

❖ **Bellevue Avenue** ❖

**An Architectural  
and Social Study**

by

**Edna Hudson**

**Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy**

*July 1993*

## **Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy**

P.O. Box 7162  
Station "A"  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5W 1X8  
Telephone: 947-1066

A branch of the Architectural  
Conservancy of Ontario Inc.

All services such as tours,  
lectures, written  
communications, etc., originate  
at the branch level. The cost of  
printing the Acorn, the official  
publication of the A.C.O.  
Provincial Council, is  
underwritten by a surcharge of  
\$2.00 per household.

President of T.R.A.C:  
Alec Keefer

Vice Presidents:  
Hamish Wilson  
Pierre Vaillancourt  
Charles Kinghorn

Secretary:  
Peter Razgaitis

Membership Secretary:  
Doug McGavin

Treasurer:  
Jim Wiswell

Copy Editor:  
Mark Gerson

Production Design:  
Charles Kinghorn

Material appearing in T.R.A.C.  
publications may only be  
reproduced with the written  
permission of the Toronto Region  
Branch of the Architectural  
Conservancy of Ontario.

### **Edna Hudson**

Resident of Toronto for more than twenty years. Started life in Daventry, England, which is a small old market town, remarkable for the survival of a large number of Georgian sandstone houses. Made early efforts to become a mathematician, went on to systems engineering, then business. Now enjoys reading social history; and the research and reflection necessary to produce this essay were a pleasure.

Thanks to Mr. Alec Keefer, whose consistent interest and encouragement were invaluable.

Special thanks to my grandchildren, Mr. Jasper Dupuis and Ms Tasha Dupuis, for their contribution of drawings of houses.

(Unless otherwise indicated, all drawings and photographs are by the author.)

# Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

### 2. THE ECONOMICS OF BUILDING

- Building Materials
- Building Labour
- Land and Capital Costs

### 3. THE BUILDING OF BELLEVUE AVENUE

- Data Sources
- General Building Progress, Lot Development Density
- A Walk Down Bellevue Avenue
- Owners and Builders Who Formed the Streetscape
  - James S. McMurray
  - First Owners, to 1875
  - Builders, 1878 to 1891

### 4. MUNICIPAL INTERESTS

- Data Sources
- Water Supply, Drains and Sewers
- Paving the Roads and Sidewalks
- Overcrowding

### 5. ARCHITECTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Explanation of Categories
- Listing of Data
- Illustrations, Plans and Drawings

### 6. SOCIAL HISTORY

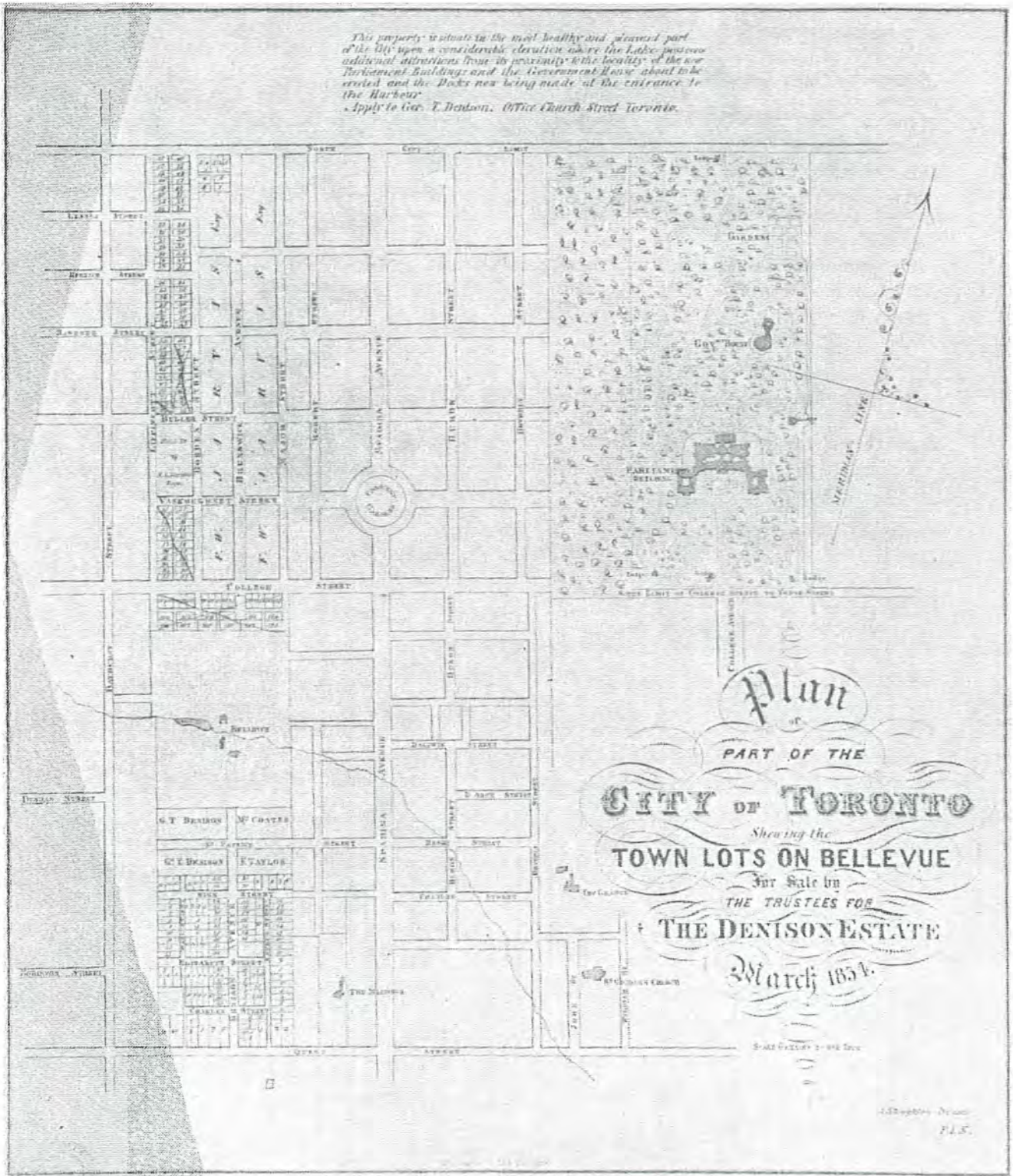
- Early Beginnings, Lord Simcoe and the Denison Family
- After 1860: Environmental Determinants
- To 1935: Social Determinants
- Women and Property Ownership

### 7. METAPHORS OF CHANGE

- Cultural Metaphors
- Political Metaphors
- Ecological Metaphors
- Responses to Questionnaire
- Bellevue and Social Adaptability

### APPENDIX

- Development of Community Values
- Strategic Planning



Plan of Part of the City of Toronto Showing the Town Lots on Bellevue For Sale by the Trustees for the Denison Estate, March 1854 [J. Stoughton Dennis, surveyor]  
 (Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library)



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Most of what is written here is common knowledge, a part of the story of the development of Toronto, replicated in streets and towns elsewhere. The obvious, however, too often escapes attention. This study is an examination of the individual features of the streetscape, as well as the characteristics of one street as a whole.

Bellevue Avenue, the street chosen for our example, is on the edge of older Toronto. It is perhaps not the most interesting street one might choose. What, for example, is the architectural interest in houses built without an architect? But some vernacular houses have great charm, even beauty. Can a house, such as a one-storey wooden structure built by a handyman as minimum shelter for his family, can such a house be interesting to us today?

Interest in the social fabric of our city as it was is one of the surest guides to a wider view of what our city should become.

At this point, it's worth stressing that much of the motivation and interest for this kind of study of Bellevue arises because so much of it is still intact. These houses are lived in today, not just because people cannot afford newer ones, but because, in general, they find they like them. The story of these houses, and the social circumstances of those who built and lived in them, needs to be told.

From a practical point of view too, we need to know what is truly unique and worthwhile about our environment, the better to preserve it.

## CHAPTER 2 THE ECONOMICS OF BUILDING

### Building Materials

#### WOOD

The building material of choice was wood.

Canada was an exporter, to Britain and the U. S., of building lumber from about 1850. Good quality lumber was taken for granted in 19th-century Canada and was used with prodigal hands.

The early vernacular buildings were nearly always made of wood because that was the material available. The building method was to set up a wood frame and make the outside walls load-bearing.

Wood is not a difficult material to work with, and many features of house decoration — columns, verandahs, balustrades, interior and exterior cornices — which in Europe are usually stone or plaster, are often rendered in wood on this continent.

#### ROUGHCAST

Roughcast is the covering of walls with a rendering of sand and cement — and sometimes small pebbles as well — for better fire and weather protection. The basis may be either wood slats over frame or rubble-fill wall. Roughcast can be worked into ornamental patterns imitating stone such as ashlar. This can give a fine architectural presence to buildings.

Roughcast colours with age, and becomes friable if the lime content is too low. It was sometimes painted.

#### STONE

Stone as a building material calls for more skill in working than other materials. Stonemasons, many from Wales, came to Canada in great numbers to work on the railways and stayed to popularize the use of stone in house-building.

There is no source of good building stone in the

Toronto area. Fieldstone, used in early Ontario for rough-walling and basements, was not abundant. Quarried limestone, often from Kingston, was expensive.

*The stone for ashlar and other cut work used at Toronto is generally procured from Flamborough distance 49 miles, 45 by water conveyance, it is a good sandstone and easily wrought*

*“Memoranda upon the nature and values of materials from information in the Office of the Commanding Royal Engineers 1841”*

Later, large quarries were established at Kingston, Ottawa and St. Mary's as well as at Beamsville. There were other smaller quarries as well. A good deal of the stone used later in the 19th century was imported from the U. S., which had firms using more up-to-date equipment and could therefore cut the stone into narrower sections than could their counterparts in Ontario.

St. Stephen's Church foundations are on irregular flat stones. The quoins, architraves and lintels are of fine dressed Ontario limestone. House nos. 95, 91, 87 and 96 are built on stone basement walls, the other houses on the street have brick or cement-block basements.

#### BRICK

Brickmaking was a labour-intensive activity. There was an early brickmaker in Yorkville who produced yellow bricks. Clay for red bricks was found in Orangeville and in the Don Valley. Most brick companies were small enterprises until firing processes were updated in the last decade of the century. According to our 1841 military informant:

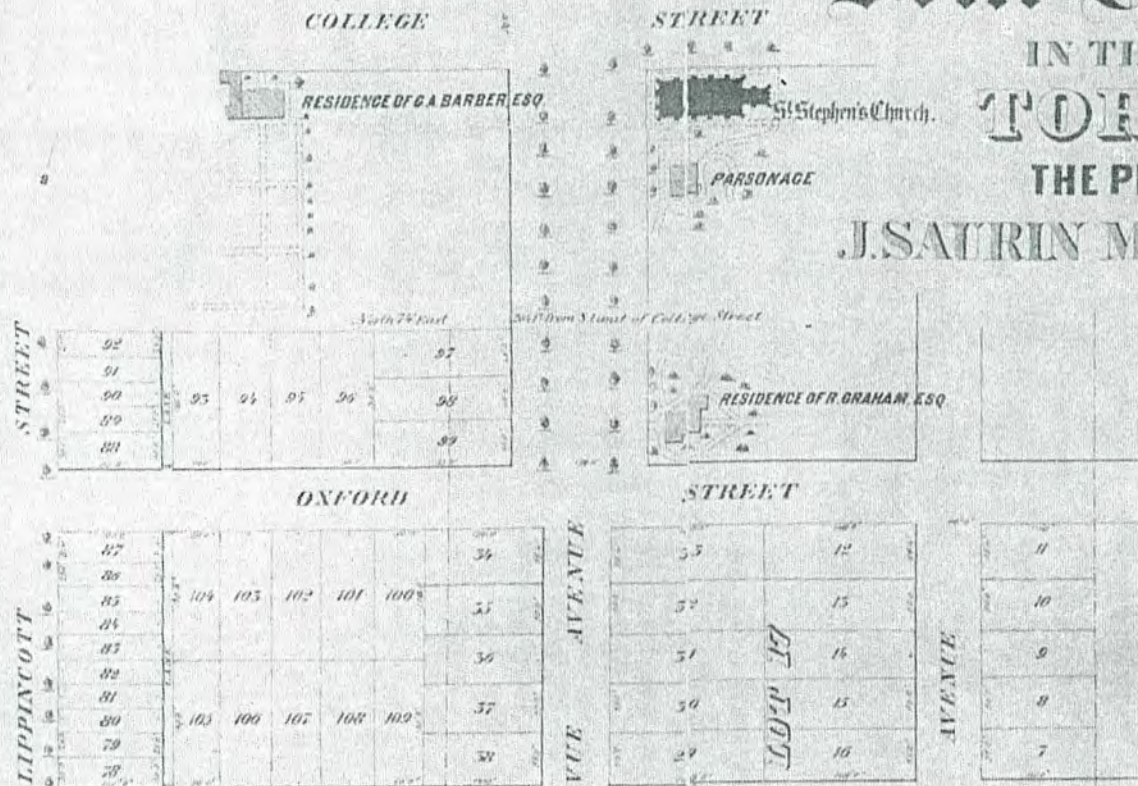
*The bricks made at Toronto are owing to the want of coal badly burnt. It is imagined from successful experiments made in the US that Anthracite coal could be used with great advantage in making bricks.*

There was a shortage of building bricks from time to



Plan of Building Lots on Part of the Belle Vue Estate in the City of Toronto, the Property of J. Saurin McMurray, Esq.  
 J.O. Browne, surveyor, January 1, 1869  
 (Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library)

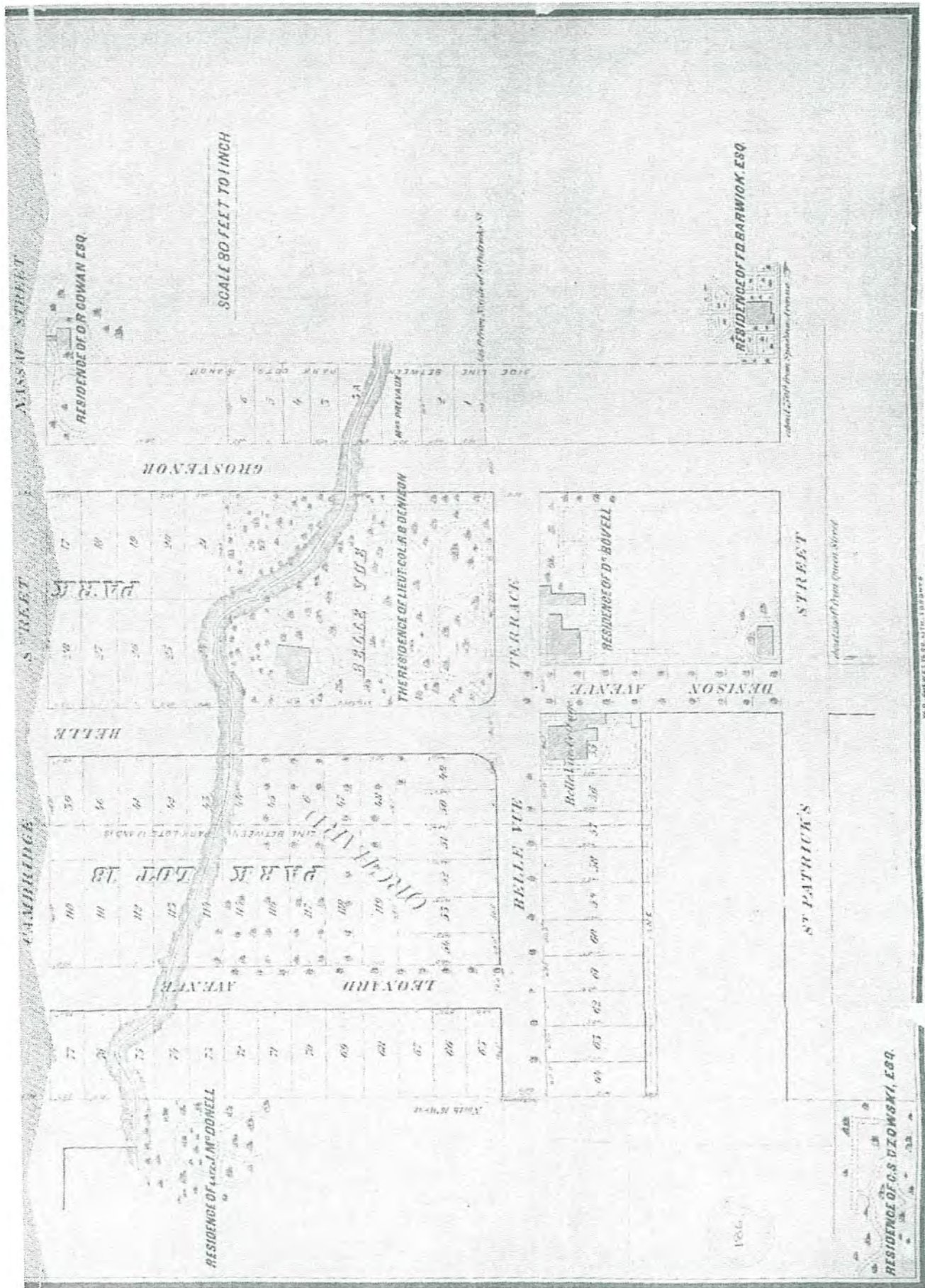
PLAN  
 OF  
 BUILDING LOTS  
 ON PART OF THE  
**Belle Vue Estate**  
 IN THE CITY OF  
**TORONTO,**  
 THE PROPERTY OF  
**J. SAURIN McMURRAY, ESQ.**



*J.O. Browne*  
*and Engineer R.L. [unclear]*  
 Surveyors  
 Jan 1, 1869

Bellevue Avenue





## Bellevue Avenue

BUILDING DENSITY	VACANT	1 H	2 H	3 H	4 H	5 H
1871	30	9				
1875	11	17	7	1		
1881	7	13	13	7		
1885	6	11	13	10		
1891	1	8	12	12	3	3

TABLE 1

Count of lots by number of houses built on the lot and date of observation

BLOCK	TOTAL	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX
# lots in block	39	6	5	12	4	5	7
1871	.31	.4	.2	.1	.5	.4	.1
1875	.87	.4	1.4	.8	.8	1.6	.9
1881	1.54	1.7	1.8	1.3	.8	2.0	1.0
1885	1.72	2.0	2.0	2.0	.8	2.0	1.7
1891	2.44	2.3	2.0	2.6	1.0	3.4	2.7

TABLE 2

Average number of houses per lot by block and by year

INTERVAL	TOTAL	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	SIX
1872-1875	.50		1.2	.7	.3	1.2	.7
1876-1881	.67	1.3	.4	.5		.4	.1
1881-1885	.18	.3	.2	.7			.7
1885-1889	.72	.3		.6	.2	1.4	1.0

TABLE 3

Rate of change of number of houses per lot by block and interval



time. *The Globe* complains of the shortage in 1867, also mentioning that a kiln load has just been sent to the U. S. at the exorbitant cost of \$12 per thousand. In 1868 *The Globe* complains that bricks cost \$2 to \$3 more per thousand in Toronto than in London or Brantford.

Overall, though, the cost of bricks did not change much from \$7.00 per thousand for common in 1867, for example, to \$8.00 per thousand in 1882. If a single-brick wall section of nine square feet requires about 50 bricks, a double-wall brick house, such as no. 68, would require about 38,000 bricks. Thus bricks made up about 11% of its cost when no. 68 was built.

St. Stephen's is red-brick, with red-brick interior walls and pillars. No. 68 is red-brick, no. 96 yellow-brick. From about 1880 brick dominated building. The mansions at nos. 87, 91 and 95 are all wonderful expositions on the potential of brick. Many houses on Bellevue now have brick-veneered fronts, applied over roughcast or wood structure.

Toronto is a city built largely of brick, and the subject of the manufacture and availability of brick is worthy of a thorough investigation.

### Building Labour

In good years, when capital was available to fuel the need for housing, building tradesmen were in great demand. Many immigrants became tradesmen on the boat journey because demand was so high that no proof of skills was sought.

The builders of the first period, up to about 1880, were working on a very small scale — only one or two houses per season. Some builders had little knowledge of architecture. Either they followed and repeated whatever was being done by those around or they used stock designs. The basic house plan did not vary much.

The second period, 1880 to 1890, saw people working on a larger scale. The building workers would have been overseen by a master craftsman, or clerk. The range of styles was still limited, but standards were getting better. No wood houses were put up on Bellevue in this period, a symptom of its urban rather than suburban character.

Carpenters earned about \$1.60 a day in 1866, and their wages rose gradually to about \$3.00 a day by 1907. Bricklayers earned \$2.00 a day in 1866, labourers

between 90 cents and \$1.00. There was no apprenticeship system; the workers were not organized. Employment was seasonal and, at best, intermittent. Movement between trades and between building and other industries was frequent.

### Land and Capital Costs

Land was readily available, and throughout the 19th century the city wanted to encourage the development of this land in order to increase its revenue. The sale of much of the land around Belle Vue mansion was forced by the declaration of R. B. Denison as an insolvent. The action of Fred Jarvis, sheriff of County York and City of Toronto, in calling his note was likely prompted by an 1868 Act of the Legislature requiring all property-tax exemptions to be listed in assessments, clearly distinguishing glebe from private property. Until this time, many acres of land around St. Stephen's had not been included in the assessment rolls.

The problems of financing building activity at this period in Boston is discussed in S. B. Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs*. Inferring that business conditions in Toronto were similar, the following scenario emerges.

Land was either sold at auction or by private solicitation of a land speculator such as James McMurray. The overwhelming difficulty inhibiting building activities was the scarcity of capital. The Bank of Upper Canada failed in 1866, undermining the confidence of financial markets for a long time. Banks were wary of long-term investments.

The capital for houses had to come from many small investors. A person may have put up money to build a house as a home for his family, as a rental investment or to make a profit by resale on completion. Up to one-third of the houses on Bellevue were built as rental investment. Although it is not possible to be definite about every house, the trend is there.

It was usual for a mortgage to be for a term of only one or two years, with annual or semiannual payments required to pay interest of 5% to 6% in the intervening period. The mortgagee was then liable for repayment of the entire capital sum. Most hoped to renew their mortgage for the same amount at the end of the term. A first mortgage could rarely be obtained for more than 50% of the value of the property, so second mortgages were common.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BUILDING OF BELLEVUE AVENUE

#### Data Sources

City assessment rolls were examined, from 1860. Some properties were not listed at all on early rolls because they were built on church lands. Also, since the data was collected by house-to-house inquiry, there are some errors in it as recorded. Assessment rolls for every year are available on microfilm at City Archives. In the

interests of economy of effort, I studied mostly the records for odd-numbered years.

Building-permit records are available from 1881. These proved a less rewarding source, as many building activities were not recorded. The records are much better after about 1900.

Each house on the street was photographed. This

proved a wonderful incentive to continue work with documents, often allowing for positive identification of surviving buildings.

**General Building Progress, Lot Development Density**

For the purpose of this analysis and using the block notation shown below, the land is seen as follows. Six lots on block ONE; five lots on block TWO; 12 lots on block THREE; four lots on block FOUR; five lots on block FIVE and seven lots on block SIX. The count of lots on block SIX does not include 100 feet of frontage at the south end. That was the westerly fence of Belle Vue mansion itself, and was not available for building development until 1891. Counted this way, there are 39 lots on the avenue. The analysis covers 1870 to 1891; by the end of that period most lots were at maximum density.

Table 1 shows the development of the lots by number of dwellings per lot, recorded at five-year intervals. Note the trend: from 1875 when 17 lots have one house each, to 1881 when the number of one- and two-house lots is about equal, to 1885 when more lots have two houses than any other number and three are not uncommon, to 1891 when the number of three-house lots equals the number of two-house lots.

Three houses on a 50-foot lot will each have a frontage of 16 feet 8 inches. To fit four or more houses on a lot, rear buildings must come into play, and access to the rear house must be arranged by a private path.

When the interests and activities of individuals have been a strong influence on the built architecture, there can be marked differences in the character of even short lengths of street. Accordingly, we divided the lots into blocks by intersection. The blocks are counted from north to south, west side first.

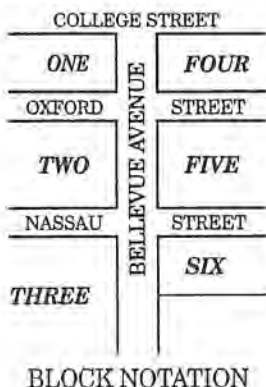


Table 2 shows, in the "total" column, the progress of housing density on the street. Block FOUR, the one with St. Stephen's on it, is always more sparsely built than the rest. Block FIVE clearly was ahead of the rest in density by 1891. The lot next to its south corner had a rapacious original owner: William Orr packed five dwellings as well as stalls for six cows and a horse onto a single lot. This congestion would also have contributed

to the deterioration of block FIVE's south corner lot, starting in about 1889.

Table 3 shows first-order changes (differences) calculated from Table 2. Although there was a lull in building activity from 1882 to 1885 (see "total" column), the pace of building was otherwise steadily increasing. Blocks TWO and FIVE were developed most intensively during the period 1872 to 1875. Block FIVE had a second burst of intense activity between 1886 and 1891.

**A Walk down Bellevue Avenue**

Let us take a walk down Bellevue. Start at College and go south along the west side.

The original firehall (no. 8) was built 1877-78. This is a replica, rebuilt after a 1973 fire.

A tree allowance on both sides of Bellevue between College and Oxford is shown on the original survey, and for many years the sidewalk was 20 feet from the curb.

The first four houses were built in 1878 by Robert Bowes. This is the earliest effort to build more than two houses at once on the street.

No. 114, a frame house, is one of the earliest houses on the street, built before 1870.

*... on Bellevue Avenue are two very elegant two storey houses built by Mr. James Moffitt. The combined value is \$4,000*

"The Globe" November 18, 1869

No. 112 was built in 1877 by Fred Bayliss, a bricklayer.

The houses at nos. 106, 108 and 110 were built by Archibald Grant. Grant lived in no. 110 for many years, and its rear extension is the other, older frame house mentioned in *The Globe* excerpt. When built, this trio probably all had wood verandah railings and posts, as may still be seen on the ground floor of no. 106. The five-pointed star and crescent moon in fretwork on the bargeboards is a "Moorish fantasy."

Nos. 102 and 104 were built of lovely orange brick in 1885; nos. 98 and 100 were built by the same builder in 1880. No. 100's master bedroom shows a double window, then very stylish.

No. 96, on a corner lot, is an architect-designed house. It was built in 1876 for Maxfield Sheppard, a book-keeper and agent who moved to Toronto from Montreal in 1873. Sheppard lived here the rest of his life.

Walk onto Oxford Street to see how the architect managed the corner problem. The adjacent apartment block on Oxford was built in 1903, destroying the balance of the house on its lot. Maxwell's daughter also divided the house internally into three apartments, and added the verandah and front pillars in 1914. Despite these and other solecisms, the old house still has class.

Cross Oxford Street.

The corner house is a replacement built in the '30s. Originally there was a frame-and-roughcast house here,

built in 1870 and with an address on Bellevue. Until 1909 the lot included land now built over by nos. 90 and 92.

Nos. 84, 86 and 88 were built by Thomas Martell, a carpenter and builder. He bought the lot in 1873 and lived with his family of 14 in a one-storey wood house built at the back of the lot. In 1874 he built two more houses, one 23x26 and the other 25x26 renting them both out for the next six years. In 1882 he modified them into the three houses extant to this day, each 16x26. It is possible that lumber from Martell's first one-storey house is incorporated into this row of three.

*Bellevue Avenue - Thomas Martell, three dwellings*  
\$2,400

"The Globe" October 6, 1882

Look at the graceful lines of the asymmetric pair at nos. 80 and 82. They were built by Archibald Grant in 1880 and the architect was Robert Grant. The completion of this pair is not mentioned in *The Globe* of November 27, 1880, although other work by Archibald Grant on Cameron Street is mentioned. The verandahs on both houses are later modifications.

Nos. 76 and 78 were built in 1875 by Thomas Hopkins and sold separately upon completion.

Nos. 70 and 72 were both started in 1873. Their owners were two brothers, James and Alexander Mitchell, both in the building trade. Their business specialized in shops. James lived in no. 70, and his wife ran the grocery shop. No. 72 was not completed until 1878.

Cross Nassau Street.

The corner house, no. 68, was built in 1870. The architect was James Grand. It is a pretty house, designed for the lot; a happy example of cottage Gothick.

*A Handsome two storey brick cottage on the corner of Cambridge Street and Bellevue Avenue. Value \$2,200*  
J.S. McMurray, proprietor

"The Globe" November 3, 1870

Nos. 62 to 66 were built in 1905. Prior to that the lot had belonged to the owner of no. 68.

Nos. 58 and 60 were built seven years apart on the same lot. Its owner was Egbert Lucas, a young carpenter and builder in a small way. He built no. 58 in 1872, and it is described as a one-storey wood house. He lived there until 1877, when he rented it to another carpenter, Joseph Timson. Together they built no. 60 in 1879, and new owners were found by 1882.

Thomas Crouch and John Harvey Jr. built no. 56 in 1886, and nos. 52 and 54 the following year.

Nos. 48 and 50 were developed from a wooden one-storey carpenter's cabin of 1872. Its owner, Charles Wright, lived in it as he altered it to two, two-storey structures in 1880. The houses were still owned by Wright's sons in 1935, although they no longer lived there. The original no. 46 was built by Wright in 1878.

Nos. 34, 36, 38 and 34A behind, are all on the same lot and tell us about Thomas White. White was a case-

maker who lived with his family of six in no. 34A at the rear of the lot from 1873. In 1876 he built nos. 36 and 38 and rented them out. Then in 1887 he was able to build no. 34 and, better still, to live in it. He died about 1891, but his widow was able to continue to live in the comparatively spacious no. 34 and rent out the other properties.

Nos. 30 and 32 are another pair — built in 1875 and 1887 respectively — by Peter Wright, a pattern-maker. He lived in the new house, but had sold both by 1891. The old buildings are still there behind the nice new facades. Note their unusual positioning on the lot.

Nos. 20, 22, 24 and 26, built in 1889, are good quality houses by Withrow and Hillock, built in 1889. They have lots of detailed joinery work, as well as bold bay windows that rise right up to the roof. Although rough-cast, not brick throughout, they are attractive houses — despite a story of scurrilous building practices surrounding the three rear houses on the lots and involving Crouch and Harvey. No. 16 was built by Crouch and Harvey in 1885.

The rest of this side is occupied by three pairs and a single house, all in common style and plain finish and all built in 1883. There was a slump in the housing market at the time, and it took the builder, Francis Phillips, at least four years to sell even one. These houses have less decorative finish than the ones Phillips built at the north end of the street. Some have also been modified with a complete disregard for style. These houses spring from cynical assumptions about house buyers, or more cautiously expressed, an unrelieved utilitarian concept of housing needs.

Start at College Street again and proceed down the east side.

St. Stephen's was a gift of R.B. Denison. The gift was land, building and living for the parson, the old benefactor-and-advowson idea. The church burnt down in 1865 and was replaced with an identical structure by Denison. The style is ecclesiastical Gothic.

The apartment block next to the church is on the site of the original rectory. The rectory was roughcast, also Gothic.

The next house, now a municipal day-care nursery, was a mansion built in 1888 by fashionable physician Dr. Machell for his own use. The architect was D.B. Dick. Before 1886 St. Stephen's had a schoolhouse here; it was towed to the other side of the rectory so the land could be sold.

No. 91, St. Stephen's Community House, is built on what until 1889 was the garden of the corner house. In 1889 Joseph Gibson bought the land and built the substantial house that you see today. The architect was W. Gregg. The house was let to Reverend Alexander Gilray, the pastor of College Street Presbyterian Church.

The corner lot originally supported a large rough-cast house designed and built in about 1860 by architect



[Build]ing Lots for Sale. Belle Vue Estate. The Coloured Lots Are for Sale. Easy Terms of Payment.  
 1870 modified version of the original Browne Survey. Compare with original on p. 5.  
 (Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library)

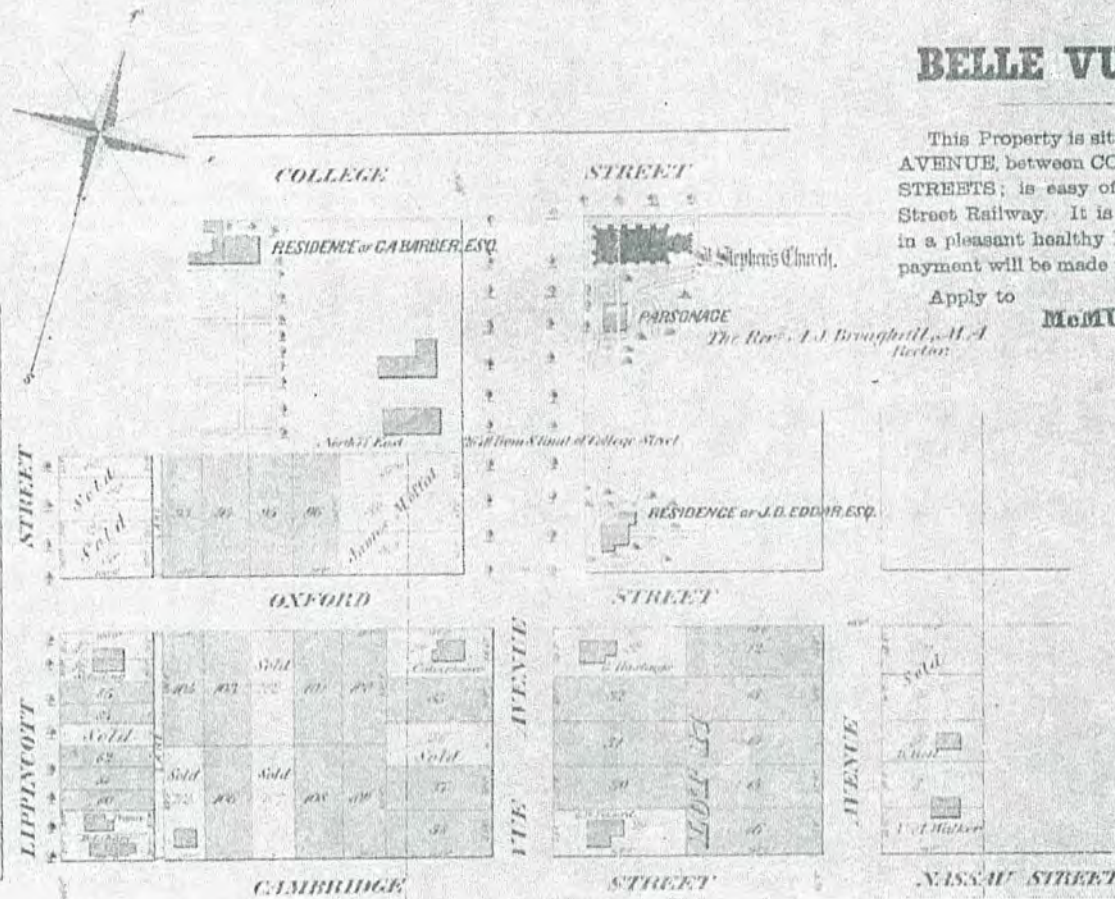
# ING LOTS FOR SALE.

## BELLE VUE ESTATE.

This Property is situated West of SPADINA AVENUE, between COLLEGE & ST PATRICK STREETS; is easy of access, and close to the Street Railway. It is high, easily drained, and in a pleasant healthy locality. Liberal terms of payment will be made to suit purchasers.

Apply to

**McMURRAY & RAE,**  
 Solicitors, &c., York Chambers,  
**TORONTO.**









Thomas Fuller. In 1890 the house and lot were bought by J. Algernon Temple, another physician, who then altered the old house for use as his home and private hospital. In 1905 the house and hospital were bought by the Sisters of St. John the Divine, who added a two-storey extension that faces onto Oxford Street. The architects were Symons & Rae.

#### Cross Oxford Street.

In 1871 there were only two houses on the block from Oxford to Nassau: a brick house on the north corner, and a frame house of one and one-half storeys on the other corner. Both were centred on their lots. The brick house was demolished in 1906 to make way for today's three-storey industrial building, originally a Bell Telephone Co. exchange that has since been used for various light industries. It goes almost up to the lot lines. Being on the north end of the block, it shouldn't deprive its neighbours of sunlight. Still, one can't help feeling that this large and solid pile must make an aggressive neighbour. Every house on this block is a recent replacement.

Nos. 81, 79 and 77 are all on lot 32. In 1873 the lot ownership was divided equally between two men. The one who owned the southerly half covered his whole 25 feet of frontage with house, and by 1875 had set another behind as well. As the owner of the other half of the lot built only a modest house, there was probably room for argument between the two men.

It is interesting that today's houses on lot 30 — nos. 71 and 69, and no. 67 (which is really a block of four apartments, six dwelling units in total) — replicate the overbuilding that occurred on this lot in the 1880s. The lot was bought in 1875 by William and Margaret Orr who set up a dairy business. At one point they had nine cows, a dog and nine family members living on this lot. In 1880 the Orrs decided to build two more houses on the "unused" part of their lot. They did it again in 1889, for a total of five dwellings, plus sheds for the cows. So it was that this section was overbuilt by the 1890s.

The houses at nos. 65 and 63 are recent replacements for the frame house built for Girdleston Izzard in 1870. The row of shops, with no attached living quarters, were built during the 1930s.

#### Cross Nassau Street.

The corner restaurant and the houses at nos. 59 and 57 are easily recognized as the work of one builder because of the loving joinery round the windows and the mansard roof. Alexander Clark owned and ran carpentry workshops on this lot until 1882. Once the buildings were completed, he lived in the part facing Nassau and his son ran the corner shop as a grocery.

Nos. 55, 53 and 51 feature the same plain style and common design found on the other side of the street. These houses were built in 1889 by Helen Martin, a widow who had pioneered the lot with her husband. The wooden house they first built and lived in from 1873, remained at the back of the lot for many years.

Nos. 49 and 47 share lot 26 and a surprising amount of style. The first houses on the lot were two one-storey wood houses built in 1873. One was owned by a hatter, the other by an upholsterer. Then in 1878 Paul Shakespeare, a grocer with a shop on Seaton Street, bought both, extending them forward with two-storey structures. There is room between for a horse and carriage to pass.

No. 45, built in 1884, is a shop with a beautiful stylish front. The owner, Abraham Charlton, was a fireman and his wife ran a dry-goods shop here, selling dress materials and findings. This is another house with fine joinery. The design expresses joy and charm.

There were six other houses on what is now a parking lot. Only no. 27 remains of the row built in 1889.

Belle Vue mansion originally stood on the corner. This was R.B. Denison's house and the street's namesake. Belle Vue was a roughcast house in classical style, built in 1815. It was oriented due north and south, thus at an angle to the street axis. R.B. sold it to Edith Denison in 1890, and the last tenant was a retired mortician, Mungo Turnbull. But the house was incompatible with contemporary property-value and development trends, and Edith Denison had it demolished by 1892. It stood on land now occupied by nos. 22, 24 and 26 Denison Square.

No. 25 is a synagogue that dates from 1923. It replaces two houses built in 1890. The synagogue was built for The First Russian Congregation of Rodfesoium Ansekv, the Orthodox congregation that still owns it. It is being restored by the Ontario Jewish Archives Committee.

### Owners and Builders Who Formed the Streetscape

#### James S. McMurray

In 1870 James S. McMurray was a Toronto barrister, senior partner in the firm of McMurray, Smith and Rae. McMurray was also a land and real estate speculator. He had bought a large tract of land from the Bellevue estate sale in 1868, and had it surveyed into house lots and street lines. He tried to encourage the development of Bellevue Avenue in the suburban ideal. This ideal had the following characteristics:

- A street of good houses, each enjoying a 50-foot lot.
- Home owners who work elsewhere, probably in the city.
- One family per house.

For those who did not keep a carriage, a streetcar line ran along Queen Street. Alternatively, it was possible to walk the two miles to Front and Yonge Streets.

Following the suburban ideal, McMurray first encouraged well-to-do buyers to choose corner lots, hoping that other builders would follow the pattern thus established. He personally invested in the design and building of no. 68, and the renovation of Fuller's roughcast



house no. 87, using the best materials and finest architectural design. Then he divested himself of the rest of his holdings.

Why did McMurray not have the whole street designed and built the way he wanted? In those early days neither materials, credit arrangements nor real estate salespeople were available. There was some moral censure in the words "speculative building" (construction of the dwelling before a buyer is identified) as late as 1882 in *The Globe*. In the 1850s, and again in the early 1870s, speculative building had left many houses standing empty and investors without their money. This memory made people cautious.

**First Owners, to 1875**

We know from Table 1 that by 1875 there were 17 single-family dwellings built on single lots. A reactionary optimist, perhaps James McMurray, might have looked on the development as an expression of suburbia. Why was it not?

First, social class in pre-industrial society was very important. Society was headed by merchants and the administrative elite. Below this level were skilled tradesmen of various kinds. At the bottom were the labouring poor. There was a definite economic distinction between levels. The labouring classes rarely owned land or buildings and could not afford education for their children. An accumulation of capital in the hands of even the skilled tradesmen was not to be assumed.

Early assessment rolls give the occupations of all freeholders and tenants listed, and we can sketch a class profile from this data. I assumed that labouring classes were not represented in the owners up to 1881, and that the interests of those in the building trades would be different from those in other occupations. The occupation groupings are: *building trades* — including carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers and builders; *other tradesmen* — moulders, pattern-makers, dairymen, firemen, etc.; *genteel* — gentlemen, widows, doctors, merchants, manufacturers, barristers and anything clerical or related to book-keeping; and *unknown* — which means I had no source of information and the owner neither lived on the street nor figured in the Toronto directory of the time.

OWNER GROUPS	1875	1880
Building Trade	25%	34%
Other Tradesmen	31%	25%
Genteel	34%	38%
Unknown	10%	3%
# owners in sample	26	33
# houses built	32	51
# rented houses	11	28

TABLE 4A

Although the genteel owned houses on the street, they

were outnumbered from the start by skilled tradesmen. It is interesting that the number of rented houses in 1875 was one-third of the total, a proportion that did not decrease.

Second, look at the value of the houses built. Assume that the ratable value is close to the sale value of the property at the time, and omit incomplete houses. We have the following data:

	PRE-1872	1872-1876
Total houses built	11	25
Average ratable value per house built in interval	\$1376	\$583

TABLE 4B

There is one exception in each time interval: one house worth \$450 was built in 1871 (Peter Wright's mistake) and one house worth \$1,600 built in 1875 (Maxfield Sheppard's no. 96). If these are omitted, the contrast between the two groups is even more marked.

It is clear from this data that some early inhabitants of Bellevue Avenue must have expected to enjoy, and did enjoy, a more spacious way of life than others. This is evidence of a conflict between the genteel, who were comfortable with their lot in life and expressed it in their houses, and the skilled tradesmen, who did not have social aspirations of the same kind.

The general question of how long owners held their property, can also be answered from assessment rolls. Compare the tenure of owners who bought in before the character of the street was clear — before 1876 — with those who bought during the following five years.

LENGTH OF OWNERSHIP:	LESS THAN 5 YRS	LESS THAN 10 YRS	10 YRS OR MORE
Bought 1875 or earlier	24%	18%	58%
Bought 1876 to 1880 inclusive	16%	42%	42%

TABLE 5

From Table 5 we can see that most of those who bought houses in the early years were not speculators. They intended to live out their lives there. They were not at all the men of means required to bring about the suburban ideal. They were, by and large, skilled tradesmen with another ideal: to bring about an improvement in their lives. They were preparing well for the industrialization to come.

Charles Wright, Thomas White, Maxfield Sheppard, Egbert Lucas, Abraham Charlton and others have left properties that are individual, exuberant in some cases, and expressive of their owners' lives and circumstances. The properties are *tableaux-vivants* of our city's history.

### Builders, 1878 to 1891

Paul Shakespeare did the street a favour in 1878 when he bought and remodelled the two houses on lot 26, nos. 49 and 47. Shakespeare was a grocer and dry-goods merchant whose store was at the corner of Borden and Harbord streets.

In 1878 Robert Bowes became the first person to get the resources together to develop several lots at one time, using the same builder for nos. 122, 120, 118 and 116. Bowes was a barrister and lived at 18 Dufferin Avenue in Yorkville. We do not know which builder he used, but money must have been tight because they are of a common design.

Francis Phillips, a Newfoundland builder with good financial backing, built more houses than any other single person. He built nos. 98 and 100 in 1880, and lived in no. 100 for a few years. In 1883 he built nos. 2 to 14 inclusive — common plan, plain style. He built nos. 102 and 104 in 1885. Nos. 55, 53 and 51 were built in 1891 for widow Helen Martin, and might also be Phillips's work. Phillips built many other houses on neighbouring streets.

In 1880 Archibald Grant, a Scot, built nos. 80 and 82, then among the few brick houses on the street. He also built the row encompassing nos. 106, 108 and 110 in 1887. There is an older house incorporated in the back extension of nos. 108 and 110. Archibald Grant lived at no. 110 until his death.

Thomas Crouch and John Harvey Jr., a pair of young Methodists from England, made an impression on the street in 1883. That was the year they moved their carpenter shops onto the street, behind no. 16. Harvey temporarily installed his father on the lot in an old house soon to be demolished. Crouch was courting Harvey's sister Elizabeth. Crouch and Harvey built nos. 16, 52, 54, 56 and perhaps also no. 30. They had started building nos. 20, 22, 24 and 26 and several others across the street when their business went bust in 1888. They had been hard-pressed for capital all along, their buildings taken over by creditors as soon as complete. None of the houses they built was connected to the sewer line.

Also, judging by their completed houses, they worked from one set of common plans.

The firm of Withrow and Hillock, which completed nos. 20, 22, 24 and 26, was noted for its fine carpentry work. It had workshops and a planing mill at 125-135 Queen Street. John Withrow and John Hillock were also proprietors of the Canadian Homestead Loan and Savings Association.

With the exception of Withrow and Hillock, and Archibald Grant, these builders were not constructing houses of architectural quality. One might almost think there was an agreement between them about what was suitable for the location: common plan, plain design — housing for the masses.

How can we summarize the development of the streetscape? The owners were packing in more and more houses up to 1891. What stands out is that many owners were not people of means. They sought income from their land investment — their ideal was two houses, one to live in and one to rent out.

Did any of those who first lived on the street dislike the way things developed? Samuel Owen built a house in the middle of lot 49, and lived there for only four years. It was probably a house in the suburban ideal, certainly a two-storey house with a slate roof. The house was either not well-built or, more likely, was not big enough to subdivide and thus could not be made to fit the neighbourhood. It was pulled down in 1888. Peter Wright's first house was small and in the middle of the lot, thus obstructing the development of more houses on the same lot. In Peter's case, he sold his mistake and bought the lot next door in 1875. On the new lot, he had a house built on one side. Here is a fairly clear case of change of ideal. Peter's mistake was also demolished in 1888. Peter's second and third houses are still standing: nos. 30 and 32.

Those who had had more expensive houses built faced a declining market value for their property. These houses were vulnerable each time the ownership changed.

## CHAPTER 4

### MUNICIPAL INTERESTS

#### Data Sources

The city engineer's annual reports from 1882 to 1911 are available in the City Archives. Plumbing records detailing all plumbing and drainage work inspected by the city since 1889 are in Central Records at City Hall.

*Canadian Architect and Builder*, published monthly from 1888 to 1906, and *Canadian Contract Record*, a companion periodical published weekly from 1889, were the trade magazines of the time for architects and builders. Both chronicled the development of ideas and common practice in all aspects of house-building.

#### Water Supply, Drains and Sewers

When James McMurray bought the land in 1868, he had it surveyed into house lots and made the first rough grade of the street. The City of Toronto laid water lines and, eventually, sewers, curbs and street lights.

Following recommendations in Thomas Keefer's 1857 "Report on a Water Supply for the City of Toronto," Lake Ontario was chosen as the source of drinking water for the city. The water was drawn from an inlet on the south side of Centre Island. The alternative, building dams and reservoirs on the Humber, was discarded because of

industries already established on the river. Sewage was treated by a sedimentation process and flushed out to the lake. There were two main outlets, one each at the mouths of the Don and Humber rivers.

There are no records of when water lines were laid on Bellevue; I assume it was soon after the street was graded. The water quality was not good and there were deaths from typhoid. Sewer lines were laid under a local-improvement scheme, which had the city borrow the money by floating an issue of 21-year bonds. A three-by-two-foot brick sewer was laid along Bellevue Avenue in 1878 at a cost of \$3,760.96. That same year 42% of house owners on the street paid the initial fee to have their private drains connected to the sewer and the connections inspected by the city. Some, such as the parsonage and the owners of nos. 68 and 114, paid only \$2.00. Others had to pay more, such as the owner of nos. 63 and 65, then an undivided house, who paid \$27.33.

Throughout the 19th century, householders connected to a sewer continued to pay for the privilege by an annual fee schedule. Sewage connection was therefore not seen as a necessity but as an optional extra. The city engineer's report for 1885 refers to this point obliquely:

*The question of constructing private street drains from sewer to street line, when the sewers are being constructed, and the cost made payable concurrently with the payment of the sewer, was brought before the council by one of its members. Many of our citizens are debarred from drainage for the want of cash to pay, as at present required for house drains.*

In July 1891 *Canadian Architect and Builder* published an abstract of a paper prepared for the Association of Health Officers of Ontario by Willis Chipman, C. E. According to Chipman, an outdoor "Slop Sink," outdoor tap and outdoor "Dry Earth or Ash Closet" are all that need be provided for those paying \$5.00 or less a month in rent. He recommends sharing these facilities among several houses as a way of decreasing costs. Chipman's further recommendations that water-flush closets should be reserved for those willing to pay \$12.00 or more a month in rent, and that "the addition of baths, wash-bowls, laundry tubs, etc., are conveniences not necessities" strike an odd note to modern sensibilities. But architectural practice of the time allowed that even in very large new houses, there would be no provision of either bathroom or W/C for use by the servants: one W/C and one bathroom were thought to be sufficient for seven or eight bedrooms until after the First World War.

This lack of interest in bathrooms by architects has at least two causes: architects of the time had little confidence in plumbers and there was no demand from customers. The need for a vent to let off gases from the sewer lines was only gradually realized, and the standards for sizing pipes and making lasting, watertight joints had to be developed from experience.

The problem with the dry-earth closet — and with the privy pit — was that suitable, able-bodied men did

not come forward to take on the job of emptying them regularly. Chipman's 1891 article earnestly explains the details of what is required, and how "one man with a one horse cart" can easily gross \$3.60 a day on such work.

City council — ideally more in tune with both popular opinion and health requirements — was responsible for passing legislation that set adequate housing standards. It is interesting to read comments in 1891 from the city engineer:

*Plumbing inspections increased in number due to growing desire on part of property owners to have plumbing work inspected. . . It is a source of satisfaction to report an increased willingness, amounting almost to uniformity, on the part of the plumbers and owners of property to comply fully with the provisions of the Bylaw, and to meet the wishes of the inspectors in their endeavour to improve the general character of plumbing work in the city.*

Plumbing-inspection records for Bellevue Avenue show that in the decade 1890 to 1900, 30% of the houses had work inspected, and a further 20% in the decade to 1910. No. 10 had a builder's shop at the back (opening presumably onto the rear laneway), fully serviced with plumbing in 1907. The example of no. 63 is instructive. It shows an old indoor sink connection; outside toilets, but with a new drain connection in 1903; a full bathroom was installed in 1925.

Rear structures were the most likely to be poorly serviced. Some did not even have an indoor tap when built, but relied on fetching water from a tap on the street. However, standards improved gradually. Nos. 48 and 50 were the last to be connected to the city sewer, in 1930.

### Paving the Road and Sidewalks

Most streets were unimproved until 1881. There was a short section of macadam to be sure, but grading was the routine job. In wet weather all roads developed ruts; in dry weather dust was a problem.

Then in 1881 the city began to pave roads under the local-improvements scheme. Cedar-block roads were laid in the core streets. In 1882 City Engineer Redmond J. Brough devoted much of his annual report to a discussion of road surfaces.

Brough describes the characteristics of each type of surface. He cogently argues that woodblock paving laid on a board foundation rots: "the streets in fact, might as well be covered a foot deep with rotting barnyard manure." Surprisingly, Brough dismisses macadam as unsuitable to the heavy traffic of large cities. He goes on to discuss the experience of New York, Washington, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago and Paris. He quotes a Chicago correspondent who says the "cheap and short-lived wooden pavement of the city are a species of shoddy that should not be encouraged." Brough recommends granite blocks cemented with coal tar. He also likes asphalt laid on a basis of crushed stones, but recognizes that it is slippery, particularly when wet, for horses.



	Cedar Block	Stone, Blocks Scoria	Asphalt, Bituline	Macadam	Brick	Gravel	Unpaved	Total
1881	3.5			50.9			62.4	116.9
1891	117.3	.6	6.7	36.4			89.4	250.4
1901	78.3	3.6	34.9	48.4	11.5	5.5	77.2	259.6
1912	8.8	2.2	194.8	42.8	29.1	20.6	198.5	508.6

TABLE 6

Different classes of roadways and their mileage in the City of Toronto

The report is magnificent. If only Brough could have brought himself to study examples of British roadwork — but no. The report was ignored. Cedar-block paving of all city roads went ahead. From this time, however, the city works department kept records of the state of road wear and conducted laboratory tests on materials used, in a search for the best performing materials under local conditions.

Bellevue Avenue was paved with cedar blocks on wood board and given wood curbs in 1882, and the work was guaranteed for 10 years. Householders were assessed accordingly. A sidewalk of wooden slats was laid the following year. By 1892, when the repayment period was complete, it was obvious that the cedar-block pavement had been completely worn out for several years. The City Engineer E. H. Keating recommended replacement with a light asphalt or brick surface. The core district was already asphalt at that time. Keating preferred bricks. The supply of bricks, however, was still limited and expensive.

The local brick industry was coming into production, and bricks rapidly becoming more available. The city was reporting regularly on the strengths of various bricks under experimental conditions, with particular attention to the properties of U. S. versus locally made bricks. In 1897, however, a pusillanimous Keating wrote this about cedar-block pavements:

*Under our present system the time for payment extends only over five years, and considering their cheapness, quietness and freedom from dust, I do not think that the residents on streets where there are cedar block pavements existing, can do better than have the streets relaid with new blocks, if the amount of travel is moderate and the property not valuable enough to permit of the tax for a pavement on a concrete foundation.*

In 1897 Bellevue Avenue was repaved with brick laid on a concrete foundation and given a stone curb. A concrete sidewalk was laid on the east side in 1902 and was extended the whole length and both sides of the street in 1904.

### Overcrowding

An analysis of the number of people living on the street was made from assessment-roll data. In the counts

of houses and occupants, omit no. 95 from 1915 on, when it was a Salvation Army refuge house and no. 87 from 1890 on, when it became a private hospital.

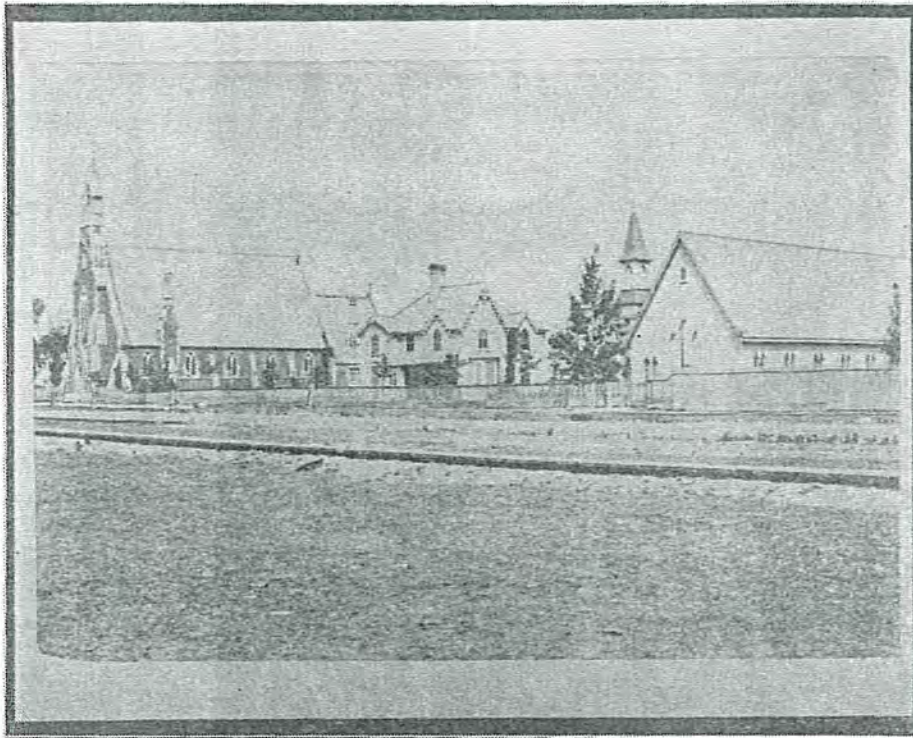
The average house size on Bellevue is 1,200 square feet. This house would have no more than three bedrooms, two of them rather small. When there are 10 or more people living in such a house, common areas would have to be used for sleeping accommodation; privacy would be rare.

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1935
No. people	427	434	547	623	650
Average people/house	4.6	4.5	5.4	6.3	6.6
Number of houses with more than 10 inhabitants	1	1	4	9	14

TABLE 7

The data shows increased crowding on the street after 1910. This would have been caused by the growing number of job opportunities in the area and the numbers of European refugees who came here to live with families or friends. The overcrowding put increasing pressures on city services and neighbourhood amenities, although of course there was no law against it.

Also to be inferred from the increasing street population is the ongoing enlargement of some houses and the partition of others into two separate apartments. In fact, some houses have been partitioned, rejoined and partitioned again several times. A constant feature is the lack of individually owned apartments; ownership has always been of the complete house. In 1880, due to the way the properties were developed, 36% of owners owned two or more houses on the street. By 1920, changing ownership meant that the proportion had slipped to 12%. Today only 4% (i. e. three) owners own two houses on the street; none own more. On the other hand, assessment rolls now list only 35 partitioned houses — down from 53 in 1980. In the same interval, the two new apartment blocks have added 20 rental units to the stock, making a 1992 total of 137 dwelling units on Bellevue Avenue.



Installation of 3x2' sewers  
St. Stephen's Church, roughcast, rectory and parish hall, c. 1878  
(Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library 974-2)



Cedar block curb and roadway in state of disrepair  
St. Stephen's Church, parish hall relocated and rectory, now both brick veneered, c. 1887  
(Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library T30132)



Bellevue Avenue



95 Bellevue Avenue; Built 1889 for Dr. Machell; Architect: D.B. Dick



91 Bellevue Avenue; Built 1889 for Rev. Alexander Gilray; Architect: W.R. Gregg



96 Bellevue Avenue; Built 1876 for Maxfield Sheppard; Architect: unknown



## CHAPTER 5

## ARCHITECTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Buildings on Bellevue Avenue have been classified under the following categories:

- Ecclesiastical, municipal and industrial
- Architect-designed houses
- Vernacular houses, good design
- Vernacular houses, individual building method
- Vernacular houses, common type

A selection of plans and illustrations follows the listings.

**ECCLESIASTICAL, MUNICIPAL AND INDUSTRIAL****St. Stephen's Church, 101 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1856. Architect: Thomas Fuller. Brick and stone construction.

After a fire in 1865 that left the walls standing, rebuilt exactly as it had been. Architect: Gundry & Langley.

Addition in 1878. Architect: R.C. Windeyer.

Addition in 1902, building permit no. 792. Architect: Eden Smith & Sons.

**First Russian Congregation, synagogue, 25 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1922-23, building permit no. 43151, file 53498. Architect: B. Swartz.

**No. 8 Hose Station, 132 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1877-78. Architect: Stewart & Strickland. Red and yellow brick, clock tower for drying hoses.

Additions in 1889 and 1890.

After a fire in 1973, rebuilt as it had been.

**Industrial building, 83 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1906, building permit no. 4537, as a Bell Telephone Exchange. Three storeys, brick-and-stone construction, estimated cost \$36,000. Architect: W. Carmichael, Montreal.

**ARCHITECT-DESIGNED HOUSES****95 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1889 for Henry Machell, physician, as his consulting rooms and home. Brick construction, three storeys. Ratable value in 1889 \$6,000. Architect: D.B. Dick.

Alteration in 1909, building permit no. 14589. Estimated cost \$2,000. Architect: Eden Smith & Sons.

Alteration in 1913, building permit no. 2235. Conversion to three apartments. Estimated cost \$3,500. Architect: C.P. Bund.

**91 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1889 for Joseph Gibson, as the presbytery for Reverend Alexander Gilray of College Street Presbyterian Church. Brick construction, two storeys. Ratable value in 1889 \$4,000. Architect: W.R. Gregg.

Alteration in 1923. Architect: Molesworth, Savage & Secord.

**87 Bellevue Avenue**

Built circa 1860 as private residence for Thomas Fuller. Roughcast construction, two-storey building. This building was completely enclosed by later alterations, although its proportions influenced the work that was done later.

Addition in 1890, building permit no. 233, a two-storey brick addition in front of the old building, i.e. on Bellevue Avenue side. Owner Dr. Temple used building as private hospital. Estimated renovation cost \$6,000. Architect: unknown.

In 1906 building permit no. 4426, for a two-storey brick addition. Estimated renovation cost \$8,000. Owners were the Sisters of St. John the Divine, who used the building as a residence. Architects: Symons & Rae.

Addition about 1923, to link buildings. Fuller building enclosed in brick facing.

Alteration in 1992-93 to 26 affordable apartments, owners Homes First Society. Architect: Stephen Langmead.

**96 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1876 for Maxfield Sheppard. three-storey yellow-brick. Value claimed in *Globe*, April 21, 1866 \$3,000. Architect: unknown, possibly from Montreal.

Alteration in 1913, building permit no. 33920, converted to three apartments.

**80 & 82 Bellevue Avenue**

Built in 1879-80 by Archibald Grant. An asymmetric pair, designed with mutual drive to north side. Fine interior plasterwork, particularly in entrance hall, probably by William A. Grant. Architect: Robert Grant, former partner in architectural firm of Grant & Dick.

Addition 1910, building permit no. 20803, of a one-storey verandah to house no. 82. Estimated cost \$100.

Addition 1911, building permit no. 28514, to verandah of house no. 80. Estimated cost \$35.

Part of the interest of this house lies in the story of the Grant family. The main characters are Robert, Archibald, John and William A. Grant, and the short-lived firm of Grant Bros.

Robert Grant was born in Scotland in 1840. He appears in the Toronto city directory for the first time in

1870, as a builder in partnership with Lionel Yorke, engineer. Robert Grant lived on John Street with his father John Grant and wife Agnes (see 1871 census, Toronto, St.Patrick, 289/305 p.85). By 1873 the Yorke and Grant firm is no more and Robert Grant is listed as an architect in Cherrier's Toronto city directory. The Grant & Dick partnership with architect David Dick lasted 1874-76, and thereafter Robert Grant set up as an independent architect, though he had no known qualifications (see Toronto city directory for 1878). All later entries show him as a contractor.

Archibald Grant was born in Scotland in 1846. He joined the congregation of Bay Street Presbyterian Church, in April 1872 and was married there in 1873. No other Grant in the congregation at that time. (see Archives of Ontario, Jennings papers). Unfortunately the marriage register has not survived. Archibald Grant was a carpenter.

John N. Grant was born in England in 1848 of Scots parents. He emigrated in 1872 with his wife and first child (see 1881 census, Toronto, St.Patrick, Section 3 pp.194/198). He was also a carpenter.

William A. Grant was born in England in 1847 of English parents. He emigrated in 1871 with his wife and child, and was a member of the Plymouth Brethren (see 1881 census, St.Patrick, section 3, pp. 522/529). He was a bricklayer.

Grant Bros., building contractors, was in existence only from 1875 to about 1876. The principals were William A. Grant, J.N. Grant and J.R. Grant. Archibald is not named but was involved. This firm gave the three younger men their opportunity and they each styled themselves "builder" from then on. Unfortunately, a mechanics' lien was brought against the firm in May 1876 by a disgruntled workman. The building sites named are lot 8 plan D160 and lot 57 plan D55 (see Archives of Ontario, reference code RG22, unprocessed papers, mechanics' liens) The first lot is on Adelaide Street West, where Archibald Grant lived from 1875-79. The second lot is on the south side of Wales Street, where W.A. Grant lived from 1877-82.

The data as laid out above suggests that Robert, Archibald and John were brothers; William A. was also related, but likely a cousin. These men were used to working together to support each other's work. They had been through the fire of experience. By 1878 they wanted to showcase Robert as an architect. Nos. 80 and 82 Bellevue were rather special.

The design concept was one that had taken the fancy of David Dick: to design a pair of semidetached houses that look like one large house. Robert Grant set out to outdo his master. The problem was to arrange for a convincing illusion, while maintaining the usual concerns in a semi-detached house for homes of equal size and with sufficient privacy.

The houses were designed for and built on the south side of the lot. There are baroque contrast surrounds to

windows, doors and sides of the building that even today give a look of self-assurance and confidence to the houses. There is a pleasant variation to the front by a gabled projection over the main rooms of no. 80. There would originally have been a verandah only along the front of no. 80, giving more emphasis to one front door than the other. The back extensions are separate, giving what could be a common courtyard between them.

The design of this pair of houses is not wholly successful. The baywindow at ground floor level of no. 80 detracts from the subtle variation of the front provided by the gabled projection; possibly also a flush window would have been more private. I also find that the dormer window on no. 82 works against the illusion of one house. But these are minor defects, the major design feature that limits what can be done with the layout is the one central chimney for both houses. The front doors and corridors now have to be at the outside walls, and the principal rooms separated only by the party wall.

#### 68 Bellevue Avenue

Built in 1870, for James S. McMurray. Brick construction, two storeys. Domestic Gothic style. Advertised for sale for \$3,500 in 1870, sold in 1872. Architect: James Grant.

Plumbing work done in 1905.

Alterations in 1905, building permit no. 2635. Owner, Richard Chalkley; estimated cost \$900. These alterations are believed to have involved relocation of windows and extensive interior work to correspond. Architect: C.J.Gibson.

The 1905 renovation removed many Gothic features from the exterior, since the fashion in 1905 was for solid structure without ornament.

#### VERNACULAR HOUSES, GOOD DESIGN

##### St. Stephen's Rectory, 99 Bellevue Avenue

Built 1857, no architect. Roughcast construction, two storeys, domestic Gothic style. Original house 2,800 square feet, with numerous outbuildings. Demolished 1990, replaced by 16-unit affordable apartment building.

##### 83 Bellevue Avenue

Built in 1870 for D. Mitchell McDonald. Brick construction, 1 1/2 storeys. 2,500 square feet of living space. Demolished 1906, for the industrial building.

##### 63 Bellevue Avenue

Built in 1869 for Girdleston Izzard. Frame construction, 1 1/2 storeys. Over 1,800 square feet of living space before back extension and verandah were added in 1875.

Altered in 1889 to two dwellings by owner Samuel Gooding.

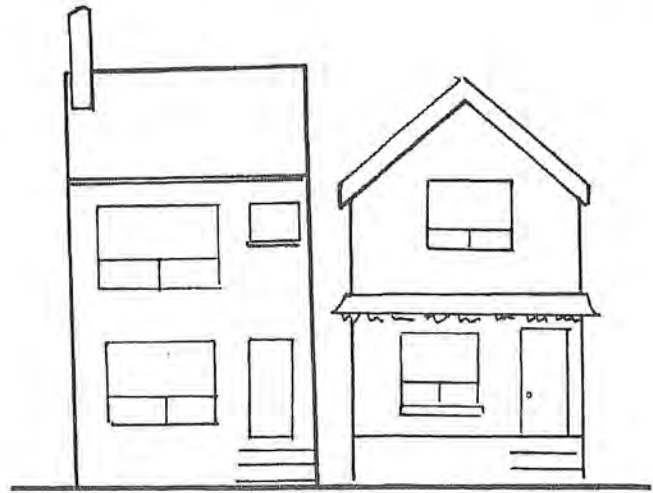
Demolished in 1985.





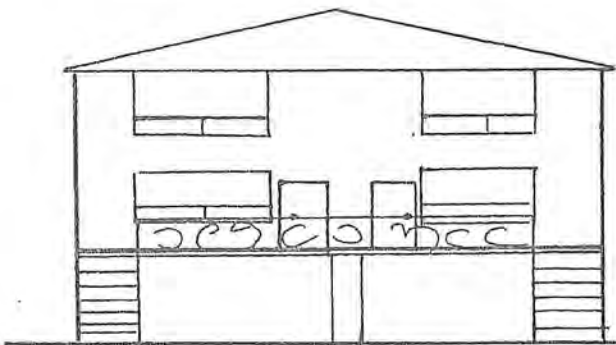
No. 24

No. 26



No. 30

No. 32



No. 40

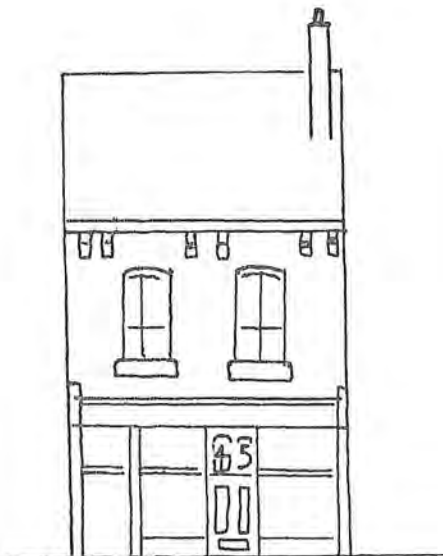


No. 42

No. 44

No. 46

No. 48



No. 45



No. 52

No. 54

No. 56

**61, 59 and 57 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1884-85 by Alexander Clark, when he gave up the carpenter's shop that he had used on this lot since 1873. Attractive joinery, vernacular Italianate style.

**45 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1884 for Abraham Charlton. Roughcast construction, two storeys. Jane Charlton ran a drygoods business from the shopfront. An earlier roughcast house, also built and owned by Abraham Charlton, was attached on the south side. That house was demolished in 1964 and part of the land used as the driveway to no. 45, part sold to the city for the adjacent parking lot.

Alteration 1892, building permit no. 850, for erection of the mansard roof to rear section.

Alteration 1911, building permit no. 25618, for underpinning dwelling.

House changed hands for the first time in 1925.

**114 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1870 for James Moffatt. Frame construction, two storeys. Ratable value in 1870 \$1,800. Now the oldest house on the street. The pitch of the roof is shallower than that of any other house on the street. The bay windows at the front are a later addition.

**110 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1870 for James Moffatt. Frame construction, two storeys. Ratable value in 1870 \$1,300. Positioned at right angles to no. 114.

Addition 1886-87 of brick front section, by Archibald Grant.

**94 Bellevue Avenue**

Built 1869-70 for Mrs. Culverhouse, then for Dr. Jones. Frame construction, 1 1/2 storeys. Ratable value in 1871 \$1,100.

Replaced 1934 and turned onto Oxford Street. Not clear from the footprint of the house whether this was renovation or replacement. Knowledge of interior details could determine this point.

**VERNACULAR HOUSES, INDIVIDUAL BUILDING METHOD**

The original owners of lots in the period 1870-80 adopted several different expedients to cope with the lack of money and reliance on their own labour that made development of their land difficult.

The written documentation that survives is assessment-roll data. Some excerpts from this data follow. In every case the modern number of the house is used.

**Lot 26 (50x148 feet)**

Divided in 1873, half each bought by John Aldrich and Lewis Freeman.

House no. 49:

1873: 12x21' house, wood, one storey on half lot.

1874: 10x12' addition, frame, one storey.

1878: 21x23' addition to front, roughcast, two storeys.

House no. 47:

Exactly same building progress as recorded for no. 49 above.

First a minimum building in 1873, only 252 square feet of living space, rather pinched quarters for four people. Extended by a lean-to kitchen structure at the back in 1874. A substantial two-storey addition to the front in 1878. Increase in living space at this time to 1340 square feet.

**Lot 35 (50x122 feet)**

Bought by Thomas Martell, 1873. The story of the development of the lot is best told chronologically because houses were developed from one, to two, and then three dwelling units as Martell worked on them.

1873: 23x26' house, wood, one storey, south side of lot (unfinished).

1874: 10x12' addition, roughcast, one storey; lot 25'.  
23x26' and 10x22' house, roughcast, one storey; lot 25'.

1876: 22x22' shack in rear of south house, roughcast, one storey.

1883: Three houses now, each on lot size 16x120'.  
16x26' and 10x14' house, brick and roughcast, two storeys.

16x26' and 10x22' house, roughcast, two storeys.

16x26' and 12x22' house, roughcast, two storeys.

Over the years 1873-76, Martell built three houses on his lot. They were all roughcast and one storey. The house at the rear of the lot had no kitchen extension and no street frontage. It was 484 square feet, and was home for Martell, his wife and four children, until demolished in 1883. The two semidetached houses at the front of the lot varied only in the size of the back extension and were 700 and 800 square feet respectively.

The two front houses were remodelled in 1883-84 into three houses, on the same foundation as before. The windows and doors would have been moved, and a second storey added. The old rear house was re-used as the back extension of houses nos. 86 and 88. From this time, Martell lived in no. 84.

Thomas Martell, as is typical of original settlers, retained ownership of all properties built on his lot and





No. 51

No. 53

No. 55

No. 58

No. 60



No. 62

No. 64

No. 66

No. 66 1/2



No. 68



(Tasha Dupuis)

rented out as much as possible. It was characteristic of him to live in the smaller house, thus maximizing rental income.

#### Lot 42 (50x130 feet)

Bought by Egbert Lucas, 1873.

House no. 58:

1873: 22x24' and 9x24' house, wood, one storey.

House no. 60:

1880: 20x27' and 12x24' house, roughcast, two storeys.

House no. 58 was built on the south half of the lot. Lucas sold the other half of the lot to another builder, Joseph Timson to build no. 60, which was built twice the size of no. 58. This pattern of lot development is a good example of professional building work of the time.

House no. 58 has remained substantially as first completed. House no. 60 was altered in 1905, building permit no. 1782. Alterations were to front of dwelling. Architects: Munro & Mead.

#### Lot 43 (50x130 feet)

Bought by Charles Wright, 1872.

1872: 24x26' house on north side of lot, wood, one storey.

1873: 14x22' addition, wood, one storey.

1878: 16x24' and 13x12' house, roughcast, two storeys with 16' frontage.

1881 alterations to 24x26' house on north side of lot, become:

House no. 48:

17x26' and 14x22', roughcast, two storeys.

House no. 50:

17x26' and 14x12', roughcast, two storeys.

The first house was 624 square feet and was probably used as a carpenter's workshop as well as home to a growing family. Wright was a carpenter up to 1877, when he joined the Northern Railroad. That year also, the second house on the lot was completed, no. 46, at 924 square feet. The house was rented out.

The first house was altered in 1880-81 by extending the street frontage by 10 feet, adding a second storey, subdividing the internal space into two parts, repositioning the windows and doors as required to make the new layout workable and adding a second kitchen extension on the north side of the building. These are the present nos. 48 and 50, each just over 1,000 square feet. The chimney looks as though it has no stack, so the only original heating would have been by a wood-burning

stove, with a system of metal flues to lead the gases given off out of the hole in the roof.

Compared to the buildings developed by Martell, who stayed in the building trade all his life, Wright made his building tasks more complicated by lack of experience and planning. The end result has a quality that speaks eloquently about the conditions of life in 19th century Toronto.

#### Lot 45 (50x120 feet)

Bought by Thomas White, 1873.

1873: 21x13' house, wood, one storey, house no. 34A.

1876: 13x30' and 9x14' house, roughcast, 1 1/2 storey, no. 36.

13x30' and 9x14' house, roughcast, 1 1/2 storey, no. 38.

1887: 21x30' and 15x6' house, roughcast, two storeys, no. 34.

White lived in the first house built, no. 34A, with his family in 273 square feet. A semidetached pair of houses was built in 1876, at 924 square feet each. They were rented out immediately and are still standing today as nos. 36 and 38.

In 1887 White had the first house towed to the back of the lot, where it still stands. A larger house (1,800 square feet), no. 34 was built at the front of the lot for the White family to use.

#### VERNACULAR HOUSES, COMMON TYPE

There are 35 of these houses on Bellevue Avenue. Their fronts vary from 15 to 18 feet. There were three houses only 13 feet wide on the street, where the parking lot is now.

Most common-type houses of this date have back extensions. These vary in size too, and some are two-storey structures. Essentially, a back extension provided room for the kitchen and lean-to backhouse. Placing the kitchen in the extension was almost universal. The kitchen stove was wood- or coal-burning, usually with its own metal chimney. Putting it in the extension meant that the chimney was short, reducing danger of fire to the dwelling.

In the houses existing on the avenue in 1935, there were 82 with back extensions, 54 of these were shared between two houses. The back extension went out of favour as a design feature after 1920, when people wanted more light in their rear rooms and replaced wood-burning stoves with gas or electric models.





No. 80

No. 82



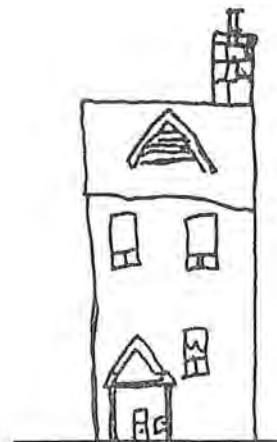
No. 83



(Tasha Dupuis)



(Tasha Dupuis)



(Jasper Dupuis)



1992 south elevation of No. 87 as seen from Oxford St. At right, Fuller's roughcast home of the 1860s with an 1890 front and entirely brick-veneered. For subsequent additions see p. 19.  
(Stephen Langmead, architect)





St. Stephen's Church, red brick interior, c. 1888  
(Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library T32783)



St. Stephen's choir member, c. 1888  
(Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library T10814)

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1901
<b>Total Population</b>	44,821	56,092	86,415	144,023	208,040
<b>By religion:</b>					
<b>Anglican</b>	14,125	20,668	30,193	46,084	62,406
<b>Baptist</b>	1,288	1,953	3,667	8,223	11,898
<b>Congregational</b>	826	1,186	2,018	3,102	3,658
<b>Jews*</b>	153	157	534	1,425	3,083
<b>Lutheran</b>	167	343	494	738	972
<b>Methodist</b>	6,976	9,606	16,357	32,505	48,278
<b>Presbyterian</b>	6,604	8,982	14,612	27,449	41,659
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	12,135	11,881	15,716	21,830	28,994
<b>Other and unspecified</b>	2,547	1,316	2,104	2,677	7,092
<b>By origin:</b>					
<b>English</b>			34,608		94,021
<b>Irish</b>			32,177		61,527
<b>Scotch</b>			13,754		34,543
<b>Other British</b>					785
<b>French</b>			1,230		3,015
<b>German</b>			2,049		6,028
<b>Other</b>			2,597		8,121
<b>By nativity:</b>					
<b>English</b>	7,112	11,089		22,801	
<b>Irish</b>	12,441	10,366		13,347	
<b>Scotch</b>	2,961	3,263		6,347	
<b>French</b>	66	61		114	
<b>German</b>	336	336		799	
<b>Native to Canada</b>	19,202	28,424		93,162	
<b>Other</b>	2,703	2,553		7,435	

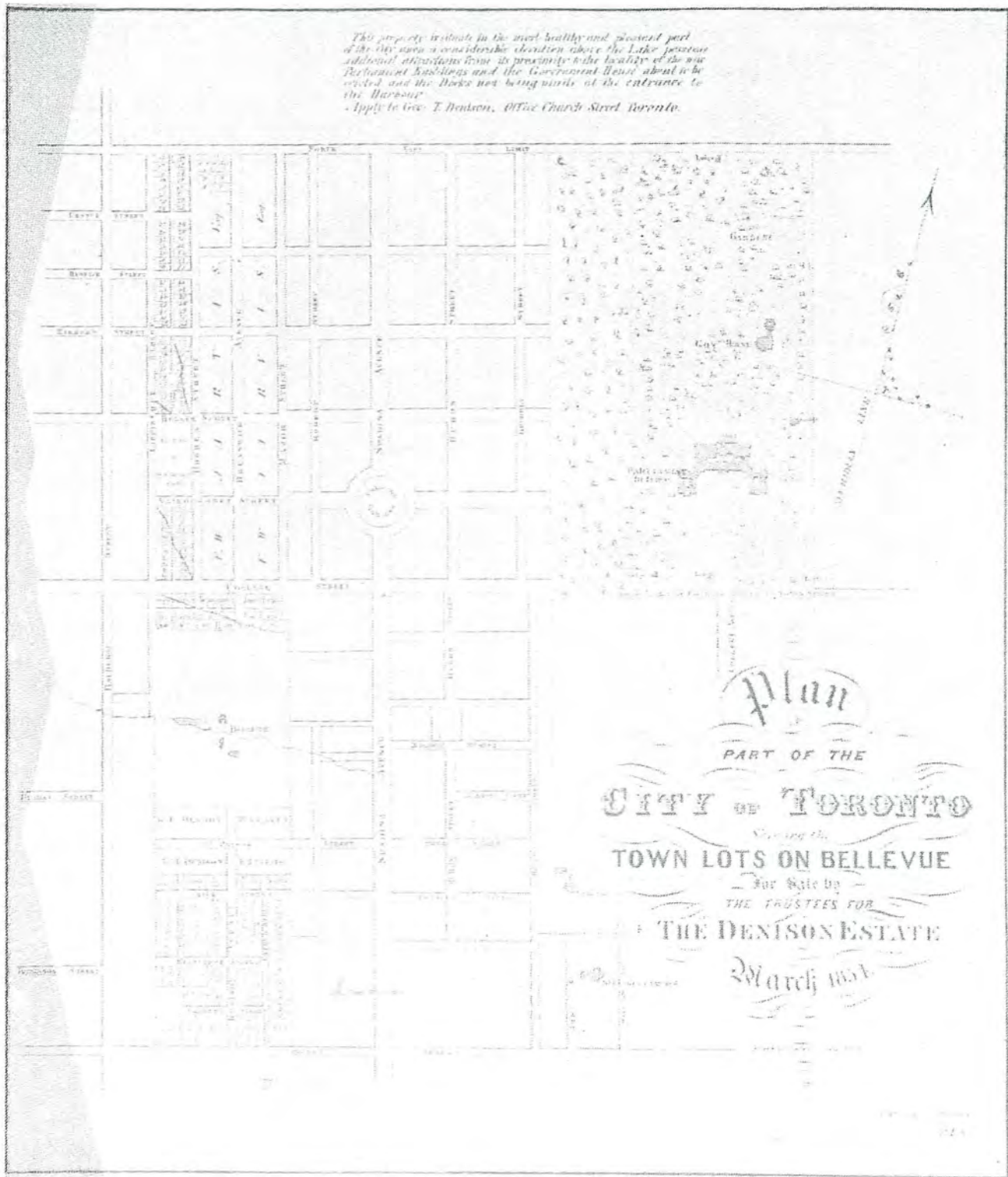
TABLE 8

Population of Toronto, 1860 to 1901, by Origin and Religion

\*The term used in the Censuses.

Reprinted from *Victorian Toronto*, Peter C. Goheen.





Plan of Part of the City of Toronto Showing the Town Lots on Bellevue For Sale by the Trustees for the Denison Estate, March 1854 [J. Stoughton Dennis, surveyor]  
(Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library)

## Bellevue Avenue

	1880	1885	1890	1895	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920
<b>Number of Dwellings</b>	51	67	89	94	94	95	98	102	102
<b>Tenants</b>	28	35	37	46	51	47	53	52	48
<b>Freeholders</b>	22	31	48	45	43	48	44	47	52
<b>Vacant Dwellings</b>	1	1	4	3			1	3	2
<b>Number of Owners</b>	33	44	62	62	69	70	63	72	79
<b>% Tenants</b>	55%	52%	41%	49%	54%	49%	54%	51%	47%

TABLE 9

Occupancy characteristics of houses on Bellevue Avenue

## CHAPTER 6

### SOCIAL HISTORY

#### Early Beginnings, Lord Simcoe and the Denison Family

In 1787 Lord Dorchester, governor-in-chief of Canada, arranged the "Toronto purchase," buying 250,880 acres of land for the Crown from the Mississauga Indians. Four years later, Col. John Graves Simcoe was named Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada and charged with finding a suitable capital for the new province. He chose Toronto over the border towns of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Kingston because of fears of war with the U.S.

Most of Upper Canada's early settlers were British in origin. Their pro-British, monarchist and anti-U.S. sentiment was reinforced in the 1780s by the arrival of United Empire Loyalists. Opposed to the American Revolution they sought refuge in Canada and were rewarded with grants of Crown land, as were those who had served militarily against the Americans. For soldiers, the size of the grant varied according to their military rank. The location of the land depended on the date of the grant.

The Denison family acquired much land in those years, some in recognition of Captain John Denison's military achievements during the American Revolution, but more by purchase and advantageous marriage. The family has a long military tradition. Henry Scadding, in his *Toronto of Old*, refers to Captain Denison's great-grandson, "G.T. Denison tertius" (G.T. Denison III) as "author of a work on 'Modern Cavalry, its Organization, Armament and Employment in War' which has taken a recognized place in English strategical literature." This same G.T. Denison was involved in the 1866 repulse of the Fenian raiders.

The parcel of land that includes Bellevue Avenue was first granted to Major E.B. Littlehayes, an aide to Governor Simcoe. Colonel G.T. Denison, eldest son and heir of Captain John Denison, purchased the land from Littlehays and built Belle Vue in 1815. G.T.'s second son, Brigade Major Robert B. Denison inherited it in 1853.

The plain frame-and-roughcast house, Georgian in style, was small compared with country houses in Britain. However, the land it was built on was large. With such a vast estate, why didn't the Denisons become farmers? Probably because there were no compliant villagers to hand, ready to become tenant farmers or agricultural labourers. As well, the Denisons always answered those recurring calls for military expertise.

R.B. Denison's interests included neither farming, active politics nor commerce. He was a strong Anglican, evidenced by his 1858 gift of the church and living of St. Stephen's. G.T. and R.B. parcelled up and sold family land at intervals over the years to support their household running costs. By the time R.B. died — August 4, 1900 — he no longer owned any land.

#### After 1860: Environmental Determinants

Toronto in 1860 was strongly British, and Protestant. According to the 1881 census (available in the Metro Reference Library), two-thirds of the adults then living on Bellevue had been born in Britain. Most of the rest were born in Canada. Of the owners alone, 80% were British immigrants.

Although Toronto has always had a large population of immigrants, until the mid-20th century most were from Britain. In 1890 most Torontonians were still of British stock, though only one-third had been born in Britain. (See Table 8.) Clearly the people shared a common culture, even if they did not share a common experience. It was a culture that favoured nostalgic colonialism and a conservative outlook.

The railways were a force for change. They encouraged commerce, opened distant markets, and required a work-force with new skills. The Toronto, Simcoe and Huron Railroad opened in 1853, the Great Western Railway (connecting to Buffalo, Hamilton and Windsor) in 1855. The Grand Trunk opened in 1856, linking Toronto to Montreal, Sarnia and, later, Chicago. The railway tracks were strung out along the Toronto lakeshore where the ground was level and connections with water transport fairly simple. According to Peter C. Goheen in *Victorian Toronto*, areas of industrial specialization quickly took root near railway lines. Other areas of specialization, such as the Spadina Avenue garment district, evolved more slowly.

Residential areas tended to develop within walking distance of work until the advent of public transport and then cars. The Toronto Streetcar Company's six-mile line from Yonge to Ossington Avenue opened in 1862. It's not clear whether fares were within reach of the lower classes, but the line made it possible to live farther from work.

#### To 1935: Social Determinants

The character of Bellevue Avenue, as determined by its built architecture, was largely lower class. Most houses are small and many are plain. Another social determinant that we can measure from assessment-roll data is the proportion of freeholders to tenants. From Table 9 we can see that between 1880 and 1920 the percentage of rented dwelling units remained about the same, except for a drop in 1890. *Globe* editor George Brown would have rejoiced in that temporary rise in the proportion of freeholders. On December 1, 1868 he argued that the "mechanic evinces the same (financial) confidence in expending the savings of his labour in securing a residence for himself, and thus gives the surest pledge that he is no transient resident, but permanently a citizen of Toronto."



## Bellevue Avenue

	1895	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920	1925	1930	1935
Anglican	39	26	32	37	29	20	11	6	5
Baptist	6	7	5	6	4	5	2	3	1
Congregationalist		1	2	2			1		
Jewish					31	49	67	74	77
Lutheran				2				1	2
Methodist	20	18	22	14	10	8	4	1	1
Presbyterian	27	34	28	23	12	5	2	2	
Roman Catholic	2	1	2	7	5	6	5	11	8
Other		7	4	5	11	9	3		3

TABLE 10

Religion of all households on Bellevue Avenue

5-Year Period	1895-1900	1900-05	1905-10	1910-15	1915-20
Percentage dwellings with changed owner	15%	16%	25%	48%	38%
Average dwelling/year changed owner	3	3	5	10	8

TABLE 11

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930
Widows and Spinsters	3	1	4	5	3
Widow, Dower Owner	4	4	3	1	1
Joint Owner	1	1	10	5	6
Married Woman, Sole Owner		1	1	10	24
Marital Status Unknown i.e. absentee female owner	1	2	1	12	15
<b>Total, Woman Owners</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Total, All Owners</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Percentage Female</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>58%</b>

TABLE 12

Analysis of property ownership by women

Table 10 shows that the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians were the street's biggest founding groups, although the Jewish presence grew rapidly after 1910.

Table 11 looks at the rate of ownership turnover. Because I have only looked at five-year intervals, owners who held properties for fewer than five years may not always be included. Although these figures underestimate the actual turnover, they are still a useful indicator of change.

Post-1910 owners, according to assessment rolls, were nearly always several people buying one property. Unfortunately, the names are sometimes difficult to follow because of spelling variations. In addition, addresses of absentee owners are rarely available, generally having been listed as care of their Bellevue property. Assessment-roll data between 1910 and 1915 shows that Jewish ownership of Bellevue property began in 1911. During that five-year period only three properties were sold to non-Jews. There is also evidence that Jewish owners did not live on the street until several years after they bought the property.

#### Women and Property Ownership

Single women or widows were the only women allowed to own property before 1870, when Ontario's Married Women's Property Act allowed married women to own property in their own right, separately from their husbands. In 1884 a new Married Women's Property Act gave women the right not only to own property but also to rent or sell it without their husband's consent. The good news spread slowly. Of Bellevue's five women owners in 1880, one was a spinster and two were widows who bought on their own account, one was a widow whose husband had owned the house before her, and one was a joint owner with her husband. The latter was Margaret Orr, who had purchased the lot in 1874 as a widow — and she was at least 10 years older than her husband.

Then there was the interesting case of Jane Wright. Jane and her husband, Charles, emigrated from England and bought a Bellevue lot in 1872. Charles built nos. 48 and 50, still standing, and no. 46 now demol-

ished. Charles worked for the Northern Route Railway from 1877 and nos. 48 and 50 were completed in 1880. He died in 1882, leaving Jane with five young children and three Bellevue houses. Jane married again in 1886, for the next few years show her new husband as owner. From 1891, however, Jane Wilson, married woman, is listed as owner; her husband is the tenant at no. 50.

Table 12 gives evidence of accelerating shift in women's status before 1910. The ownership of the family home by the wife with husband as tenant, the practice pioneered on Bellevue Avenue by Jane and John Wilson, is often used by those families where the husband is in business for himself. Then if the husband goes bankrupt, a house in the wife's name is safe from seizure.

The shift towards property ownership by women can be seen as part of a larger movement of political and social reform, especially the suffrage movement. Canadian women's suffragists were a group of privileged women who rejected the militant tactics of their British counterparts. They did not heckle politicians, break shop windows, resort to arson or go to prison for their activities. Still, they did have Emmeline Pankhurst, a leading British suffragist, to speak in Toronto in 1909.

The First World War had a positive effect. Women won the right to vote in Ontario elections in 1917 and the right to hold provincial office in 1918. The federal franchise was extended first to women nurses who served in the war, then in 1917 to women who were wives, widows, mothers, sisters or daughters of men who had served or who were serving in the Canadian or British forces. The franchise was finally extended in 1918 to all women who were British subjects and age 21 or over. The right to run as a candidate followed in 1919.

Canadian women achieved full suffrage before British women, and federal suffrage before the American women. Canadian suffragists, however, believed that should women win the vote, they would vote for measures to strengthen the family. They wanted to slow down the pace of change and reinstate Christian values. Despite this agenda, the real changes in the status of women had become so obvious that those in power knew they had to extend suffrage to women.

## CHAPTER 7

### METAPHORS OF CHANGE

#### Cultural Metaphors

The inhabitants of 19th-century Toronto were nearly all Protestant, staid and with strong family values. Their six-day work week was followed by a predictable Sunday of church-going, Bible-reading and sobriety — a Sunday without streetcars and without shopping or open amusements. Most of those who built houses on Bellevue were British immigrants. Although they were unfamiliar with local geography and Ontario personalities, there

was no language barrier, so they learned fast. Like all other immigrants they had to go through a mourning period, having lost all the familiar places and people they had known and loved in earlier times — that daily evidence of personal continuity with history that is taken for granted in older societies. But they found much that was familiar in the established churches. There were also reassuring similarities in political institutions. They quickly felt at home.

In any of the houses, a picture of the sovereign, a print from the old country or a familiar proverb might grace the parlour wall. Social hierarchies were taken for granted at work; at home most women, while confident of their own worth, were not about to march for the franchise. There was a feeling of unity among the people. Industrialization might have changed the culture, but it had not radically altered it.

Then immigrants from Eastern Europe began arriving. For some of the Jews who came to live on Bellevue, Yiddish was their first language. Some were politically radical to an extent rare among those who have suffered no persecution. And they did not believe in Jesus which their neighbours at first found truly difficult to accept.

The Presbyterians led other Christians in sponsoring a mission to convert the Jewish newcomers to Christianity. A converted, Yiddish-speaking rabbi's son, Shabbabei Rohold, agreed to lead their mission. Rohold was an enthusiast for aggressive outdoor preaching, as was his Methodist counterpart, Henry Singer. By 1913 Singer was preaching regularly at the corner of Kensington and Dundas. "The affronted Jews responded with rival meetings up the street, and loud gramophone music to drown the preacher," writes Stephen A. Speisman in *The Jews of Toronto*.

For Anglicans, the conversion of Eastern European Jews was an urgent matter; they thought it essential to acculturation to Canadian ways. In 1916 the Anglican mission was moved to Bellevue, cooperating with Rohold on the work of outdoor relief.

The Jewish community countered the missions by setting up welfare and social agencies of its own. And Jewish children were specifically warned by the rabbi of Holy Blossom to be wary of missionaries.

Some Jewish parents on Bellevue responded by setting up an orthodox synagogue and school at 25 Bellevue. The school and congregation appears on the assessment rolls from 1918; the synagogue itself was built in 1923. The synagogue brought scholars to live on the street, giving the neighbourhood prestige and a high moral tone.

None of the missions gained many converts. The secular press was generally sympathetic to Jews; popular sentiment was aroused against the methods used, particularly the shameless attempts to gull Jewish children, using charitable offerings as bait. This lack of decency and fairness in the methods used was eventually recognized. The legal system of the time was not strong about individual rights and freedoms.

It took many years for the old Anglo culture to adapt. The struggle to assimilate the Jews of Eastern Europe transformed both sides. Canada's current multicultural assumptions are far different from the assumptions of 1910. The thoroughness of the transformation is a tribute to the ferocity of the struggle and the strength and decency of both sides.

Jews moved away from Bellevue in the 1950s and 1960s, succeeded by Portuguese and a few Asian immigrants. The number of Asians is slowly increasing, and today stands at about 36% of owners.

### Political Metaphors

In 1911 the apparent change on Bellevue was minimal. Only one resident claimed to be Jewish, but the number of people giving equivocal answers to the official question "What is your religion?" had risen. Answers included "Polish," "evangelical," "dissenter" and "No." Clearly a new way of relating to government authority was taking form.

As more Jews moved in, long-time residents might have been upset by the many who were peddlers, and junk dealers. In 1925 eight homeowners on Bellevue were peddlers.

*The immigrant sought an occupation which required little initial capital and offered some degree of independence. Peddling, rag-picking ... had several advantages in these circumstances. As activities low in the social scale of prestige, they were avoided by the non-Jewish natives. These were menial jobs but they offered the immigrant an opportunity to maintain the traditional Jewish values that might be endangered by the regular hours of the factory. He might attend services in the synagogue each morning ... by not working on Jewish holy days, he might lose money, but never his job.*

*The Jews of Toronto*, Stephen A. Speisman

Some Jews set about organizing trade unions and Communist cells, taking direct aim at the political system. It was in their interest to change the political climate, and they did.

Of course, Toronto's political climate would have changed anyway. The pro-British stand of early citizens was challenged by the greatly enlarged trading opportunities that industrialization brought with it. Workers for the Grand Trunk Railway for example, had to be preoccupied with U.S. concerns. Industrialization also challenged the existing social hierarchy. As more and more specialized occupations and professions emerged, the need to loosen and broaden social relationships became apparent.

The authority of the British way was bound to diminish as Canadian experience diverged from British experience. Canada's growing wealth was also a factor leading to political maturity.

### Ecological Metaphors

A living organism exists in a wide environment. It depends on that environment and exists in a state of tension with it. The street is composed of buildings, each of which can be described individually and compared with others. But what of the relationship to the whole? Is it more than the sum of its parts? Can we say that Bellevue Avenue is or was a good place to live? What is its residential character now?





First Russian Congregation Synagogue, interior, c. 1990  
(The Ontario Jewish Archives #294)



First Russian Congregation Synagogue, c. 1990; Architect: B. Swartz  
(The Ontario Jewish Archives #71)

In the beginning St. Stephen's was an important part of the streetscape. Most British immigrants must have loved its presence, its reassuring sense of continuity, its similarity to just such churches in the small towns and villages of Britain from which they had come. It was easy to imagine it in a rural setting, surrounded by fields, glimpsed through trees. The church now has a small congregation and the nave (auditorium) is largely taken over by diocesan offices.

When Eastern European Jews moved onto the street, they too brought a longing for the familiar life left behind. Establishing the synagogue was the most important thing they could do, for it offered them courage, community and a stake in the future. The synagogue now is open regularly, drawing the congregation from both local and more distant residents. The building is being restored, so its fabric is sound and the oak furnishings gleam.

The three mansions all contain memories of past tensions. Perhaps the most peaceful is no. 95, Dr. Machell's old house and a municipal day nursery since the 1940s. This house was bought by the Salvation Army, and from 1915 was used as a refuge house with 39 free beds offering shelter for the homeless, runaways, drunkards and prostitutes of the neighbourhood. But it wasn't that kind of neighbourhood and didn't need that kind of remedy.

No. 91, now St. Stephen's community centre seems to have been built to house the pastor of the Presbyterian church, Rev. Alexander Gilray. Perhaps one can read some rivalry in that — a challenge to the Anglican dominance. The house was then used as a physician's private house and surgery until 1916. Its subsequent use as the "Mission to the Jews" was the first Anglican response to the alien hordes. Although few Jews were converted, it brought out the reserved, undemonstrative, yet undoubtedly power-holding Anglicans to confront and converse with a different religion and culture. So in that sense, perhaps it was a good thing.

No. 87 was built as a private hospital and in 1910 had room for 42 patients. By 1925 it was a "home for the aged" operated by the Sisters of St. John the Divine, an order of Anglican nuns. Its character then was pious and benevolent, though somewhat removed from ordinary life. The Unification Church (the "Moonies") bought the property in 1979, selling it 13 years later to the Homes First Society, a mainstream Protestant philanthropic organization. The building is being renovated into affordable apartments, which should make it once more a living part of the street ecology.

In a 1962 report from the chairman of the Parking Authority of Toronto to the Board of Control, the site of the parking lot and another on Baldwin Street were targeted. City Council authorized action on the matter on September 28, 1964. Six 19th-century houses occupying the site on Bellevue Avenue were subject to compulsory purchase and razed. The net gain was 101 parking

spaces for residents and users of the Kensington Market. Since then multistorey parking has been added elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

The industrial building at the southeast corner of Bellevue and Oxford was built by Bell Canada in 1905 and fell within the city bylaws of the time. However, the building was probably never fully utilized by Bell. From 1913 and for about a year afterward, International Correspondance Schools of Scranton, Penn., used two floors as a book depository, storing titles such as *Dynamos and Motors*, *Gas Making*, *Gas Supply and Distribution*, *Domestic Uses of Gas* and *A Textbook on Mining Engineering*. The building was vacant for years before Bell sold it in 1944. For the past 40 years it has been owned by the same firm, Precision Vacuum, which first used it for light assembly work and now packages electroplated trophies there. For people of the neighbourhood, it has been a good place to work.

Block FIVE houses, south from Precision Vacuum, are all recent replacements, and it is important to this discussion to question whether these houses work with the street. They are larger, taller houses than the ones they replaced. They have some applied details that are accepted as "in period," such as gabled roofs and contrasting-brick quoins. All are built over a half-basement garage. The driveways cut down the amount of front garden but leave room for showing off roses. Of course, these replacements speak to the needs and values of those who had them built; had those builders been truly interested in history, they would have preserved the originals. As it is, their market value may be higher than those across the street, possibly causing some concern.

The tension between new and old buildings is increased by the number of new buildings and the fact that they are all lined up together. They stand apart from the older houses on land that has been exploited for capital gain, without regard for community or historical values.

There are also three replacement houses on Block THREE (west side between Nassau and Wales). The style of these houses is contemporary, similar to those of many housing estates of the 1970s. All three have basement garages. The redeeming feature of these houses is that they are in scale with their neighbours — and thus make good neighbours.

The replacement houses add to the diversity of the mixture. But had they been in scale and harmonious in style with the original structures, I would have liked them better. The assumption that owners will want a car should be questioned. A driveway and garage door make a forbidding facade.

#### Responses to Questionnaire

Is today's Bellevue Avenue a good place to live? The residents responding to the questionnaire included six by personal interview and the rest by mail. Questions were asked about both the built architecture and social environment of the community.



Everyone likes the location and goes on to mention either newness or the qualities of an old house, such as high ceilings, interior finish and trim in favourable terms. Whatever "little bit of fixing up" is needed tends to be done by the occupant "as cheaply as possible."

Those who have lived on the street as children fondly recall activities organized by the St. Stephen's community centre and the fire station. They remember street dances, street picnics and movies in the parkette. Most others see the two mansions, nos. 95 and 91, as "always full of kids" and do not distinguish between them.

No. 87 has been quiet in recent years, even compared to the times when children of the neighbourhood were "shushed so as not to disturb the invalid old ladies who lived there." The affordable housing will be welcome.

The industrial building has "not even been noticed" by some, others comment: "glad to see it's still in use," "an eyesore," "seems an odd place for a factory to be" and "I would rather see it used for community purposes."

The church and synagogue both attract comments: "soothing," "like it," "seems like a historic building," "glad it's there." Also for St. Stephen's: "the doors are always open; very much a part of this community."

Residents view the new apartment block next to St. Stephen's as a "terrible choice of architecture," an anomaly on the "social-service block"; those who knew them miss the old Gothic schoolhouse and rectory. (Note: no one from the apartment block responded to the questionnaire.)

The block of replacement houses is sensed as visually discordant by most of those who do not live there. Those who do live there like the newness of their housing.

The municipal parking lot is accepted as useful, although one commented that it seems to have been repaved unnecessarily, and another that street parking opposite the exit should be better controlled. Those who live south of Oxford Street comment that the "constant car honking and traffic congestion on Saturdays" is a nuisance, "trees are desperately needed along that stretch" and "it destroys street life through its emptiness."

The neighbourhood is "nice and quiet," "everybody seem to get along," "we say 'hi' to our immediate neighbours," "we know some by names," "good place to raise kids," "I feel good about my neighbours," "multi-racial but no racial problem," "growing up in the suburbs makes this neighbourhood seem so lively, cultural and historical," "I like a non-pretentious neighbourhood, with a park close by" and "I feel at home and am happy here".

The people at the south end of the street get to know each other by taking time to sit out front of a summer evening. There are "pockets of close kin, extended families and lodgers that make a viable community" along the full length of the street. (Some properties also have shared premises behind.) A few residents claim to be

"not interested" in getting to know their neighbours. There are also a few who set examples of bad behaviour.

One resident who often walks a dog late at night reports feeling safe on all the neighbourhood's paths and lanes. Residents, of course, are unhappy that "drug users and vagrants are becoming more noticeable." Violence is sometimes feared. For those who have been burgled or who have had lawn furniture or laundry stolen from their yard, there is a lingering sense of injustice.

Today's unemployment contrasts unhappily with the days when "employers used to come knocking on the door, looking for good workers." Recessionary times first deprive even hard-working and conscientious people of their jobs and then deprive them of their optimism.

### Bellevue and Social Adaptability

Those who promoted the suburban ideal by building good-class housing in 1870, as well as those who scuppered that ideal by building smaller houses, set the stage well for changing styles of life. The housing was convenient from the start, whether for those working at the new factories and offices, the Bell telephone exchange or the garment sweatshops.

The housing was also suitable for those wanting to start up a home business. Shoemakers, tailors, grocers, dry-goods merchants, physicians and rag merchants have all at one time or another operated from premises on Bellevue Avenue, before city bylaws were modified to contain the spread of the market. Then again, there have always been many rented houses on the street, and so one could always take in boarders to help make ends meet without being socially ostracized for doing so.

The outward individuality of the street architecture, characteristic of the beginning of the industrial period, is a balm to the oppressive drive towards standardization required of an industrial work-force.

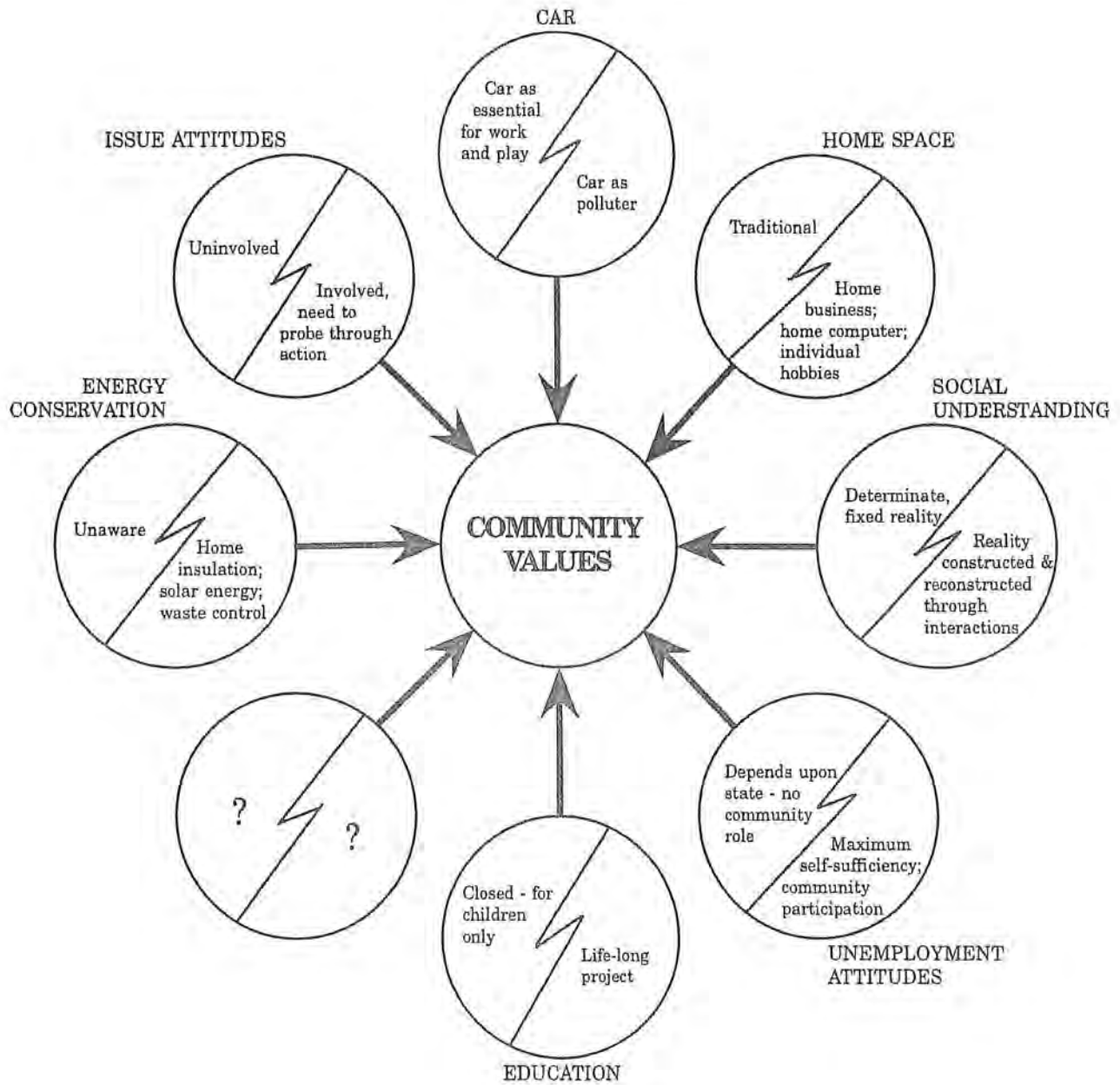
The varied size of the houses offers something for everyone, from over 4,000 square feet at no. 91 as built in 1889, over 2,000 at no. 68, to 1,100 square feet at the parsimonious Thomas Martell houses nos. 84, 86 or 88, all the way down to 273 square feet at no. 34A.

The variety of people, in terms of trade and cultural background, willing to live in these houses has always been great enough to ensure that more than one opinion is represented on most issues. What has happened on Bellevue has not been the result of planning, it has been the result of people and architecture being free to interact.

The British immigrants have gone. The immigrants from Eastern Europe have gone, and so have some of the Portuguese. The houses on Bellevue have been attractive to immigrants because many can be rented, they have not been too expensive to buy, and they are close enough to several different types of commercial area to eliminate the immediate need for a car. The houses of Bellevue continue to be a comfort to those who do not or cannot make it to the middle-class suburbs.



### Community Value Formation



The religious institutions on the street have been remarkable for their contrast. Some have mistaken the relationship between figure and ground, and have perished as a result. Some have reached a state of apparent equilibrium. Opposites evoke tensions and conflicts, and as long as the tension is not too high, it is this that identifies the street as adaptable. There is plenty of yin and yang here.

The social organization of the street was established in the early years as favourable to utility values (such as living in one's own house, getting rent from land) rather than capital values (cashing in on rising property values). Some capital-value realization has taken place in recent years, through exploitation of real land values. Ownership at present, however, is unconcentrated. In the early years, and now too, most landlords are person-

ally available because they live on the street. There is lots of evidence that here is a place where a person may enjoy life and where individual capacities for expression and community may be developed.

Whether this will be the pattern of the future depends on which features of the street we select to enhance.

For some, old houses compete with new apartments. But a house on Bellevue has far more to offer. This is a human-scale neighbourhood, one that fosters human growth, change and transformation. It is a neighbourhood where the variety, scale and age of the housing give to life some essential qualities that are missing from high-rise apartment blocks and new subdivisions. Bellevue still has a flexible architectural form, adaptable to new social realities.

## APPENDIX

This paper has been devoted to a description of one street, Bellevue Avenue, and the architectural and social actions that have brought it to the present. The Kensington Market community has many streets that share the same general characteristics: a variety of architectural form, a high percentage of 19th-century houses, a variety of use and people of a wide variety of background and occupation.

### Development of Community Values

The community faces the consequences of many external forces such as international trading decisions that change the number and types of jobs available locally; environmental crises of pollution and waste, both here and elsewhere; social crises of changing world views; increasing activism on social issues; government debt crises that affect national autonomy; government immigration policies, mass international migrations and population shifts; and soaring energy costs. These forces interact in complex ways and generate an unstable social environment. Society and community values are undergoing change, a change that can be abrupt, but is more often gradual.

The people of any community have to make some personal lifestyle decisions. Some of these decisions, although made by individuals in their own interests or that of their kin group, affect the community profoundly. The aggregate of these decisions determines the character, quality of life and expressed values of the community.

Some key decision alternatives are identified in the diagram on the opposite page. The community values are formed from the alternatives selected. Each person has his or her own outlook, talents and responsibilities, and when faced with a decision each person decides as she or he sees appropriate. Appropriateness is consonant with outlook, the way in which the person sees external forces or evolving social realities.

It is the attitude of active involvement with issues that will make the inevitable social transitions least painful. Each person will end up taking new sides on one or more of the key issues as the future unfolds. The social transformation follows.

### Strategic Planning

Strategy has to follow on a desired goal. For a vibrant inner city area whose goal is to remain vibrant, we have to know what it is about the community that makes it vibrant now, and we have to know this in all its small details. These are the identified strengths and weaknesses of the current situation. Next, actions have to be selected that will support the goal, and factors that might block the achievement of the goal have to be identified. These are the opportunities and threats.

The strategic situation facing Bellevue Avenue has the following characteristics:

#### STRENGTHS

1. Considerable number of historic houses in a variety of architectural forms.
2. Some long-term residents.
3. Variety of occupations and interests among the residents.
4. Variety of activities carried on in workplaces on the street, for example: nursery school, language classes, work, café, cultural activities.
5. Neighbourhood identity, newspaper, market, etc.

#### WEAKNESSES

1. Fortress-like design of new houses, all with drive-ways in front and a semi-basement garage.
2. Some residents not interested in community.
3. Industrial building has a scruffy exterior.
4. Parking lot makes a poor neighbour.

### OPPORTUNITIES

1. Preservation of all old buildings to be encouraged.
2. Industrial building could be more fully utilized.
3. Parking lot could be redeveloped. Path through to Augusta should be retained if possible.

### THREATS

1. Pressures for redevelopment of land for more intensive use.
2. Loss of variety in architectural, social or use forms.
3. Loss of confidence in the future by some residents, due to inability to meet consumption needs or maintain assets.
4. Narcotics possession and other crime require the attention and concern of the community, to determine what is happening and what can be done about it.

The strengths of this street are considerable.

In addition to the analysis above, the Kensington Market neighbourhood meets all the conditions set by Jane Jacobs for generating "exuberant diversity." This strength to adapt to prevailing conditions has been present for a long time.

### Strengths

The outstanding strength of Bellevue Avenue is the number of old houses that survive. As Jun'ichiro Tanizaki argues, "living in old houses, among old objects, is in some mysterious way a source of peace and repose." People living in a historic house have available to them a unique means of access to the past, which is daily and habitual and can be personally valuable. Knowledge of others who have lived and struggled in the place where we live now, those others who can be known only through the artifacts and records they have left behind, is reassuring; it is knowledge that gives perspective to present problems and wisdom to see ahead.

A further advantage of old buildings, and not museum-quality buildings that are too good to use, but really serviceable old buildings, is that they present their users with space that is not defined in a standard way. The proportions of the rooms, their layout and intended use and flow patterns, will not be the same as contempo-

rary construction — the homes built in recent subdivisions and the purpose-built modern shops and offices. This discovery of the unexpected is an encouragement to improvise and an opportunity for unique adaptation. For many who find the standard house layout and living assumptions inappropriate, the old used building is preferred.

Yet another advantage enjoyed by old buildings is that their purchase cost does not have to reflect the costs of construction, since those were paid off long ago. This gives to old buildings a cost advantage, one that can be used by people with limited capital resources to start their home or explore new business ideas. A home that is low-cost can have high personal value because of its age and the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. A business that has low overheads can be low-yield and yet be viable.

### Opportunities

Of the opportunities on Bellevue Avenue, perhaps the redevelopment of the parking lot needs explanation. Any parking lot is unsightly and is often termed 'dead space.' This parking lot is brightly illuminated at night, making its empty and dead character evident.

Next, one must question whether this parking lot is necessary to the businesses or residents of the area. Even if this could be proved, and I suggest that it could not, it is grotesque to suggest that the land is either appropriately or efficiently used for single level-parking.

Redevelopment with residential buildings should remove the "visual noise" at present necessary for security, and restore the stranded no. 27 to its companions on the street, thus improving the ecology all round.

Suggested: redevelopment of the parking lot with a number of residential houses, with particular interest in energy efficiency and the use of solar heating.

### Conclusion

A city such as Toronto is defined by its diversity. The city, not the countryside, is the crucible for the future of mankind. As Jane Jacobs writes "lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves."





Printed in CANADA by

**Q-PRINT**

98 Richmond St. East, Toronto, Ont M5C 1P1

(416) 366-0374