

## Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



### **11 Centre Street West - Richmond Hill Temperance Hall**

1876

Part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township

Prepared by: Heritage & Urban Design, Planning & Building Services, 2024

### **History:**

#### **11 Centre Street West**

The property at 11 Centre Street West originated as part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township. The 210-acre Lot 47 was patented from the Crown in 1808 by John E. Stooks in return for his military service. The lot passed through the ownership of D'Arcy and Henry J. Boulton between 1810 and 1818, at which point Henry Boulton sold the property to David Bridgeford. Lot 47 was progressively subdivided and sold off for development or land speculation over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Land Registry records indicate that in September of 1876, John Brown registered Plan 420 within Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township. Plan 420, located at the northwest corner of Yonge and Centre Streets, established five lots: one fronting Yonge Street, and four along the north side of Centre Street West. John Brown then granted Lot 2 of

Plan 420 (now 11 Centre Street West) to “William Harrison et al Trustees” for \$200 on September 6, 1876. As both Brown and Harrison were fervent supporters of the Temperance Movement in York County in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is probable that the “et al Trustees” refers to the Trustees of the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT). Archival newspapers indicate that William Harrison held a leadership role with the Richmond Hill IOGT in 1876, and spearheaded the construction of the new temperance hall on Centre Street West that same year.<sup>1</sup> An article in the *York Herald* from November of 1876 described the new Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West:

*“The splendid new Good Templars Hall at Richmond Hill, York County, was dedicated on Wednesday first inst., attended by very interesting services... The hall is a very commodious one, well finished, neatly painted, and surrounded by good grounds well fenced, the whole making a very tasty appearance from the outsides. Inside the arrangements are excellent. The finishing is done in good style, the walls being ornamented with some appropriate mottos, and decorated with pictures, everything having been done to make the place as attractive as possible.”<sup>2</sup>*

Another article in the *York Herald* from November of 1876 also described the dedication ceremony for the new Temperance Hall, which included services, a dinner for nearly 400 attendees, lectures, and “grand musical entertainment” in the evening.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after it was constructed, the Temperance Hall on Centre Street was also depicted in the 1878 map of Richmond Hill in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of York County* (Figure 1).

Soon after the Temperance Hall was built on Centre Street in 1876, William Harrison, along with other leaders of the Methodist community including Abraham Law, William Trench, and Isaac Crosby, erected a new Methodist Church at the northeast corner of Yonge and Centre Streets in 1880-1881.<sup>4</sup> This established the intersection of Yonge and Centre streets as an important nucleus for the closely linked Temperance and Methodist communities in the village.

Land Registry records indicate that in 1896, the Trustees of Good Templars<sup>5</sup> sold the property at 11 Centre Street West to Elizabeth A. Switzer for \$540. J.A.E. Switzer and his wife Elizabeth (née Atkinson) operated a store on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Centre Street, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and were both actively involved in the Temperance Movement in Richmond Hill. J.A.E. Switzer’s obituary noted him as a great advocate of Temperance, and a leading member of the Royal Templars of Temperance Order in Richmond Hill.<sup>6</sup> It is likely that the Switzers, being strong supporters of temperance, continued to rent or donate use of the existing Temperance

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<sup>1</sup> “Village Directory: Societies,” *York Herald*. August 11, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> “The Temperance Hall,” *York Herald*. November 24, 1876.

<sup>3</sup> “Dedication,” *York Herald*. November 3, 1876.

<sup>4</sup> Stamp, *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930* (Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991), 185.

<sup>5</sup> LRO records indicate that in 1896, the Trustees of Good Templars included William F. Broekenshire, James Armstrong, William N. Madill, Bella Ross, Francis S. Spence, William K. Keys, and James D. Andrews.

<sup>6</sup> “Mr. Switzer’s Death,” *Liberal*. May 20, 1909.

Hall on Centre Street West to the Royal Templars until they sold the property in 1909. A review of archival newspaper articles and announcements also supports this deduction, as advertisements for gatherings and events at the Richmond Hill Temperance Hall similarly cease in 1909. While the Temperance Movement was active in Richmond Hill during the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, its popularity declined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, likely in part due to the passing of the Local Option By-law in 1906, which prohibited liquor sales in the town, thus greatly reducing the need for temperance advocacy.

In August of 1909, the Switzers sold 11 Centre Street West to John H. Sanderson for \$450.<sup>7</sup> An article in *The Liberal* on August 26<sup>th</sup> of that same year records that J.H. Sanderson had purchased the Temperance Hall on Centre Street, and was expected to take the building down to construct “a comfortable dwelling.”<sup>8</sup> However, rather than demolishing the building, Sanderson converted the former Temperance Hall into a residence. He then resold the property to Frederick W. Hall for \$1,500 in January of 1912.<sup>9</sup> A 1923 fire insurance map of Richmond Hill also indicates that the building was used as a dwelling at the time (Figure 2). While no archival images of the building at 11 Centre Street West from the period of its use as a Temperance Hall have been found, a review of similar buildings in Ontario (see Figures 3-6) suggests that the building was originally single-storey, with a large central doorway flanked by raised windows. The addition of a second storey within the existing building envelope, modifications to door and window openings, and the addition of a front porch likely took place when the building was converted to residential use in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The property appears to have been used primarily for residential purposes from 1912 to 1971, when it was sold by owners John and Jane Mollard to Richmond Hill Veterinary Holdings Ltd. The property has been used as a veterinary hospital since the 1970s, and is today occupied by the Richmond Hill Animal Hospital. A two-storey rear extension was added to the building in the 1970s.

### The Temperance Movement in Richmond Hill

The subject property has been associated with the Temperance Movement since the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT) constructed the existing building as a temperance hall in 1876. Alcohol was prevalent in 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneer life, as water was unsafe to drink, tea and coffee too expensive for most people to regularly consume, and hard liquor soothing to the hardships of early settler life.<sup>10</sup> Members of the Temperance Movement believed that the consumption of alcohol led to personal evils and disrupted society.<sup>11</sup> Temperance groups such as the IOGT aimed to promote the cause of Temperance or prohibition, and meetings often included lectures or sermons dedicated to the cause as well as lively social gatherings.<sup>12</sup> The Temperance Movement was generally led by Protestants, especially evangelical denominations, though members of

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<sup>7</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*, York Region, Plan 420, Lot 2, Richmond Hill.

<sup>8</sup> “Locals,” *Liberal*. August 26, 1909.

<sup>9</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*, York Region, Plan 420, Lot 2, Richmond Hill.

<sup>10</sup> Benoit Dostie and Ruth Dupré, “The People’s Will’: Canadians and the 1898 Referendum on Alcohol Prohibition,” *Explorations in Economic History* 49 no. 4 (October 2012): 500.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Graeme Decarie, “Temperance Movement in Canada,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historical Canada. Article published July 23, 2013; Last Edited November 13, 2020.

other religions did sometimes support the cause, or supported moderation, rather than total abstinence, of alcohol consumption.

According to an entry in R.D. Wadsworth's *Temperance Manual* of 1847, a Temperance society appears to have formed in Richmond Hill as early as 1831. By 1860, a newspaper announcement in the *York Herald* reported that the recently established branch of the Good Templars already had over 40 members, and that they were distinguished from other Temperance orders for "admitting ladies as well as men to the privileges of membership."<sup>13</sup> The Good Templars' support of equal rights for all human beings, regardless their gender, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic background, is noteworthy for a group established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when women did not yet have voting rights.

Temperance societies such as the IOGT also played a role in national history by campaigning for prohibition. This resulted in the Canada Temperance Act of 1878, which allowed local governments the option to prohibit the retail sale of alcohol within their jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> The regulation and enforcement of alcohol sales in Richmond Hill also commenced in the early 1870s through the use of "shop licenses," or permits allowing the sale of alcohol. William Harrison, Reeve of Richmond Hill at the time and a leader in the IOGT, signed the last shop license in 1874, and for more than three decades before the passing of the Local Option By-law in 1906, the sale of alcohol was limited to hotels in the village.<sup>15</sup>

In 1906, Richmond Hill residents first cast their votes on the Local Option By-law, which proposed a total ban on alcohol sales within the boundaries of the village.<sup>16</sup> The campaign for Local Option had been spearheaded by local women's groups, who joined forces with Protestant clergymen and temperance-minded businessmen to fight for the prohibition of alcohol sales in the village. Together, these supporters of Temperance persuaded Council to pass the Local Option bylaw in February 1906 and to defeat an attempt to repeal the bylaw six years later.<sup>17</sup>

The enactment of the Local Option brought a significant decline in alcohol related issues in the village, and Richmond Hill maintained its status as a "dry" community until 1962, when residents finally voted in favour of licensing the sale of liquor within the town.<sup>18</sup> This marked the end of 56 years of prohibition in Richmond Hill.

A number of temperance halls were built by different groups in Ontario throughout the mid- and late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Research indicates that temperance halls in Toronto, Newmarket, Bishop's Mills (North Grenville), Kettleby, Greenbank (Scugog), Oakville, and Sharon (East Gwillimbury) shared similarities in their design (see Figures 3-6). Reflecting their function as community gathering spaces, and the values of restraint, discipline and frugality that were hallmarks of the both the Temperance Movement and

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<sup>13</sup> "The Good Templars," *York Herald*. November 16, 1860.

<sup>14</sup> Decarie, "Temperance Movement in Canada."

<sup>15</sup> "Richmond Hill Electors go to the Polls Friday," *Liberal*. November 14, 1935.

<sup>16</sup> "Richmond Hill Electors Vote Decisive No," *Liberal*. November 21, 1935.

<sup>17</sup> Stamp, *Early Days in Richmond Hill*, p. 265.

<sup>18</sup> "Majority Favour Liquor Licenses," *Liberal*. May 3, 1962.

the Protestant religions from which it originated, these buildings are typically modest, single-storey, front-gabled structures with symmetrical facades featuring large central entrances flanked by raised windows. Due to the decline of the Temperance Movement in the early 1900s, many temperance halls were demolished in Ontario in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and now very few remain.

### **Architecture:**

Dating to 1876, the building at 11 Centre Street West is a rare surviving example of the Victorian Temperance Hall building typology, which was widely applied to Temperance Halls throughout Ontario in the mid- and late-19<sup>th</sup> century. While the building was modified for residential use in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century following the decline of the Temperance Movement, it remains legible as a Temperance Hall due to its many distinct and representative architectural features.

The subject building is a 1 ½ storey front-gabled structure dating to 1876, with a rear (north) addition constructed in the 1970s that projects slightly above the roofline of the original (south) portion of the building. The original (south) portion of the building has a simple rectangular plan, and features a front-gabled roof, and vinyl clapboard cladding. The rear addition features brick cladding at first-floor level, and vinyl siding above.

The building's front (south) elevation is symmetrically-organized into three bays of window/door openings at ground-floor level, and two bays of windows within the front gable at second-floor level. At ground-floor level, the easternmost bay features a pair of entrances, sheltered by a small hipped-roof porch supported by square pillars. Second-storey windows, the pair of off-centre entrances, and the front porch were likely added after the building was converted to residential use in 1909, as these are atypical features for 19<sup>th</sup> century public buildings such as temperance halls.

The west and east elevations of the original (south) portion of the building feature two and three window openings, respectively. Though of different sizes and configurations, all windows in the original (south) portion of the building are flat-headed. All window openings now feature contemporary aluminum or vinyl units. The building also features a red brick chimney, located slightly west of the peak of the roof, at the junction between the original (south) portion of the building and the new addition.

The building's former wooden clapboard siding and scalloped wood trim below the front gable and eaves were recently covered by new vinyl siding in 2015 (see Figure 7). It is unknown whether these details still remain intact under the new siding.

The rear portion of the original (south) portion of the building has been covered by the rear addition. The appearance of the original rear elevation remains unknown.

### **Context:**

The subject property is located on the north side of Centre Street, just west of Yonge Street and within the historic core of Richmond Hill village. Immediately east of the building there are several paved driveways, and surface parking at the rear of commercial buildings fronting onto Yonge Street. There is also a surface parking lot

located directly north of the subject property. Further to the east of the subject property is the intersection of Yonge and Centre streets, which features a mix of historic and contemporary low-rise commercial and institutional built form, as well as the 1881 Richmond Hill Methodist Church at the northeast corner of the intersection (Figure 13).

West of the subject property, both sides of Centre Street West features predominantly fine-grained late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century residential built form, along with a residential slab tower dating to the 1970s.

### **Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06 – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:**

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06, the prescribed provincial *Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest* under Part IV, Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg. 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

Criteria applicable to the property are outlined below, along with explanatory text.

#### **1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.**

Dating to 1876, the building at 11 Centre Street West has design value as a rare surviving example of the Victorian Temperance Hall building typology, which was widely applied to Temperance Halls throughout Ontario in the mid- and late-19<sup>th</sup> century. While converted to residential use in 1909, the building remains legible as a Temperance Hall, and has retained its original scale, form, massing, and orientation towards Centre Street, as well as its simple rectangular plan, front-gabled roof, and the symmetrical organization of bays on its front (south) elevation. The simplicity and sparsity of the building's design and material palette is also representative of the Temperance Hall typology, and reflects the values of restraint, discipline and frugality that were central to both the Temperance Movement, and the Protestant denominations from which it originated.

#### **2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.**

N/A

#### **3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.**

N/A

#### **4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.**

The Temperance Hall has historical value for its direct associations with the Temperance Movement and several fraternal Temperance orders active in Richmond Hill in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The hall was constructed by members of the International Order of Good Templars in 1876, and was used as a community gathering space for different Temperance groups for over 30 years.

Advocating for the avoidance of alcohol as a way of achieving societal good, the Temperance Movement was a significant international movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Temperance Movement is also significant in its early support of equal rights for all human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic background, as evidenced in the movement's admittance of female members as early as the mid-1800s. The Temperance Movement is also directly linked to Richmond Hill's history as a "dry" town from 1906 to 1962.

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

The property also yields information about the genesis, growth, and decline of the Temperance Movement in Richmond Hill and nationally during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which contributes to a broader understanding of the community, its history, and societal trends and forces during this period.

**6. The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.**

N/A

**7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.**

Located on the north side of Centre Street, west of Yonge Street, the Temperance Hall has contextual value for defining, maintaining, and supporting the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century village character of the surrounding area. This village character is typified by low-rise commercial and institutional buildings on Yonge Street, such as the nearby Methodist Church (1881), and Old Post Office (1936), along with fine-grained residential built form from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries along Centre Street West.

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

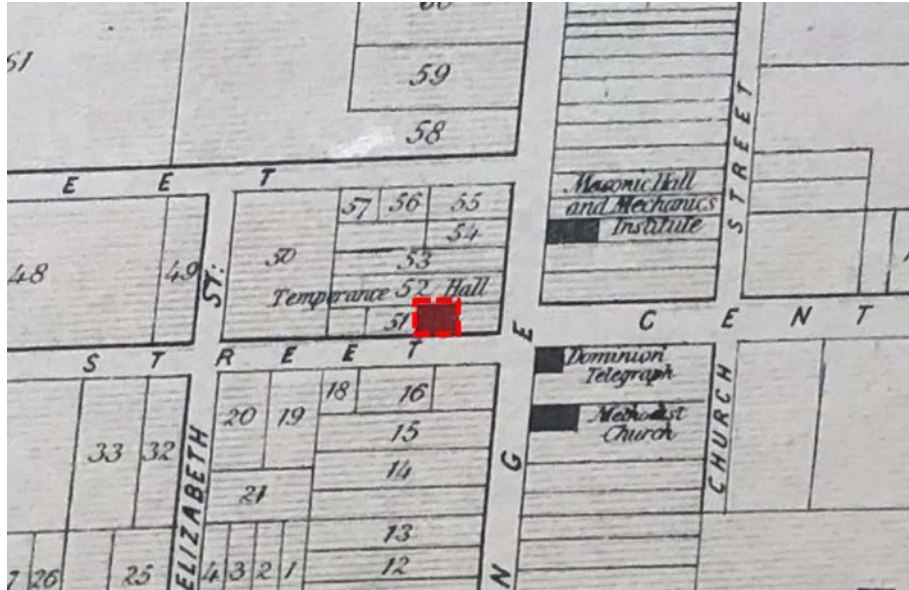
The property also has contextual value for its functional, visual, and historical links to the Methodist Church (1881) at the northwest corner of Yonge and Centre streets. Built within 5 years of each other and approximately 50 metres apart, the two buildings would originally have functioned as an important nucleus for Richmond Hill's closely linked Temperance and Methodist communities in the late 1800s.



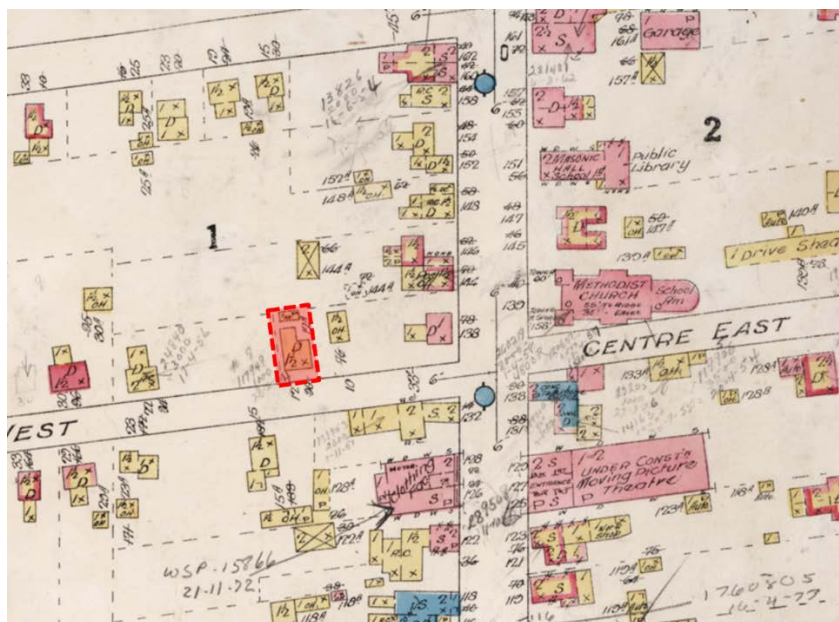
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.

N/A

## Maps and Photographs



**Figure 1** Detail of the 1878 Miles & Co. *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York*, showing the approximate location of the Temperance Hall on the north side of Centre Street West in red (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



**Figure 2** Detail of the 1923 Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, with the approximate location of the Temperance Hall (used as a dwelling at the time) indicated in red. (Source: University of Toronto Library).





**Figure 3** Kettleby Temperance Hall (c. 1850). Originally located in Kettleby, Ontario, but since relocated to Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto. (Source: <https://acotoronto.ca/building.php>).



**Figure 4** Former Greenbank Temperance Hall (now demolished), Scugog, Ontario. Associated with the Sons of Temperance. Date of photo unknown. (Source: <http://www.scugogheritage.com/misc/hamlets.htm>).



**Figure 5** Former Oakville Temperance Hall (1843; now demolished), at Trafalgar and Randall. Associated with the Oakville Temperance Reform Society. Date of photo unknown. (Source: <http://www.oakvillehistory.org/html/TrafWalk/trafWalk1-a.htm>).



**Figure 6** Composite sketch of the north side of Millard Avenue, Newmarket, circa 1920. The Temperance Hall (1856; now demolished) is shown third from the left. (Source: <https://www.newmarkettoday.ca/remember-this/remember-this-newmarket-long-battled-banned-demon-booze-1191067>).





**Figure 7** 2014 photograph of the Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West, prior to the building being over-clad in contemporary siding. Note the the building's scalloped wooden frieze, wooden clapboard siding, and flat headed windows with wood surrounds. (Source: MHBC).



**Figure 8** Current photograph looking north, showing the principal (south) elevation of the former Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West. Note the building's 1 ½ - storey massing, front-gabled roof, and symmetrical organization of bays. (Source: HUD, 2023).



**Figure 9** Current photograph looking northeast, showing the principal (south) and side (west) elevations of the former Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West, with the 1970s addition visible at the rear. Note the original building's 1 ½ - storey massing, front-gabled roof, symmetrical organization of bays on its front elevation, and flat-headed windows. (Source: HUD, 2023).



**Figure 10** Current photograph looking northwest, showing the principal (south) and side (east) elevations of the former Temperance Hall at 11 Centre Street West, with the 1970s addition visible at the rear. Note the original building's 1 ½ - storey massing, front-gabled roof, symmetrical organization of bays on its front elevation, and flat-headed windows. (Source: HUD, 2023).





**Figure 11** Context view looking northwest along Centre Street West, showing the former Temperance Hall within a fine-grained 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century residential streetscape on the north side of Centre Street West. (Source: HUD, 2023).



**Figure 12** Context view looking northeast along Centre Street West, showing the visual, functional, and historical relationships existing between the former Temperance Hall and the Methodist Church to the east. (Source: HUD, 2023).

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