron, applying for a tile drain “necessary to complete a drain from George Street to the river along the north side of James Street, the residents guarantee to lay the drain at their own cost.”<sup>206</sup> (The See House, or home of the Bishop of Huron, was on St. James Street west of St. George Street.) Two weeks later, Municipal Council granted his petition, and directed payment to cover the difference between six-inch and eight-inch pipe. But in October Cronyn again wrote to Municipal Council, complaining that the cost of the drain was being covered by the residents along the route of the drain, and “suggesting as a satisfactory arrangement that the corporation pay the entire cost of the drain and charge every one the sewer rate.” His suggestion was referred to #2 Committee, which then recommended that the whole cost of the tile drain be assumed by the City, with “the See House and all other parties . . . charged a frontage tax for the same.” In November, the City Solicitor, gave his opinion that “the city might assume the tile drain constructed by the Anglican Church from the See House and charge a rental to the property owners on the street opposite.” Finally, #2 Committee moved that the City “pay \$312 to V. Cronyn on behalf of the Anglican See House, being the cost of constructing a tile drain on St. James Street.” Its motion was adopted.<sup>207</sup> The record does not show whether the other users of the St. James Street drain were charged the sewer rate, a frontage tax, or another form of rental, but the incident does illustrate that citizens were demanding infrastructure improvements and that the City was scrambling to find the ways and means to provide and to finance them. In contemporary parlance, municipal government required a larger toolbox.

The larger toolbox came through powers vested in municipalities through various acts of the Provincial Legislature. Over time, the *Municipal Act*, *Local Improvement Act*, and *Drainage Act* gave cities power to raise debentures to pay for civic improvements, while stipulating how assessments on ratable property could be applied to cover some of the local costs.<sup>208</sup> It was up to the municipality itself to devise the local decision-making structure within which such powers would be administered. London did this by writing By-Laws spelling out the process for deciding about and funding local improvements.

One such By-Law was #2497, “Respecting Local Improvements”, which Municipal Council passed on April 3, 1905. According to its direction, petitions for improvements would go to the local Assessment Commissioner who would determine whether the petition came from two-thirds of the owners representing one-half of the value of the property to be benefitted by the improvement. #2

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<sup>205</sup> Minutes, p. 1103, 1108; 1885, p. 1162, 1170.

<sup>206</sup> Minutes, p. 1174.

<sup>207</sup> Minutes, p. 1180, 1212, 1222, 1225, 1233.

<sup>208</sup> Dennis H. Wood and Sharmini Mahadevan, *Financing of Municipal Infrastructure to Support Development: An Historical Perspective*. [www.woodbull.ca/.../financing-municipal-infrastructure-to-support-development-an-historical-perspective](http://www.woodbull.ca/.../financing-municipal-infrastructure-to-support-development-an-historical-perspective)

Committee would then pass the petition to the City Engineer who would judge the advisability of the project. If Municipal Council decided to undertake the work, notice would first be published in two local newspapers for two weeks, and then the work could be carried out unless a counter-petition was presented to Municipal Council signed by a majority of owners representing at least one-half in value of the real property to be benefited. The City Engineer would measure the frontage of the properties affected for assessment purposes, and ascertain the cost of the proposed improvement and its probable life. With all of this information in hand, Municipal Council would then make a final decision whether to proceed with the local improvement project. If the decision was to go ahead, a By-Law would be prepared to authorize the work, and the Engineer would then call for tenders. A formula was described by which the cost to the City was calculated based on frontage of "corner lots and triangular or other irregular shaped pieces of land situate at the intersections or junctions of streets". The whole was calculated to pass on most of the cost of the work of such infrastructure improvements to the property owners affected.<sup>209</sup>

A good example of a final report, which the Engineer would present to Municipal Council prior to its ultimate decision, can be found in the minutes of the meeting of June 5, 1911:

St. James Street Concrete Walk, Talbot to a Point East

A 5-foot concrete walk, including the alteration of water services, on St. James Street, north side from Talbot to a point 465 feet east. The real property which will be immediately benefitted is the property fronting or abutting on the north side of the portion of the street named above, and is the land to be assessed. The probable cost of the work is \$207.63, and the probable lifetime is ten years, which is the period over which the annual payments are to extend. The proportion of the cost to be assessed against the property benefitted is \$207.63. The proportion in which the said assessment should be made on the various portions of real estate benefitted as aforesaid is an equal rate per foot according to frontage. The frontage assessable is 465 lineal feet. The approximate cost per foot frontage is 45c, and the approximate annual cost for ten years is 5 3-5c. In case the actual cost exceeds or falls short of the above estimated cost, the shares of the cost of the work to be paid by the city and by the local assessment are to be in the proportions above indicated.<sup>210</sup>

In 1901, City Engineer Graydon had proposed a slightly different scheme to Municipal Council for sharing the cost of paving and repaving streets.<sup>211</sup> Graydon's recommendation was for the City to pay one quarter of the cost of paving unpaved streets, and one third of the cost of those that required repaving. The remaining cost would be charged to the affected property owners through a

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<sup>209</sup> Minutes, 1909, p. 105-106.

<sup>210</sup> Minutes, 1911, p. 158

<sup>211</sup> Minutes, 1901, p. 173.

frontage fee. Perhaps the comparatively generous share of the proposed City's contribution is attributed to the greater cost of road paving, as opposed to sidewalk construction.

As time went on, frontage fees became the new norm for funding local improvements. Typical of this was By-Law #5487, passed in 1917, for oiling certain streets in London. If 40% asphalt oil was used, the frontage fee to be entered on the Collector's Roll was 3½¢ per foot: if liquid asphalt was used, the cost per foot was 5¢. That year, College Avenue from St. George Street to Richmond Street, St. James Street from Talbot Street to Hellmuth Street, Sydenham Street from Talbot Street to Wellington Street, Talbot Street from Oxford Street East to St. James Street, Richmond Street from Oxford Street East to the City limits, Cheapside Street from St. George Street to Richmond Street, and Grosvenor Street from St. George Street to Hellmuth Street were on the list to be oiled.<sup>212</sup>

The cost of street cleaning and pavement sweeping was also passed on to property owners by a frontage fee. In 1925, the total cost for the previous year's work on roads was \$6,729.20: the share for streets in the Study Area was levied at 1½¢ per foot. Pavement sweeping was more costly: the City spent \$42,723.85 in 1924, and the charge for properties on Bridport Street and Victoria Street was 5¢ per foot frontage, and for Oxford Street East and Richmond Street, 7¢ per foot.<sup>213</sup>

The practice of passing most of the costs of development on to the particular citizens benefitting from them could be seen as an extension of the practice whereby Henry Becher had provided his own water supply, fire protection, and sewage disposal, and had taken responsibility for his own transportation needs. It would be many years before London achieved its present-day practice of sharing the funding of municipal services across the entire tax-base, rather than laboriously applying charges to the assessment of each property owner.

### **Water Supply and Fire Protection**

If an army marches on its stomach, as both Frederick the Great and Napoleon are reputed to have declared, then a city is nurtured by its water supply. By the mid 1870's, London's businesses, industries, and people had outgrown their informal network of private and public wells, and required a larger and more reliable source of water. Enabling legislation, the *London Waterworks Act*, was passed by the Provincial legislature and provided for an elected a Board of Water Commissioners.<sup>214</sup> Various sources for a predictable water supply were suggested, and several studies were done. Persuading voters to agree to the necessary funding was difficult: on March 29, 1875 a public vote on a By-Law to appropriate \$400,000 for a waterworks was defeated on by 699 to 243.<sup>215</sup> City Council next ordered the City Engineer William Robinson to suggest a solution to the problem, and on July 16, 1877, he proposed a plan to construct 18½ miles of piping, to site an engine house at the west end of Dundas Street, and to take the water

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<sup>212</sup> By-Laws of the City of London, reprinted and passed in 1917. P. 15- 18.

<sup>213</sup> Minutes, 1925, By-Law #7663, pp.22-24.

<sup>214</sup> 36 Victoria, Chapter 102, passed 29 March 1873.

<sup>215</sup> W.A & C.L/ Goodspeed, *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, ed Daniel Brock, Belleville: Mika, 1972, p. 275.

supply from the north branch of the Thames River. He priced filters, valves, hydrants, pumps, and engines, and proposed that the boundaries of the area to be supplied be Grosvenor Street on the north and Waterloo Street on the east, for a total estimated cost of \$166,946, which did not include land or right-of-way expenses. Robinson also suggested extending the system to Coombs Mill in Westminster Township (now in Springbank Park), at a cost of \$246,046.

In the end, the plan to source water from springs along the south banks of the main branch of the Thames, rather than from the north branch, succeeded, and a By-Law authorizing the new waterworks plan was passed by Municipal Council in December 1877. Fortunately for the growing residential area of North London, mains were laid beyond the northern limit originally suggested by Robinson. In 1898, the annual report of the Board of Water Commissioners included a map of the water mains laid to date. The map shows mains installed on Richmond Street beyond the city limits to the north, on Oxford Street East and Talbot Street, on St. George Street as far as Cheapside Street, and on Sydenham Street, St. James Street, Grosvenor Street, Louisa Street, Cheapside Street, and the east part of Bridport Street.<sup>216</sup> In 1904, a four-inch main was laid on Victoria Street between Richmond Street and St. George Street (at a cost of \$569.80.) The main on St. George Street was extended north to Bridport Street in 1908, and again in 1910. Bridport Street's water main was extended to St. George Street in 1910, and a four-inch main was installed on College Avenue in 1917,<sup>217</sup> completing water distribution in the Study Area.

Water from the Coombs and Colville springs was now readily available for domestic consumption, and also for nurturing lawns and gardens. In its 1896 annual report, the Board of Water Commissioners noted that all of the springs on the Waterworks property (in Springbank Park) had now been collected, but the supply of water was insufficient to meet London's demand. Although the summer of 1896 had experienced ample rainfall, the demands for lawn-watering and street-sprinkling had "required the full supply of the springs at the Waterworks [and] Springbank." In the circumstance, the Commissioners recommended that additional springs in the vicinity be procured.<sup>218</sup>

The schedule of water rates, established in 1896, show that Londoners were paying exactly for what was consumed every time a tap was turned on or a toilet flushed.

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|---|-----------------|
| 1. Private dwelling houses, not exceeding three rooms - | \$5.00          |
| 2. Each additional room                                 | \$0.50          |
| 3. Lawn rates, 2,000 sq. ft. and under per season       | \$4.00          |
| 4. Every additional 1,000 sq. ft. or part thereof       | \$1.00          |
| 5. Gardens, season from 15 April to 15 October -        | half lawn rates |

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<sup>216</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Board of Water Commissioners to the Municipal Council of the City of London, 1898. (Bound with City Council Minutes.)

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, 1904, p.12; 1908, p.17; 1910, p.10; 1917, p.17.

<sup>218</sup> Board of Water Commissioners Annual Report, 1896, p.9-11.

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|--|-----------------------|
| 6. Urinals, in private dwellings, self-closing, each         | \$4.00                |
| 7. Water closets, in private dwellings, pan and self-closing | \$3.00                |
| 8. Baths, in private houses, per bath                        | \$4.00 <sup>219</sup> |

The following year, Board chair, R.K. Cowan reported that one-fifth of the daily consumption of water that summer had been for street watering, this had put a serious drain on the reservoir. He advised that in future river water be obtained for this purpose. Lawn watering, too, added to the summer water shortage. In fact, additional springs on the Griffiths property in Byron had been purchased by the City, but Cowan did not consider they would provide “sufficient quantity to permit of the consumption at the same rate as in the past”, i.e., 100 gallons per capita per day. He recommended putting meters on every service to discourage “useless waste, which is the chief cause of our shortage.” Yet he valued the “very considerable portion of our receipts” that revenue from lawn services brought to the City.<sup>220</sup>

As the springs on the main branch of the Thames River failed to supply sufficient water to satisfy Londoners’ needs, Adam Beck approached City Council, in 1910, with a scheme to pump water from artesian wells in the City’s hinterland. His offer was accepted, with the happy result that just as the Hydro-Electric Power Commission began supplying electricity to London, a new source of water also began delivering. As noted by historian H.V. Nelles, Beck had the distinction of bringing both “light and water to the growing city in the same year.”<sup>221</sup> Well fields served London’s water requirements until the pipeline to Lake Huron was connected in 1967.<sup>222</sup>

A necessary corollary to the laying of water mains in residential streets was the erection of fire hydrants. By 1896, street hydrants had been established on Oxford Street East and Sydenham Street at Talbot Street, St. George Street, and Richmond Street; on St. James Street, Grosvenor Street and Cheapside Street at St. George Street and Richmond Street; on College Avenue at St. George Street, and on Victoria Street at Richmond Street.<sup>223</sup> Hydrants were installed on Oxford Street East near the bridge across the Thames River in 1902, and on Bridport Street at Richmond Street and St. George Street by 1908.<sup>224</sup>

Before hydrants provided a secure supply of water for fighting fires, tanks were installed on some city streets to provide at least some readily available water should fire break out. In 1874, Aldermen J.R. Peel and George G. Magee requested that a tank be erected on George Street near Sydenham Street.<sup>225</sup> The following year, Municipal Council reported that there were sixty-nine water tanks installed on city streets, and that an alarm telegraph system connected to the fire hall on King Street was being installed.<sup>226</sup> London

<sup>219</sup> Board of Water Commissioners Annual Report, 1896, p. 5-7.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 1897, p. 6-7.

<sup>221</sup> Dictionary of Canadian Biography online. H.V. Nelles, “Sir Adam Beck”. [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/beck\\_adam\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/beck_adam_15E.html)

<sup>222</sup> Pipes, pavement & Pillars: a 150 year perspective on the history of public works in the City of London. London, 2005, p. [8].

<sup>223</sup> Minutes, 1896, p.

<sup>224</sup> Minutes, 1902, p. 13; 1908, p.18, 23.

<sup>225</sup> Minutes, 1874, p. 139, 142.

<sup>226</sup> Minutes, 1875, p.176.

built its second fire hall, in East London in 1885, and its third, in South London in 1891, but North London had to wait until the twentieth century for the same level of service.

Finally, in 1908, a city-wide vote authorized the issue of debentures to finance construction of new fire halls in the north and east sections of the City. In his inaugural address that year, Mayor Samuel Stevely urged #3 Committee to act on this authority forthwith, “as the northern portion of the City should be afforded fire protection without delay.”<sup>227</sup> On May 4, the committee reported on that the lot required for construction had been purchased from a Mr. Scarrow for \$1,200; it was located on the southwest corner of Colborne Street and St. James Street.<sup>228</sup> Designed by architect, Arthur E. Nutter, the new hall was opened the following year. London’s foremost authority on local architecture has described it well: “In scale with the surrounding houses, the station makes a colourful, efficient, and unobtrusive addition to its neighbourhood; which is, ideally, what a fire station should do.”<sup>229</sup>

### **Drains, Storm and Sanitary Sewers**

The topography of the Study Area is one of land rising gently from Oxford Street East to Grosvenor Street, and then falling even more gently northward. From St. George Street, land falls to the west, more precipitously between St. James Street and Victoria Street, where a steep hill rises above the original bed of the Thames River. Even before the beginning of settlement in the Study Area, the drainage pattern would have been to the west, and the proximity of the Thames River was an invitation to early residents to construct drains leading to it. For its first century as a City, Londoners used the Thames River not only as a source of power, water, and gravel, but also as a useful drain, dump, and storm and sanitary sewer.

The development of surfaced streets led to demands for better drainage. On 3 March 1882, as the first bridge over the Thames River at Oxford Street East was being constructed, Henry Taylor and thirteen other residents petitioned for better drainage of Oxford Street East between Richmond Street and George Street.<sup>230</sup> Later that month, John Puddicombe and eleven others petitioned for a drain on the north side of Sydenham Street from George Street to Talbot Street, “for the purpose of draining cellars, the old one being out of repair and entirely useless.”<sup>231</sup> The following July, just before torrential rains caused a severe flood in the Thames River, E.H. Hayne, Alex Hotson and Louie N. Hayne petitioned Municipal Council for construction of a drain on St James Street between George Street and Talbot Street.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Minutes, 1908, p.3.

<sup>228</sup> Minutes, 1908, p. 119.

<sup>229</sup> Nancy Tausky, *Historical Sketches of London from Site to City*, Peterborough, Broadwood Press, 1993, p. 146-7. See also *Walking Guide to Historic Sites in London*, London Public Library, 2005, p.36.

<sup>230</sup> Minutes, 1882, p. 858.

<sup>231</sup> Minutes, p. 860.

<sup>232</sup> Minutes, 1883, p.990. The petition went to Council on 9 July, and the flood occurred in the early morning of 11 July.

Open street drains facilitated the removal of rain and domestic overflow, but as London expanded beyond the downtown core, the disposal of sewage became a municipal issue. With the establishment of the local Board of Health in 1884/5, London had a new watchdog overseeing public welfare. It quickly concerned itself with London's practice of dumping raw sewage in the Thames River. Over time, and after many studies, a comprehensive sewer system was designed and approved by Municipal Council. It consisted of "two main sewers, draining the northern and southern portions of the City, uniting at King Street and Ridout Street North in a trunk sewer to carry the sewage across the Thames River to a place of disposal beyond the Cove, together with a London South branch sewer for that part of the City, connecting with the trunk sewer at its point of crossing the Wharncliffe Road." The estimated cost, including lands, was \$207,000.<sup>233</sup> In 1896, Provincial legislation was secured enabling London to issue debentures for the project, and Municipal Council passed the necessary By-Law that September. In his inaugural address on January 11, 1897, Mayor John Little assured his Council that the conditions were favourable "to establish a complete system, without a serious addition to our financial burdens."<sup>234</sup> The latter was reassuring to London's fiscally conscientious civic officials.

By 1901, a new sewer system had been partially completed in the City, and a sewerage farm constructed south of the main branch of the Thames River. The system had not yet constructed north of Pall Mall Street, but plans were afoot to carry out this work. In 1904, tile-sewers were constructed on Richmond Street from Oxford Street East to Grosvenor Street, on Oxford Street East between St. George Street and Talbot Street, and on Talbot Street between Oxford Street East and St. James Street.<sup>235</sup> The following year, the system was expanded to connect Oxford Street East between St. George Street and Richmond Street, and St. George Street between Oxford Street East and St. James Street.<sup>236</sup> In 1907, additional connections were built on St. George Street between Grosvenor Street and Victoria Street, on Cheapside Street between Richmond Street and St. George Street, on Sydenham Street between Talbot Street and St. George Street, on Grosvenor Street between St. George Street and a point 340 feet westerly, and on Bridport Street between St. George Street and Richmond Street.<sup>237</sup>

As part of the north end sewer system, the City needed to construct a trunk sewer on lands then owned by Mrs. Katherine Becher on the west side of St. George Street north of Grosvenor Street. In 1908, for the sum of \$1,000.00, Mrs. Becher granted the City permission to build and maintain a trunk sewer along the foot of the hill behind her property, on the understanding that the surface ground would be left in good condition, and that if the pond on her land dried up, the City would puddle it forthwith. Mrs. Becher's home would be connected to the sewer free of charge. She agreed not to "petition against any petition for, or any notice initiating any proceedings for a sewer upon and along St. George Street in front of the property . . . or any portion thereof and upon and along Grosvenor Street from St. George Street westerly to the said trunk sewer." For its part, the City also agreed to "erect at their own

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<sup>233</sup> Minutes, 1901, Board of Health report, p. 262-267. The chair of the Board of Health was Dr. Clarence T. Campbell.

<sup>234</sup> Minutes, 1897, p. 5.

<sup>235</sup> Minutes, 1904, p. 43

<sup>236</sup> Minutes, 1905, p. 175, 206

<sup>237</sup> Minutes, 1907, p. 94, 158, 215, 230.

expense, a gate where the said sewer enters the said lands and another gate where the said sewer leaves the said lands at Grosvenor Street.” The agreement also limited the cost to Mrs. Becher of her share of any sewer to be built on St. George Street or Grosvenor Street to ten cents per lineal foot frontage. In the event that her lands were subdivided in the future, the new lots or buildings would be assessed the usual sewer rate.<sup>238</sup> When the trunk sewer required upgrades in 1935, the City had to make arrangement with property owners on St. George Street and Grosvenor Street along its path. Mrs. Becher, her son Alexander Lorne Becher, William R. Yendell, William L. Duffield, Edward Hayman and Huron College all signed agreements with the City to enable this civic improvement.<sup>239</sup>

Final connections to the sewer system in the Study Area were made between 1908 and 1915. In 1908, Richmond Street from Cheapside Street to 50 feet north of Sherwood Street was connected, as was Louisa (later Cromwell) Street.<sup>240</sup> The following year, Sydenham Street was connected between Talbot Street and St. George Street, and Richmond Street between Grosvenor Street and Cheapside Street. Construction was then begun on the St. George Street trunk sewer arranged for in the negotiations with Mrs. Becher, and a trunk sewer on Victoria Street between St. George Street and Adelaide Street.<sup>241</sup>

In 1913, a tile sewer and six private drain connections were planned for College Avenue between St. George Street and Richmond Street.<sup>242</sup> That year, in his inaugural address, Mayor John Beattie drew Municipal Council’s attention to the urgency of dealing with the “storm sewer question”: “Many of the principal residential streets” he noted, “are awaiting pavements which cannot be laid until this work is put through.” Mr. Chipman, he said would soon report on the flooding of cellars caused by “storm water overcrowding the sanitary sewers.” In the event, the report of Willis Chipman, Civil and Sanitary Engineer of the Toronto firm of Chipman and Power, surveyed the storm water situation in all parts of the City. It noted in the Study Area that storm water was being discharged into sanitary sewers. Those on Victoria Street, St. George Street, and Talbot Street, Chipman’s report cautioned, were “gorged with street water with every heavy rain, the gullies being connected.” It recommended the construction of a storm water sewer system and Municipal Council readily took the advice, passing a By-Law on September 25, 1913 to authorize the issue debentures to the value of \$400,000 to fund the work.<sup>243</sup>

Construction of storm sewers in the Study Area actually began in 1915, with plans for sewer mains, manholes, catch-basins and connections for Oxford Street East between the Thames River and Talbot Street, for St. James Street between Talbot Street and St. George Street, for Richmond Street between Oxford Street East and Sydenham Street and between St. James Street and Grosvenor

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<sup>238</sup> Minutes, p.55; By-Law #3025, “Respecting an Agreement with Mrs. Becher”, 1908, p. 232-236.

<sup>239</sup> London. Land Registry Office, Instruments #32334, 32511, 32335, 32336, 32357, and 32368

<sup>240</sup> Minutes, 1908, p. 94.

<sup>241</sup> Minutes, 1909, Auditor’s Report, p. 99; Minutes, p. 303.

<sup>242</sup> Minutes, 1913, p. 77.

<sup>243</sup> Minutes, Report upon Storm Sewers, p. 158-173; By-Law #4442, p. 367.

Street, for Talbot Street between Oxford Street East and St. James Street, and for St. James Street between Richmond Street and Talbot Street. The estimated cost for tendering was a total of \$9,819.<sup>244</sup>

Recent upgrades to water-mains and storm sewers in the Victoria Street/Gibbons Place area have been a reminder to area residents of two truths: firstly, that infrastructure wears out and must be regularly replaced with up-to-date materials; and secondly, that a world of technical wonders is concealed beneath our streets, sidewalks, lawns and even our parks.<sup>245</sup>

## Garbage

London did not deal adequately with the disposal of household waste until the twentieth century. Mayor John Beattie's inaugural address to Municipal Council in January 1909 drew attention to the issue. He brought his colleagues' attention to frequent public demands for a garbage system, and warned about health threats to the City if these demands were not met. The previous year, he admonished, "typhoid fever claimed seventeen victims, and it is a possibility that we may reap an unfortunate harvest of epidemics for our neglect. Some of our lanes are in a filthy condition."<sup>246</sup> The City Engineer Henry A. Brazier, studied the matter thoroughly and presented a detailed report in March 1913. He recommended house-to-house calls at regular intervals and the use of galvanized iron cans with tight-fitting lids. A single horse-drawn, four-wheeled, rear-dumping, three-cubic-yard capacity wagon would be the most economical model for London's purposes, he advised. By the end of July, the Garbage Inspector, W.C. Dodd, reported that the incinerator had begun operating on July 7, 1913, and had already consumed 1,124 loads of garbage. No longer was refuse piling up in the gutters and laneways of London.<sup>247</sup>

In March of 1914, Municipal Council passed a By-Law dividing London into areas for garbage collection, and imposed a special rate to pay for it.<sup>248</sup> It then signed a five-year contract with William John Ross of 853 Maitland Street. He supplied a minimum of eighteen "good sound horses," with "all necessary harness" for them, "to be engaged in the collection of garbage, such as general house refuse, ashes, dead animals, and general trade refuse." Garbage would be conveyed "in carts and wagons to be supplied by the Corporation, to the Incinerator at the foot of Waterloo Street." Municipal Council estimated that eighteen drivers would be required to cover the city. Men to be employed by Ross were required to be "honest, sober, strong and willing workers," and the City Engineer was empowered to discharge any workman "found guilty of misconduct" or of "using abusive language to householders."<sup>249</sup> By

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<sup>244</sup> Minutes, 1915, p. 76-7, 572.

<sup>245</sup> These upgrades were carried out in 2015. See City of London letter to local residents: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Roads-Transportation/Road-Construction/Documents/Victoria-GibbonsLETTER2014.pdf>

<sup>246</sup> Minutes, 1909, p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> Minutes, 1913, p. 78, 295.

<sup>248</sup> Minutes, 1914, By-Law #4672, p. 94. Later amended as #5588 in 1917, printed in 1918, By-Laws, pp. 164-168. It included the entire Study Area.

<sup>249</sup> Minutes, 1914, p. 211-14.

September, Municipal Council had decided in favour of municipal ownership of the garbage system, and cancelled its contract with Mr. Ross with compensation to be fixed by arbitration.<sup>250</sup>

London's Board of Health commended the city for establishing garbage service. In its 1914 annual report, it attributed the low number of infectious diseases that year "to the efficiency of the Garbage Department." London, it claimed, "had never been cleaner or more free from that energetic distributor of disease germs, the pestiferous house-fly." In the past, unfortunately, much of what was now collected, "deposited in back yards and lanes, or thrown into dumps."<sup>251</sup> At the outset, garbage collection was twice-weekly in the warmer months, and once a week in the winter.

### **Street Lighting, Gas, Electricity**

The first street lamps in London were lit by gas generated by burning coal. The London Gas Company was incorporated in 1853, and received a charter from the then Town Council.<sup>252</sup> Downtown streets were the first to be lit, but gradually the service spread to new neighbourhoods. In 1856, the Committee on Gas & Water recommended that eight gas lamps be erected on Mark Lane (a portion of the present Richmond Street) from the bridge to Grosvenor Street.<sup>253</sup> By 1874, the City could boast a total of 1,206 street lamps, of which Ward 7 (which then included the Study Area) had sixteen, with two additional ones being added that year.<sup>254</sup>

As they did for other local improvements, local residents in the Study Area combined to petition City Council for additional street lighting. This demand doubtless parallels the growth of house construction, and the importance of public institutions on Richmond Street. In 1884, A. Secord and neighbours requested a gas lamp on the north side of St. James Street, west of Richmond Street.<sup>255</sup> Two years later, electric light came to London when Municipal Council diplomatically tendered with two competing concerns which were bidding to illuminate the streets. The Ball Electric Company and the Royal Electric Company were given three-year contracts, and permission to erect 20 lamps each. That number was increased during the life of their contracts.<sup>256</sup> Scarcely was the ink dry on the contract before H.A. Smith and 60 other citizens petitioned Municipal Council to have an electric light installed at the corner of Richmond Street and Grosvenor Street.<sup>257</sup> The following year, James Snow and others requested a lamp at Richmond Street and Victoria Street; and, in 1887, John Puddicombe with a number of other residents petitioned for one on "Richmond Street north". Perhaps the latter was the lamp requested by Aldermen O'Meara, Callard and Jones in 1888 for Richmond Street between the "two

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<sup>250</sup> Minutes, p. 397,

<sup>251</sup> Minutes, 1915, p. 549.

<sup>252</sup> Daniel J. Brock, *Fragments from the Forks: London Ontario's Legacy*, London & Middlesex Historical Society, 2011, p. 44,46.

<sup>253</sup> Minutes, 1856.

<sup>254</sup> Minutes, 1874, p. 158.

<sup>255</sup> Minutes, 1884, p. 1081

<sup>256</sup> E.V. Buchanan, *A History of Electrical Energy in London*, London, PUC, 1966, p. 8-9.

<sup>257</sup> Minutes, 1886, p. 1343.

Orphans Homes”.<sup>258</sup> At this stage in the illumination of North London, lamps were often positioned only at street corners or in the middle of a block.

In 1893, a light was petitioned for at the corner of George Street and Grosvenor Street.<sup>259</sup> One at Talbot Street and St. James Street was requested in 1898.<sup>260</sup> A motion to install one at Victoria Street and St. George Street was successful in 1900.<sup>261</sup> In 1907, the corner of College Avenue and Richmond Street was lit, and local residents petitioned for light on Louisa Street.<sup>262</sup> In 1911, Cy Warman, who had built a very romantic house (100 Cheapside Street) for “Sweet Marie” on Cheapside Street at the corner of St. George Street, petitioned for lights on St. George Street between Cheapside Street and Victoria Street. That same year, the Electrical Department issued its first annual report. In only nine months of operation, it had connected over 2,900 customers, and received 4,300 applications for service. It had constructed 120 miles of pole line, erected 500 miles of copper wire, and installed over 2,400 street lamps. By the end of 1912, General Superintendent, H.J. Glaubitz expected that 5,000 Londoners would be connected to the electrical supply.<sup>263</sup>

In April 1914, the London Electric Company applied to erect additional poles for electric lights in the Study Area; three on St. George Street between Cheapside Street and Bridport Street, one on Richmond Street opposite the first lane north of Oxford Street East, three on the south side of St. James Street between Richmond Street and St. George Street, two on College Avenue, four on Grosvenor Street and three on Louisa Street both between Richmond Street and St. George Street, and four on Sydenham Street between Talbot Street and St. George Street.<sup>264</sup> By this time, incandescent lamps had replaced the weaker carbon arc lamps, with the result that streets were better lit. As of November 30, 1910, London obtained its electrical power from Niagara Falls by way of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission, in the creation of which its former mayor, Sir Adam Beck had been such an instrumental leader.<sup>265</sup>

In 1912, London’s Hydro Commission opened a store at Dundas Street and Wellington Street, the first store of its kind in Ontario, both to promote and sell electric appliances. Thereafter residents were able to “live better electrically”.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Minutes, 1887, p. 1477, 1497.

<sup>259</sup> Minutes, 1893, p. 252.

<sup>260</sup> Minutes 1898, p. 73, 104.

<sup>261</sup> Minutes, 1901, p. 80, 97.

<sup>262</sup> Minutes, 1907, p. 221, 244, 268.

<sup>263</sup> Minutes, 1911, p. 248; John H. Lutman and Christopher L. Hives, *the North and the East of London: an historical and architectural guide*, London, City of London, 1982, p.21; Minutes, 1911, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, Electrical Department, p. 55-57.

<sup>264</sup> Minutes, 1914, p. 120.

<sup>265</sup> Buchanan, *Electrical Energy*, p. 9; Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: and Illustrated History of London, Ontario*, [Northridge, CA.], Windsor Publications, 1986. P. 136.

<sup>266</sup> Buchanan, *Electrical Energy*, p. 137.

## Telephone Service

The Bell Telephone Company of Canada began operations in London in 1880. Service was available first to downtown businesses and institutions, and later expanded into residential areas. In 1907, when the agreement between The Bell Telephone Company and the City of London expired, Mayor Joseph C. Judd reminded his Municipal Council colleagues that London could make a new agreement with Bell “for exclusive rights on the streets.”<sup>267</sup>

In 1912, Bell gained permission of Municipal Council to “place lines of telephone and lay the necessary branches to intersecting streets and lanes under the supervision of the City Engineer.” Its first foray into the Study Area was on Oxford Street East to “the lane or alley between Oxford and St. James”, and west on St. James Street to “the lane or alley between St. James and Grosvenor.”<sup>268</sup> In 1914, Bell sought permission to erect five poles on the south side of Victoria Street west from Richmond Street.<sup>269</sup> In 1916, poles were erected on Richmond Street from St. James Street to Cheapside Street, on the east side of Talbot Street between Victoria Street and Regent Street, and on Sydenham Street.<sup>270</sup> By 1923, telephone service had reached the north end of the Study Area, with poles now in place on the west side of St. George Street between Grosvenor Street and Huron Street.<sup>271</sup>

## Natural Gas

The City Gas Company was chartered in 1864, and authorized to lay gas mains in London for street lighting purposes. At its plant at Ridout Street North and Horton Street, the company produced artificial gas by burning coal.<sup>272</sup> When large quantities of natural gas were discovered in Lambton and Kent Counties, several companies approached City Council with schemes to supply London with natural gas for heating homes and powering machinery. But as with many other infrastructure projects, Londoners were not quite ready to vote the required debentures. In his inaugural address in January 1914, Mayor C.M.R. Graham regretted that electors had voted no in a plebiscite about bringing that fuel to the City, but he assured his colleagues that he expected experts with the Natural Gas Company to come forward with a proposition that would be more palatable to citizens.<sup>273</sup>

Two years later, the engineers of the City and the Public Utilities Commission were empowered by Municipal Council to study the “cost and practicability of piping the large consuming centres of the city for a supply of purified natural gas.” They were also to “consult with any company in a position to supply natural gas regarding terms which [could] . . . be secured” by the corporation.<sup>274</sup> These efforts resulted in Municipal Council instructing its solicitor to insert clauses in the *City of London Act*, then being amended by

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<sup>267</sup> Minutes, 1907, p. 2-3.

<sup>268</sup> Minutes, 1912, p. 218.

<sup>269</sup> Minutes, 1914, p. 99; 1915, p. 210.

<sup>270</sup> Minutes, 1916, p. 214, 280, 441.

<sup>271</sup> Minutes, 1923, p. 27.

<sup>272</sup> “The Gas Line: London”, *The Gas Line*, V. 7, no. 2, January, 1955, (published by Union Gas Company), p. 10.

<sup>273</sup> Minutes, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>274</sup> Minutes, 1915, p. 653.

the Provincial Legislature, giving authority to the Public Utilities Commission “to lay mains and pipes for natural gas, and to have the management and control of natural gas distribution for the city.” By-Law #5551 was then passed giving the PUC this local authority.<sup>275</sup> The amended Act authorized debentures for this purpose up to the value of \$50,000. The PUC requested \$20,000 at the outset to install “a natural gas distribution system to supply manufacturing industries, and to the incinerator.”<sup>276</sup> Pipes would later be extended to residential areas of the City.

The Southern Ontario Gas Company was contracted to supply natural gas to the PUC, with the McClary Manufacturing Company being the first customer, and the citizens of London next in the queue.<sup>277</sup> That line moved slowly, waiting for a secure supply of the fuel. When the Dawn Gas Field in Lambton County came on stream in 1935, a reliable supply of natural gas finally became available to heat London homes. Service was delivered first in #1 district, the south end of the City, in the week of September 23, 1935, with #2 district, the north end, scheduled to receive it the following week.<sup>278</sup>

### Public Transportation

London’s first provider of public transit was the London Street Railway Company (LSR), incorporated by the Ontario Legislature on March 29, 1873.<sup>279</sup> Horse-drawn trolleys were pulled on tracks laid down on London streets, with the first route servicing Dundas Street between Richmond Street and Adelaide Street. In 1875, the LSR made arrangements with the Proof Line Road Company (PLR) to lay tracks on Richmond Street as far as Oxford Street East. The PLR saw this as an ideal opportunity to avoid their responsibility of keeping Richmond Street in good repair, and offered the LSR both right-of-way privileges and \$60 per annum to assume the upkeep of the road.<sup>280</sup>

By the 1880s, electricity was being used to power street railways in North America, and in 1892 LSR began planning to electrify its service and expand its routes. In particular, it wished to extend the Richmond Street route north to the City limits at Huron Street. When these plans came before Municipal Council, Alderman John Moule moved that the route be extended on Oxford Street East west of Richmond Street to Talbot Street, but his efforts failed.<sup>281</sup> The LSR was electrified in 1895.<sup>282</sup>

The PLR did not easily share its hegemony on Richmond Street, and the LSR was unable to make arrangements for extending its route to the City limits at Huron Street. Indeed, Municipal Council had established a Special Committee to deal with the PLR on the

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<sup>275</sup> Minutes, 1917, p. 222. (An Act respecting the City of London, assented to 12 April 1917. RSO, 7 George V, Ch.75, Section 12, p. 368.)

<sup>276</sup> Minutes, p. 234.

<sup>277</sup> PUC Annual Report, 1917, p. 71. (Bound with City Council Minutes.)

<sup>278</sup> “Natural Gas is Turned on Here,” *London Free Press*, 24 September 1935.

<sup>279</sup> C.K. Morningstar, *From Dobbin to Diesel*, London Transportation Commission, 1973, p. 7.

<sup>280</sup> Morningstar, p. 8; Minutes, 1875, p. 255.

<sup>281</sup> Minutes, 1892, p. 261, 263.

<sup>282</sup> Morningstar, p. 11, 13; Brock, *Fragments*, p. 148.

matter. In 1896, possibly under pressure from city residents in the north end desirous of having public transit available to them within reasonable walking distance, Aldermen H.M. Douglass and Carrothers guided a motion through Municipal Council requesting the LSR to lay tracks on Richmond Street from St. James Street to Cheapside Street.<sup>283</sup> The Special Committee then took several proposals to the PLR, which were all refused. PLR rejected Municipal Council's wish that LSR be able to extend its service on Richmond Street to Cheapside Street in exchange for being relieved of its obligation to keep that section of Richmond Street in repair "during the continuance of the street railway franchise." The PLR was also offered gravel from the LSR pit free of charge for use on their road within the City limits; in addition, the City offered to "gravel Cheapside street from Richmond to George streets, and George street from Cheapside to Oxford, to allow teams coming from the north to reach the market without running alongside the lines of the Street Railway Company", in other words, to reduce the wear and tear on Richmond Street. The PLR rejected all offers, and the report of the Special Committee was filed for reference.<sup>284</sup> One wonders what the quiet burghers of the Study Area would have made of "teams from the north" drawing loads to market along their quiet residential streets.

Finally in 1898, the City of London and the LSR, empowered by both an Act of the Ontario Legislature and local By-Law #916, established six routes for the transit system. Route Number Two was known as the Wellington Street North and South line. It commenced at the corner of High Street and Tecumseh Avenue in south London, made its way downtown to Richmond Street, then north to St. James Street, east to Wellington Street, north to Regent Street, west along Regent Street to Richmond Street, and then back the way it came. This route was to operate at intervals of twelve minutes.<sup>285</sup>

In 1904, the Wellington Street North and South Line was extended at its north end to terminate at the City limits at Richmond Street and Huron Street, before retracing its route.<sup>286</sup> Aided by grants from the Township of London, the County of Middlesex, and the Province of Ontario, the City of London purchased the assets of the PLR in 1907. The City now had total control over Richmond Street and could make changes in LSR routes without negotiation and aggravation.<sup>287</sup>

Further changes to routes were proposed in 1913. The former Route #2 became Richmond, Route #4, operating at 12 minute intervals. A new Route #5, Oxford, would travel from downtown to Oxford Street East and Richmond Street, where every alternate car would travel on a loop along Oxford Street East, William Street, Cheapside Street and Richmond Street, or in the reverse direction, at seven-and-a-half minute intervals. Given these new routes, the Study Area would now be served along Richmond Street by two trolley routes.<sup>288</sup> Sunday service on the LSR began on February 22, 1914.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Minutes, 1896, p. 123.

<sup>284</sup> Minutes, 1896, p. 140.

<sup>285</sup> Minutes, 1898, p. 331-333. Part of By-Law #916 is printed in Morningstar, p. 44.

<sup>286</sup> Minutes, 1904, By-Law #2469, p. 806.

<sup>287</sup> Minutes, 1907, p. 155.

<sup>288</sup> Minutes, 1913, p. 272-273.

City Council decided in 1916 to pave Richmond Street north with “Asphaltic Concrete Pavement.”<sup>290</sup> This project made it necessary for the Street Railway to pave its track allowance on Richmond “at the expense of the Company, with the like materials, or such other materials as shall be approved of by the Council of the Corporation.” Council passed By-Law #5551 to this effect. The By-Law also directed that “drainage catch basins with proper gratings” were to be located and installed by the Company, and “directly connected to the City Storm water sewer, or other sewers as directed by the City Engineer.”<sup>291</sup> Clearly, London relished its complete control over the modernization of Richmond Street.

Rival bus companies appeared in London in 1925, competing with the LSR for customers. The company purchased its own gasoline-driven buses the following year, and service began in north London connecting with streetcars at the corner of Richmond Street and Cheapside Street.<sup>292</sup> The last electric streetcar was retired in 1940.<sup>293</sup> The City of London bought the LSR in 1951 and established the London Transportation Commission (LTC) in its stead.<sup>294</sup> Service to the Study Area has increased over the decades as bus routes were added on Richmond Street (Huron Heights, Kipps Lane/Thompson Road, Wellington Street, and for a time, Colborne Street), and on Oxford Street (Oxford West.) In the Study Area, no one today lives more than two blocks from an LTC bus route.

### **Street Names, Numbers & Signs**

Some names given to streets in the Study Area originate in the original London, in England. Oxford Street, Grosvenor Street, and Cheapside Street fall into this category. Richmond Street was named after Charles Lennox, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richmond, who was Governor-General of the Canadas for a brief thirteen months before dying horribly of hydrophobia (i.e., rabies) in 1819.<sup>295</sup> That part of the street in the Study Area was originally called “Burlington”, and sometimes on early maps “Sarnia Road”, since it led north to the route leading westward to that port.

College Street, so named because it led to Huron College (predecessor of Western University) and its campus in Rough Park on George Street, was originally named “Thomas Street” in honour of Thomas Ridout, Surveyor General of Upper Canada, under whose administration so much of the land of the province was divided, allocated, and named.<sup>296</sup>

Cromwell Street running between St. George Street and Richmond Street and continuing between Wellington Street and Waterloo Street, was named by an admirer of Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland. The

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<sup>289</sup> Brock, *Fragments*, p. 184-185.

<sup>290</sup> Minutes, 1916, p. 298, 397, 398.

<sup>291</sup> Minutes, 1917, By-laws, pp130-13X.

<sup>292</sup> Morningstar, p. 24.

<sup>293</sup> Morningstar, p. 26.

<sup>294</sup> Morningstar, p. 31.

<sup>295</sup> Michael Baker and Hilary Bates Neary, *London Street Names*, Toronto, James Lorimer, 2003, p. 80-81. Another invaluable source for London street names is Harriet Priddis, “The Naming of London Streets”, in the London & Middlesex Historical Society’s *Centennial Review 1967*, London, 1967, pp.29-53.

<sup>296</sup> Priddis, p. 40.

west section of that street was originally called “Louisa” after a daughter of the Strathy family who developed the block of land between Grosvenor Street and Cheapside Street, and Richmond Street and St. George Street.<sup>297</sup> Perhaps by 1915, the Strathy name was forgotten in the area, but the Becher family was not. That year “a majority of ratepayers” petitioned to have the names of Louisa Street and Cromwell Street changed to “Thornwood Avenue”, the latter being the name given by Henry Becher to his home on St. George Street. Two years later, for whatever reason, the neighbourhood changed its mind and petitioned Council for “Louisa” to be renamed “Cromwell.”<sup>298</sup> Bridport Street was named for a relative of Henry Becher, Captain Alexander Bridport Becher of the Royal Navy.<sup>299</sup> Finally, Victoria, the northernmost street in the Study Area, honours the Queen whose reign encompassed the years when most of the Study Area was developed. London erected its first street name signs in 1910.

London first addressed itself to numbering the houses on city streets in 1873, when Messers. Brown and Morris and “about forty others” asked Council to adopt a plan for numbering houses and lots.<sup>300</sup> Two years later, a scheme was agreed to, and Council appointed a Mr. Putney as official house numberer for London. Tenders were called that year for supplying and attaching porcelain numbers, and a By-Law was drafted.<sup>301</sup> Occasionally, glitches in the procedure were brought to Council’s attention, and renumbering of streets was sometimes required.

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<sup>297</sup> Priddis, p. 40

<sup>298</sup> Minutes, 1915, p. 663, 678; 1917, p. 121, By-Law #5612, p. 213.

<sup>299</sup> London Registry Office, Instrument #2023, 1 July 1862.

<sup>300</sup> Minutes, 1873, p. 28.

<sup>301</sup> Minutes, 1875, p. 179, 206, 272.