

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



111 Richmond Street - Gaby House

c. 1860 & c. 1885

Part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township

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

History:

111 Richmond Street

The property at 111 Richmond Street originated as part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township. The subject property is located on the north side of Richmond Street, within the boundaries of the historic village of Richmond Hill.

Land Registry records indicate that the 210-acre Lot 47 was first patented from the Crown in 1808 by John E. Stooks. In 1810, Lot 47 was sold to D'Arcy and Henry J. Boulton, who were members of one of York's elite families. The property was then acquired by David Bridgeford in 1818. Beginning in the 1820s, the property was subdivided into smaller building lots and sold for development or speculation.

Land Registry records indicate that in 1850, Martha Harrison, an English immigrant and widow, purchased a ¼-acre property identified as "N.E. ½ 1/4 acre" from Amos Wright for £5. This property, later identified as Village lot 26 in Gibson's Plan of the Village of

Richmond Hill (1879), was located on the north side of Richmond Street, west of Yonge Street. According to the 1851 census, Martha Harrison, age 43, and her children were living on Lot 47 Concession 1, Vaughan Township, in a one-storey frame house.¹ Martha Harrison sold Lot 26 to Frederick Gaby in 1859 for \$130,² and Gaby went on to purchase the neighboring Village lots 27 and 28 to the east from James. R. Izzard in 1860 (Figure 1).

Archival tax assessment rolls, directories, and voter's lists from the 1860s and 1870s indicate that Frederick Gaby resided on Richmond Street during this period, likely in the subject property. While the house's exact date of construction cannot be verified, Gaby likely built it soon after purchasing the property in 1860. Following Frederick's death in 1880, his son, Levi, bought the subject property for \$615 in 1885.³ Around this time, Levi expanded and overbricked the original frame house.⁴ Levi also constructed a house for his widowed mother, Eliza, on the neighbouring property to the east at 103 Richmond Street around 1886.⁵

Following Levi Gaby's untimely death in 1900, ownership of the house at 111 Richmond Street was transferred to Levi's widow, Sarah Jane. The 1901 Census lists Sarah Jane as residing alone in the subject property, next door to her mother-in-law, Eliza Gaby. However, by the 1911 Census, Sarah Jane had moved out of the subject property (Village Lots 26 & 27 on Lot 47), as it was occupied by George and Elizabeth Smith, their five children, and lodger Henry Johnson at the time. In the 1931 Census, Sarah Jane Gaby is recorded as living in another property on Yonge Street with her nephew John H. Brown. Following Sarah Jane's death in 1937, the property at 11 Richmond Street was transferred by her executors to Albert Glass and John H. Brown.

The Gaby Family

Born in 1830 in Lincolnshire, England, Frederick Gaby immigrated to Canada, arriving in Richmond Hill around 1854. Frederick was a farmer and early settler in Richmond Hill village, and accumulated over 11 acres of property within Lot 47, Vaughan Township during the 1860s and 1870s.⁶ Frederick was also an active member of the local Richmond Hill Methodist community, as well as the Independent Order of Good Templars.⁷

Upon Frederick's death in 1880, his real estate holdings in Elgin Mills and Richmond Hill were put up for auction at the Grand Central Hotel; Frederick's son, Levi Gaby, bought all of his father's Richmond Hill properties at this time, which included the subject

¹ It is possible that Martha Harrison's original one-storey frame cottage on Village Lot 26 was enlarged by Frederick Gaby when he purchased the property in 1859; however, this cannot be verified.

² Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book, York Region, Concession 1, Lot 47, Vaughan Township (Richmond Hill).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Duncan, George, "Heritage Structure Report." *Town of Richmond Hill*, 2000.

⁵ Common Bond Collective, "103 Richmond Street, Richmond Hill, Conservation Brief." *Richmond Hill Department of Planning and Building Services*, 2023.

⁶ Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book, York Region, Concession 1, Lot 47, Vaughan Township (Richmond Hill).

⁷ "An Old Settler Gone," *York Herald*. Mar 25, 1880.

property at 111 Richmond Street on the north side of Richmond St, as well as additional properties on village lots 46, 47, and 48 on the south side of Richmond Street.

During the 1890s, Levi Gaby ran an express cartage business from the Richmond Hill to Toronto,⁸ known as *Gaby's Express*, which ran every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday delivering and collecting freight, parcels, and coal. Advertisements for Levi's cartage business can be seen throughout various issues of *The Liberal* during this time.⁹

Levi Gaby's tragic death is described in an issue of *The Liberal* from November 22, 1900. While staying overnight in York (Toronto) due to inclement weather, Levi fell headfirst into an uncovered, water-filled post hole for the new St. Lawrence Market building, and drowned.¹⁰ The local community was shocked by this incredibly unfortunate event. In 1901, Levi's wife, Sarah, was awarded \$2,500 in damages after a lawsuit against the City of Toronto resulting from her husband's death.¹¹

The Gaby family is responsible for building the original house at 111 Richmond Street around 1860, as well as expanding and over-bricking it in the late 1880s. The Gaby family owned the subject property from 1860 to 1937, and members of the Gaby family resided in the house until at least 1901.

Architecture:

While the original frame house on the subject property dates to c. 1860, the Gaby House was expanded and overbricked c. 1885, and is now legible as a 1 ½-storey, brick veneered building with a T-shaped plan, representative of the Picturesque Gothic Revival architectural style.

The Picturesque architectural style emerged during the 19th century as part of the broader Picturesque artistic concept and movement, which is characterized by a strong focus on the visual qualities of both architecture and natural landscapes when they are combined. Picturesque architecture sought to emulate the beauty found in natural landscapes and irregular forms, in contrast to the formal and symmetrical designs of earlier movements such as Neoclassicism.¹² Picturesque architecture is also characterized by its Gothic Revival influences such as steeply pitched gables and ornate details. Typical elements of the Picturesque style present in the subject dwelling include the structure's T-plan form, cross-gabled roof, and decorative details such as the dichromatic brickwork (now painted white), mansard-roofed bay window, and the bellcast verandah with spindlework trim and turned wooden posts.

The structure rests on a rubble-stone foundation. While the building's brick cladding is currently painted white, an undated historical photograph reveals that the underlying brick is buff with red-brick quoins and voussoirs (Figure 3). A four-course brick plinth

⁸ "Levi Gaby's Death," *Liberal*. Nov 22, 1900.

⁹ "Gaby's Express," *Liberal*. Aug 28, 1888.

¹⁰ "Levi Gaby's Death," *Liberal*. Nov 22, 1900.

¹¹ "Verdict Against the City," *Liberal*. Nov 7, 1901.

¹² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Picturesque." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 24, 2013. <https://www.britannica.com/art/picturesque>.

with angled top bricks lines the base of the structure. The house features a medium-pitched cross-gabled roof, currently clad in black asphalt shingles.

The building features segmentally-arched window openings with wooden lugsills, brick voussoirs, and two-over two window units. While most windows have louvered wooden shutters, these are not original.

The house's principal (south) elevation faces Richmond Street. This elevation features a paneled front door, located just east of the ell, which is sheltered by a bellcast-roofed verandah on turned wooden posts with decorative spindlework brackets and trim. The south-facing gable-end of this elevation also features a canted bay window crowned with a sheet-metal clad concave mansard roof.

A modern frame addition, built between 1954 and 1970,¹³ covers the original ground-floor level of the building's north (rear) elevation.

Context:

The Gaby House at 111 Richmond Street is located on the north side of Richmond Street, within the boundaries of the historic village of Richmond Hill. The subject property's scale, form, and Gothic Revival architectural style define, support and maintain the predominantly fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape on Richmond Street. Surrounding residential buildings on Richmond Street that contribute to this historical character include the Eliza Gaby House at 103 Richmond Street (c. 1886), the Mrs. Peter Bassingthwaite House at 104 Richmond Street (c. 1913), the Gordon H. Sloane House at 110 Richmond Street (1922), the Grace Southmayd House at 118 Richmond Street, the John D. Sanders House at 121 Richmond Street, the Leslie Innes House at 124 Richmond Street, and the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street.

The subject property also shares a particularly strong contextual link with the Eliza Gaby House (Pt. IV Designated) at 103 Richmond Street, which Levi Gaby built for his mother on the neighbouring property to the east c. 1886.

¹³ "Historical Imagery." YorkMaps. <https://ww4.yorkmaps.ca/>.

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 c. 1860 and c. 1885, the Gaby House at 111 Richmond Street has design value as a representative example of Picturesque Gothic Revival residential architecture in Richmond Hill. Architectural features representative of the Gothic Revival style include the building's 1 ½-storey scale, T-shaped form, cross-gabled roof, dichromatic brick cladding, mansard-roofed bay window, windows with segmental-arched brick vousoirs and wooden lugsills, paneled front door, and bellcast verandah with turned wooden posts and decorative spindlework brackets and trim.

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 Gaby House has historical value for its direct associations with the Gaby family, who owned the property from 1859 to 1937. Frederick Gaby, an early English settler and farmer in Richmond Hill, assembled the subject property between 1859 and 1860, and lived on the property with his wife and children during the 1860s and 1870s. After Frederick Gaby's death in 1880, the property was bought by his son, Levi, who expanded the and overbricked the house c. 1885. Levi Gaby ran an express cartage business from the village to Toronto, known as "Gaby's Express" during the 1890s. Levi's cartage business served the local community by delivering and collecting parcels, freight, and coal for Richmond Hill residents. Levi's wife, Sarah (Pugsley) Gaby, was granted the property following her husband's tragic death in 1900, and owned the property until her death in 1937.

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.

N/A

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.

The Gaby House has contextual value because it is important in defining and maintaining the fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of Richmond Street, and the historical character of Richmond Hill's village core more broadly.

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

The Gaby House also has contextual value because it is functionally and historically linked to the Eliza Gaby House directly to the east at 103 Richmond Street, which Levi Gaby built for his widowed mother on the neighbouring property c. 1886.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

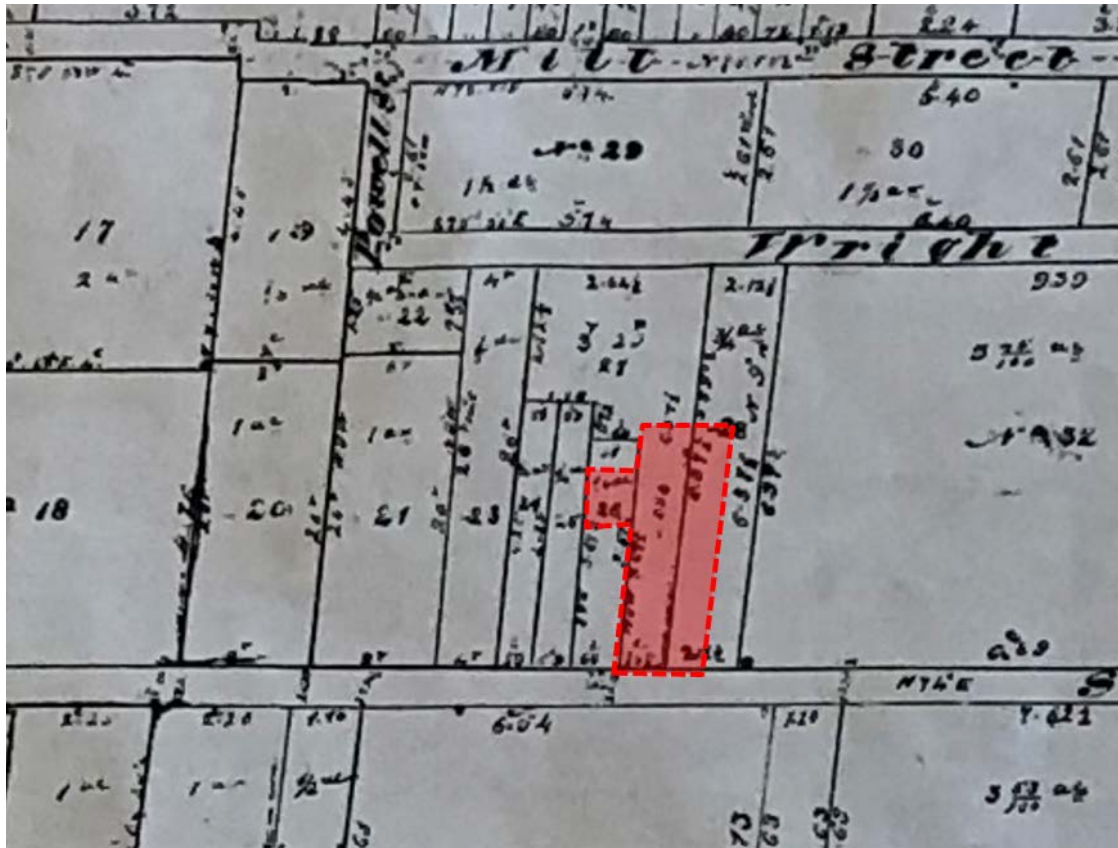


Figure 1 Detail of Gibson's Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill, 1879, with the approximate location of 111 Richmond Street on part of lots 26, 27 & 28 indicated in red. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



Figure 2 Detail of the 1923 Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, with the approximate location of the Gaby House at 111 Richmond St indicated in red. The neighbouring Eliza Gaby House to the east can also be seen in this map (Source: University of Toronto Library).



Figure 3 Undated historic photograph of 111 Richmond Street, showing its original patterned dichromatic brickwork. (Source: Richmond Hill LACAC, "Heritage Building Summary – 111 Richmond Street.")



Figure 4 Current photograph looking north, showing the principal (south) elevation of 111 Richmond Street. Note the building's 1 ½ - storey massing, medium-pitched cross-gabled roof, bellcast-roofed verandah with turned wooden posts and decorative spindlework trim, and mansard-roofed bay window. (Source HUD, 2023).

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