Award of Merit for St. Helen's School

At left: The original main entrance to the school circa 1935 which faced west onto Brock Avenue just north of College Street and shows the original grandeur of the building's facade.

Below: A view of the southwest corner at Brock and College, showing the old face of St. Helen's Catholic School along with the newly constructed modern portion of the building, complete with a round entrance.

Faced with the reality that their school overflowed with students and no longer met a good many basic building requirements, the members of the St. Helen's Catholic School Parent-Teacher Association were forced to act. But the call to action created a dilemma: should they tear down the existing school and start fresh, constructing an entirely new structure, or should they go out of their way to preserve the existing school and add required facilities to it? They chose preservation.

But the choice was only the first step. What followed was months of fighting for their choice. But their hard work resulted in the transformation you see above. And it is for their choice and hard work that the Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy would like to recognize the members of St. Helen's PTA, led by Daniel Belinson, with an Award of Merit which shall be presented during the fall school term.

New Program of Architectural Tours Launched

June 2, 1995 marked the beginning of a new program of architectural tours offered through provincial council and Paul Dilse, the organization's consulting heritage manager. A pleasant day was spent touring the Don River's parks, gardens and ravines as well as nearby buildings, by van and on foot. Complementing Paul's tour guiding was a presentation by Ken Duncan at Edwards Gardens. Ken, who had planted many of the shrubs he described, walked the group through an outstanding collection of azaleas and rhododendrons in bloom.

A week later, another group toured the subdivision of the Rusholme estate in west central Toronto. Cheryl Golecki, a stained glass artist, added to Paul's description of buildings and conservation projects by speaking to the history and making of stained glass. The walking tour ended at St. Anne's Anglican Church where a special performance was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The group sat in the same pew as Nicholas Goldschmidt, conductor of NAGA's Festival! Benjamin Britten's Chester miracle play travels to Ottawa, Montreal and San Francisco.

A fall tour to Niagara, the Shaw Festival and Buffalo will complete the 1995 program of special tour events. In addition, half-day walking tours are also available.

For tickets to Niagara Countryside, Theatre and Buffalo Architecture, call Paul Dilse at (416) 921-5324.

Main street restoration: Rebuilding Toronto's history

Walking around Toronto, one cannot help but notice the history lining both sides of the street. History that the City of Toronto, backed by both the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Province of Ontario, decided to revive in 1990 by way of a challenge. A design competition entitled "Housing on Toronto's Main Streets" was sponsored to stimulate the design of buildings that would blend in with the existing structures and also be viable housing. Too many American cities have found their downtown cores deteriorating into ghost towns as industry and people flow into the less costly suburbs. Restoring Toronto's main streets might stop a similar debacle north of the border.

Certain criteria and goals were set out for the proposal and are discussed inside by the TRAC's Anthony Lever, who has chosen five Queen Street sites which are ripe for residential intensification.

The following are the five sites chosen:
- 639-655 Queen Street East near Broadview
- 318-324 Queen Street East at Berkeley and Parliament
- 295-505 Queen Street East at McDougall Lane and Augusta Avenue
- 1142-1148 Queen Street West at Beaconsfield and Ligar Streets
- 1482-1494 Queen Street West at Macdonnell and Lansdowne Avenues

A brief history, description and possible restoration solution

Please Main Street Restoration on page 4.
OMB rules on plan for Gooderham & Worts

by Alec Keefen

At 2 p.m. on Tuesday May 23, 1995 the Ontario Municipal Board announced its decision on the appeal of the Gooderham & Worts. The Board supported the development of a city-block commercial building on both sides of the street. The building being built and this block was one of the most stunting. In 1991, James G. Macdonell owned six lots which he tried to sell. He then vacated site 1 was the grandson of Alexander Macdonell, who bought large amounts of what is now the west end of the city. Macdonell Avenue was named after the family. James G. Macdonell lived at 71 Macdonell, around the corner from the Algonquin Hotel. To break up the horizontality of the facade and accentuate the window arrangements, A stately four-storey commercial building appears across the facade at regular intervals. Stylized, one can see parallels to another work by the firm of Dick & Wickson, of the same period. The Oldfield's Hall, 2 College Street at Yonge (1891-92), displays a similar use of Chinese-footh, Gothic-style ornamentation, and contrasting stone window surrounds and detailing.

Solution

Of all the sites in the study, this one would seem to be the most desperate. Once the knowledge is gained of its original grand, two-storey status, one cannot really see the site without both towers. By making the block a unified whole again and reconstructing the three to four-storey "missing teeth" complete with towers, the proposed residential density of the site would automatically double and much of the proportionality of the whole city block would be restored. The site's four-storey, turret-shaped neighbour at the north-east corner of Macdonell and Queen also gives some indication of what the original role and role of the plains lines that this section of Parkdale once possessed and to which it could still aspire.

Kingswaybook a runaway best seller

Selling like hot cakes you say? Yes, and not only in the Kingsway.

The Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy's latest foray into the literary world has been a huge success. The recent effort, entitled Kingsway Park: Triumph in Design, has been selling briskly since its launch in mid-November. To date, over 1,200 books have been sold. The launch, which was held in a beautiful room overlooking the Hum- ber River at the Old Mill, was well attended by both TRAC members and Kingsway residents.

The work was co-authored by A.C.O. President Mr. Alec Keefen and Elizabeth brewers. The project was 6 years in the making. Ms. Keefen is Chair of the Eitobicoke Historical Board. Longstanding TRAC members and Park residents were key.

Kingsway Park: Triumph in Design is an in-depth study of the Home Smith houses in the Kingsway area and includes a detailed and comparative look of the architecturally interesting homes of the Kingsway. The book is illustrated throughout with many photographs of the homes and also includes some informative articles on the history of the area. The book is about 150 pages long and is priced at $12.95. It is available at most bookstores and can also be ordered directly from the TRAC office.

TRAC acknowledges the financial assistance of the Heritage Eitobicoke Foundation, whose loan made the

CONTENTS

A Response to Main Street Restoration..............5
Upcoming events..........................5
Kingsway Park: Triumph in Design.............10
New Architectural Tours Launched................10

TRAC Summer 1995
A response to main street restoration
by Anthony Lever

In 1990, the City of Toronto, with the backing of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Province of Ontario, sponsored a design competition entitled "Housing on Toronto's Main Streets." Working on the assumption that Toronto's main streets provided an ideal location for additional needed housing and that there were numerous underdeveloped sites along these streets, a challenge was put forth to architects, planners and other interested parties "to develop appropriate building typologies" while avoiding any negative impact that "intensification of housing" may have on its surroundings.

Among the stated goals and criteria of the competition was the suggestion that "the design proposal should have regard for the historic built form and architectural traditions of Toronto's Main Streets." Also mentioned (as it applied to at least one of the test sites chosen for the competition) was the fact that "the challenge here is to add residential units that do not result in demolition and that fit in with the historic and architectural character of the block." The calls for solutions, however, did not always clearly recognize the existence and history of the commercial blocks and their building typologies which survive on main streets.

As a response, the Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy has chosen five sites where residential "intensification" could take place by rebuilding and/or filling the gap in existing commercial blocks. These sites are at Queen Street, from Broadview to Macdonell Avenue in the west. In each case, a missing portion or "missing tooth" has resulted from fire, demolition or incompatible replacement of an original element of each commercial block. In each case, as well, these buildings make up a substantial and important part of the city block of which they are a part. The Toronto Region Architectural Conservancy argues that replacing the "missing tooth" by rebuilding to the designs of the surviving units in each block is the most logical solution to the challenge of residential intensification and the aforementioned criteria regarding sensitivity to the city's historic and architectural character. The outcome, if such rebuilding occurred, would not only be a return to the grace, beauty and architectural integrity of these blocks, but a regaining of rhythm and continuity for the whole streetscape. The accompanying rejuvenation of neighborhoods, both economically and residentially, also cannot be overlooked.

Queen Street, historically, was a gateway to the city, at both eastern and western ends. Its narrow lot subdivision encouraged speculative ventures resulting in commercial blocks. In each of the sites chosen, a form of entrepreneurial speculation was probably instrumental in the site's development. All buildings date from the 1880's and 1890's and reflect the great prosperity and rapid growth of the city in that period.

Each commercial block chosen contains storefronts at street level, with residential components on the upper floors, and is at least three units wide. As such, each example is one of well over 100 such blocks still existing in Toronto --with Queen Street having the greatest concentration. A history and description of each site follows, as well as a photo of the current site and a visual reconstruction of how it might look after appropriate rebuilding.

As the City's proposal states: "It is important to understand the 'architectural heritage' of Toronto, and the Architectural Conservancy of Toronto hereby offers a practical exercise in doing just that.
1142-1148 Queen Street West (north side between Beaconfield and Lisgar Streets)

Built: 1881/82

History

The history of the blocks to the west and east of Beaconfield Avenue on the north side of Queen Street West is perhaps symbolic of the kind of speculative development that occurred in Toronto in the 1880’s. In 1882, Philip Perpiatt is listed as the owner of four unfinished buildings (brick, two-and-one-half stories) at the site in question, east of Beaconfield. Perpiatt, who was the consul general to the Netherlands, was also the owner of several undeveloped lots of the same size on the block west of Beaconfield. At the same time, the two corner lots west of #1148 had changed hands from J. S. McMurray to The London and Canadian Loan and Investment Co. By the next year, #1142-1148 were all owned by the London and Canadian Loan and all lots west of Beaconfield are owned by J. S. McMurray. These now contained brick buildings, all assessed at the identical rate of their more easterly neighbours. It would seem that a consortium of some kind, juggled, flopped and traded lots and buildings, with James Sawirn McMurray, a well-known barrister in the City and vice-consul to Norway and Sweden playing a central role. The outcome was a development in which a terrace of virtually identical commercial buildings, although with different owners, appeared on the north side of Queen Street West, linking both sides of the Beaconfield Avenue intersection.

Solution

Filling in the "missing teeth" on this block, at #1146-1148, by rebuilding to the pattern established by the surviving buildings, would not only restore the original continuity of the streetscape, but triple the density of the underdeveloped half of this site.

(Note: Visitors to the site may wish to explore Beaconfield Avenue itself. It is a feast of polychromatic brick work attributed to architects Stewart & Strickland.)
639-655 Queen Street East
(south side between Broadview Avenue and East Don Roadway)

Built: 1889-90

History

"Smith's Block", as it was named by contemporary sources, was an eight-unit commercial block developed by owner John Smith. Smith came from a well known Toronto family, long interconnected with the history of the eastern part of the city. His grandfather, William Smith, had settled in the Town of York in 1794. It was William Smith's building and contracting business, along with a knowledge of planning and surveying, that made him an important contributor to the early development of the town. In 1910, Smith's son, William (Jr.), purchased the Governor Simcoe property, (lot 15, east of the Don) from John Headley and shortly thereafter erected a tenancy on the water's edge. He also accumulated a quantity of other real estate. John Smith, William Jr.'s eldest son born in 1881, succeeded his father in business and in the tradition of real estate development. John Smith seems to have been part of a consortium which included the likes of William Herbert Cawthra, Hamilton physician James White, James F. Coleen and Henry S. Strathy. The consortium began subdividing lot 15 in 1889 ('131 ft. on the south side of Queen') with construction beginning shortly thereafter. It may be interesting to note that Smith donated the Scadding Cabin, which was originally located south of this site, to the York Pioneers, who moved it to its present site at the Canadian National Exhibition Grounds.

Description

The three-storey, red brick commercial block consisted of eight units, the central two of which (645-647) have since been demolished. The continuity of the whole was supported by a wooden dentilled cornice at storefront level and contrasting rough-cut stone cornice courses, both running the length of the block. Other basic elements were repeated: primarily the use of two windows at the second storey level and triple round-arched windows at the third storey level, in each unit.

The builder achieved variety by the alternating of two basic forms. The first, an "end" unit (used at both ends and repeated twice in the now-disappeared centre units) is distinguished by a large round-arched opening at the third storey level which is inset with a checkerboard pattern of smooth and rusticated brickwork above the triple window arrangement. The central arch of the three windows is raised above the others and filled in with a terra cotta ornament. Other decorative terra cotta panels occur both below and above these windows. The "end" unit design is also repeated at the building's north-eastern corner, as part of a completely articulated eastern facade facing what was formerly a street, Baseball Place. This originally served to orient the building towards the major intersection of Queen and Broadview Streets. The second, plainer form, (repeated twice between the end and centre units) lacks all the surface decoration of the first and exists as a relief from it, its only distinction being its third storey triple windows which are all kept of the same dimensions, in arcade fashion, and a slightly lower building height.

Although lost to sight at present, the buildings originally displayed ornate paneled brickwork cornices (higher at the centre and ends), running along the top of each unit, as well as squared-off, decorative turrets marking the division between the units and the firewalls. A late 1910 photo also shows the centre units surmounted by a pair of triangular pediments, an identifying name stone ("Smith's Block"), and the entrance to a central doorway, with upper windows above it, inserted between the large brick arches of the centre units.

Solution

With the disappearance of the two centre units, a glaring gap in the whole block exists. This gap is even more palpably obvious from the north side of the street, namely the intersection of Carroll and Queen Street East. Filling in the gap with appropriate three-storey units would not only restore the unity and grandeur of the whole block by linking the currently separated units, but would also replicate the massing of the many three-storey buildings that still exist on this part of Queen Street East. Its reconstruction on the basis of the surviving remnants and corings was accomplished, possibly another half-storey of space, as well as privacy for rooftop units, could be gained.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TRAC Summer Walks: "Two West Side Stories"
West Toronto Junction: "At Home and Away"
Sunday, August 27 at 2 p.m.
Starting place at Jane subway station
Ending at Keele subway station by 3:30 p.m.

Kingston Park Site: "Triumph in Design"
Saturday, August 26th at 2 p.m.
Starting place at Royal York subway station
Ending at Old Mill subway station by 3:30 p.m.

B. Napier Simpson Jr. Memorial Lecture
Thursday, October 19, 1995 at 7:30 p.m.
Board of Education Auditorium, 155 College Street
Speaker: Tony Herbert, Lecturer in Fine Art at Wolverton University and at the University of Keele. Former Curator of the Jack Hall Town Museum. Mr. Herbert has a long association with the Iron Bridge Gorge site.
318-324 Queen Street West
(north side between Berkeley and Parliament Streets)

Built: 1818-20 / 1882
#322-324 1884/5

History

Although the block of land west of Parliament Street on Queen Street East was still primarily vacant in 1868, by the 1870s and 80s the area was a hive of commercial activity and the land was rapidly being subdivided into smaller lots to allow for an increase in activity. Research indicates that by 1882, the easterly half of this city block between Berkeley and Parliament was owned by William C. Price, who ran a gentleman’s furnishing store (and who was later to become Postmaster at the East Bench Post Office on this block). In 1885, almost all buildings were listed as one-storey of rough cast frame construction; by 1885, all but properties, which included as the present the present #322-324 (now a vacant lot), had become two-storey plus a basement, brick buildings.

Various businesses, residences, and organizations, including an East End Star Temperance Hall, were housed in these buildings.

To the west, the land formerly owned by builder and number merchant John Elder (who had also sold some of this land by 1882 in the possession of Robert McKay — for whom a mortgage was granted of $10,000, in the same year. His lot, 30’ x 120’, on the north side of Queen), is represented #318-320 and was assessed as a “Brick Front (and Rough Cast) building of two stories. It probably gained its present mansard roof in the late 1880’s or even early 1890’s — something which had already happened to all of its westerly neighbours by this period.

Description

Although two separate commercial blocks with different owners, are being examined, they saw the same architectural vocabulary of the period. Each unit is of red-brick construction with commercial storefronts on the lower level, a pair of square-headed windows on the second floor, and mansard roofs above. The existing building (#318-320) has echoed its easterly neighbours with a single, bipartite decorative dormer, which although not identical is virtually the same scale as its neighbours, as is the building’s height and roofline. Both facades have wooden sills and lintels and both display a vertical articulation of the brickwork to allow for each unit from the road. The original storefronts, the original two-storey rough cast buildings on the site had been replaced by three-storey brick buildings and four other “unfinished buildings”. No windows have been covered with aluminum siding which obscures its original surfaces and in both buildings the original fenestration has been tampered with.

Since the nine-unit commercial block to the east of the site (built by Price) terminates in a firewall at the rear end, and without the benefit of any contemporary photographs, one can only guess what the “missing tooth” on this block looked like. It would seem to pre-date, at least in its finished form, its westerly neighbour. It is safe to assume, however, that the original building here would have echoed the architectural vocabulary of its neighbours.

Solution

With the disappearance of #318-324, the design, which also anchored both ends of the block, featured a grouping of triple windows at both second and third floor levels. Between string courses separating the storey, a display of rusticated brickwork in a checkerboard pattern. The other design, placed between the above units, featured a slightly projecting bay window of frame construction on the second storey above a window applies on the third floor level.

495-505 Queen Street West
(south between McDougall Lane and Augusta Avenue)

Built: 1889/90

History

Originally a seven-unit commercial block, the land assembled for this venture was first owned by the Land Security Co. in 1885. By 1890, so the assessment rolls, the original two-storey rough cast buildings on the site had been replaced by three-storey brick buildings and four other “unfinished buildings”. The two-storey rough cast buildings on the site had been replaced by three-storey brick buildings and four other “unfinished buildings”. No windows have been covered with aluminum siding which obscures its original surfaces and in both buildings the original fenestration has been tampered with.

Since the nine-unit commercial block to the east of the site (built by Price) terminates in a firewall at the rear end, and without the benefit of any contemporary photographs, one can only guess what the “missing tooth” on this block looked like. It would seem to pre-date, at least in its finished form, its westerly neighbour. It is safe to assume, however, that the original building here would have echoed the architectural vocabulary of its neighbours.

Solution

One feature of the Land Security Co. has been the assistance it has afforded to persons of moderate means to acquire homes of their own, those so advantaged being numbered among the thousands. Incidentally, the lesson is taught of the progressive and secure value of well-bought real estate in Toronto: yet, as many are in a position to see, the art of handling real estate to advantage is not possessed by everybody.

The design of this project proved to be quite successful since almost identical forms of this commercial block building type (with only slight variations) are still seen in the “Hunter Block” (a nine-unit block at 7773-780 Queen Street West), a double unit at #414-16 Stanlea Avenue, and a four-unit block at 7376-742 Queen Street East.

Description

Of the original seven-unit block, much has changed. A vacant lot exists at #497-499, and its neighbours (#501 and #503) have been refaced in an Art Deco style of brick construction, converting them essentially into a single-unit building. Originally, the block was built as a long row of three-storey, red-brick buildings which now have identical storefronts, linked by a continuous Claudelite cornice running at both first and third floor levels. The units are alternated between two different designs, visible in the upper storeys.

KINGSWAY

Despite a higher than expected demand for Kingsway Park: Triumph in Design copies are still available!

Mail cheque for $24.00 (includes $4 for postage and handling) to:
TRAC
Box 7162, Station "A"
Toronto, ON, M5W 1X8

TRAC Summer 1995

page 6

TRAC Summer 1995

page 7

Above: A view of 318-324 Queen Street East as it looks today. Below: after restoration.