

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



124 Richmond Street - Leslie Innes House

1888

Part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township

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

History:

124 Richmond Street

The property at 124 Richmond Street originated as part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township. The subject property is located on the south side of Richmond Street, between Bridgeford Street North and Elizabeth Street North, and 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 lots and sold for development or speculation. In 1879, Gibson's *Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill* was registered, which laid out Village Lot 33 on the south side of Richmond Street (Figure 1).

Land Registry abstract indexes indicate that in February of 1888, Jonathan Brillinger granted a parcel of land on Lot 47 to Leslie Innes for \$600.¹ While the parcel is only identified as “Part S.M.,” this property likely contained Village Lot 33. Leslie Innes then built a brick home on Village Lot 33 the same year, confirmed by a small datestone reading “1888” on the subject building’s front (north) elevation (Figure 6). This property would have been ideally situated for Leslie Innes, a builder who also owned a large lumber and flour mill known as the *L. Innes & Sons Mill* at the west end of Richmond Street, south of the Mill Pond (Figure 2). Census records and voters lists from Richmond Hill from the 1890s to the 1910s also list Leslie Innes as residing at the subject dwelling on Village Lot 33, a two-storey brick house with eight rooms,² located on the south side of Richmond Street.³ A 1907 photograph from the Richmond Hill Library Photographic Collection displays Leslie Innes and his family outside his home at 124 Richmond Street (Figure 3).

Following Leslie Innes’ death in 1919, he bequeathed his property, including his home on Village Lot 33 and the mill on Village Lot 8, to his sons, William and John Leslie.⁴ On December 8, 1919, the north portion of Lot 421 of the *Reuben’s Plan* (located within the larger Village Lot 33, and containing the subject property) was granted to John Henry Innes (son of William Innes) for \$1. The property remained in the Innes family until it was sold to Arthur A. Eden for \$3800 on March 28, 1934.

Leslie Innes & Sons

Leslie Innes was born in 1828 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, to William Innes and Isabel Mackie. William Innes was a master carpenter by trade and passed his skills onto his son Leslie, who immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1854. Leslie Innes’ carpentry skills secured him employment working on the construction of the Northern Railway line from Toronto to Lake Simcoe’s Cook’s Bay. In 1857, Leslie married Mary Ritchie, who also immigrated to Canada from Scotland.⁵ Leslie and his family moved to Richmond Hill in 1885.⁶

Leslie worked as a carpenter and builder, and founded *L. Innes & Sons* with his sons William and John upon moving to Richmond Hill in 1885. In 1890, Leslie purchased Dr. Rolph Langstaff’s lumber Mill at the west end of Richmond Street for \$1400.⁷ A fire destroyed the mill shortly after in 1894. However, the lumber mill was rebuilt and combined with a planing mill which operated until the 1930s and was one of the last saw mills on the west branch of the Don River.⁸ The Ontario Gazetteer and Directory for 1895 lists Leslie Innes and Sons (William and John) as proprietors of a saw and shingle mill. Due to the supply of power and water provided by the Mill Pond and Don River,

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

² *Canadian Census*, 1891, 1901, 1911.

³ *List of Voters for the Village of Richmond Hill*, 1891, 1894, 1897.

⁴ *Final Will and Testament of Leslie Innes*. Richmond Hill Public Library Archives, 1912.

⁵ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of York*. Toronto: J. H. Beers & co., 1907. 558-559

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book*, York Region, Concession 1, Lot 47, Vaughan Township (Richmond Hill).

⁸ *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of York*, 1907.

Richmond Hill's Mill Pond area became a centre for industry in the village in the late 19th century. In addition to the mill operated by *L. Innes & Sons*, other industries in the area included the Wilson foundry, an edge tool factory, and several flour and grist mills.⁹

As builders, Leslie Innes & Sons constructed many houses in Richmond Hill in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and their lumber and planing mill also supplied timber and wood finishes to countless other buildings during this period. Advertisements for *L. Innes & Sons* can be seen throughout various issues of *The Liberal* from 1886 to the early 1900s.¹⁰ An advertisement from the 1902 *Metropolitan Railway Guide Book and Time Table* provides a description of the *L. Innes & Sons* offerings, stating:

"We manufacture all kinds of exterior and interior finish for houses, and keep in stock a large assortment of all kinds of Lumber: Shingles, Floorings, Sheeting, Doors, Sash, Blinds, Mouldings, etc. We manufacture mantles and work boards for hotels, and all kinds of church finish. We also control a Flour Mill where the best grade of flour, feed, etc., are always kept in stock."

Buildings attributed to *L. Innes & Sons* in Richmond Hill include: the Charles Mason Double House at 12-14 Church Street South (1891); the William Proctor Double House at 37-39 Centre Street West (1891); the William Innes House at 297 Richmond Street (c. 1893); the Old Town Hall (former Richmond Hill High School) at 10268 Yonge Street (1897); the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street (1903); the John Rumble House at 36 Arnold Crescent (1913); the Innes and Co. Rental Houses at 127 and 129 Centre Street West (c. 1914); the William Cook House at 26 Church Street (1913); the M. L. McConaghy Public School at 10100 Yonge Street (1914); and the Mrs. Joe Graham House at 38 Arnold Crescent (1915).

Architecture:

Dating to 1888, the Leslie Innes House at 124 Richmond Street is a representative example of late-Victorian Gothic Revival residential architecture in Richmond Hill.

The dwelling at 124 Richmond Street is a 1 ½-storey, buff-brick building with an asymmetrical L-shaped plan. The house is oriented to the north, and features a cross-gabled roof with steeply-pitched north, east and west gable-ends.

The subject building features a rubble-stone foundation and buff brick cladding laid in stretcher bond, with decorative masonry detailing visible on its principal (north) and side (east and west) elevations. This masonry detailing includes a buff-brick projecting building base, as well as red-brick quoins and voussoirs/hood molds over the building's segmental-arched windows and doors.

The first storey of the building's principal (north) elevation features a projecting bay window with a concave mansard roof. A similar projecting bay window with a hipped roof is also located on the subject building's side (east) elevation. The house features two raised segmental-arched doorways within the building's ell; one facing north, and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Shingles!" *Liberal*. Apr 13, 1899.

the other facing east. Both doorways are topped by red-brick voussoirs/hood molds, feature paneled wooden doors, and are sheltered by a simple shed-roofed porch on square posts, which is a later addition to the building. The eastern-facing doorway also features an historical wooden storm door with scroll trim and colored glass accents.

A white-painted brick containing the house's construction date of "1888" is located within the front (north) gable.

A non-original side/rear addition, clad in buff brick with red-brick quoins, adjoins the building's south and partial west elevations. The precise date of the addition is not known, but a review of historical aerial photographs suggest it was built between the 1980s and 1990s.

Context:

The Leslie Innes House at 124 Richmond Street is located on the south side of Richmond Street, within the boundaries of the historic village of Richmond Hill. The subject property's scale, form, and late-Victorian 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 Gaby House at 111 Richmond Street (c. 1885), the Eliza Gaby House at 103 Richmond Street (c. 1886), the Mrs. Peter Bassingthwaite House at 104 Richmond Street (c. 1913), the Grace Southmayd House at 118 Richmond Street (1922), the John D. Sanders House at 121 Richmond Street (c. 1920), the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street (c. 1903), the Harry Innes House at 132 Richmond Street (1913), and the James Freek House at 165 Richmond Street (c. 1860).

The subject building also has contextual value for being historically and functionally linked to a collection of properties built and owned by the Innes family along Richmond Street, the road leading to the *L. Innes & Sons* lumber mill located at the western terminus of the street, south of Mill Pond. These properties include the subject dwelling, as well as the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street (c. 1903), the Harry Innes House at 132 Richmond Street (1913), and the William Innes House at 297 Richmond Street (c. 1893).

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 1888, the Leslie Innes House at 124 Richmond Street has design and physical value as a representative example late-Victorian Gothic Revival residential architecture in Richmond Hill. The building has retained its original scale, form, massing and orientation on the south side of Richmond Street. The building has also retained many original architectural details that are representative of the late-Victorian Gothic Revival style including an asymmetrical L-shaped plan, steeply-pitched cross-gabled roof, buff-brick cladding with red-brick quoins and voussoirs/hood molds, segmental-headed windows and doors, projecting bay windows on its north and east elevations, date stone, and east-facing wooden storm door with scroll trim and colored glass accents.

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 Leslie Innes House has historical value for its direct association with Leslie Innes, who constructed the dwelling in 1888, and resided there until his death in 1919. Leslie, along with his two sons William and John, founded the construction company *L. Innes & Sons* when they moved to Richmond Hill around 1885, and were prolific builders and carpenters in the village from the 1880s to the 1910s. The Innes family also owned a lumber and planing mill at the west end of Richmond Street from the 1880s to the 1930s, which was a key part of the industry that developed around Mill Pond in the late 19th century, and was one of the last lumber mills to operate on the west branch of the Don River. Leslie Innes was an important local business owner and employer, and significantly contributed to the built form character of Richmond Hill village around the turn of the 20th century through his construction projects, as well as the wooden finishes manufactured in his lumber mill.

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.

The Leslie Innes House also has historical value because it reflects the work of Leslie Innes of *L. Innes & Sons*, who was a significant builder, carpenter and lumber mill owner in Richmond Hill from the 1880s to the 1910s.

Other notable buildings constructed by *L. Innes & Sons* include the William Proctor Double House at 37-39 Centre Street West (1891), the Charles Mason Double House at 12-14 Church Street South (1891), the William Innes House at 297 Richmond Street (c. 1893), the Richmond Hill High School at 10268 Yonge Street (1897), the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street (1903), and the M. L. McConaghy Public School at 10100 Yonge Street (1914).

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

The Leslie Innes House has contextual value because its scale, form, and late-Victorian Gothic Revival architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape on 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 subject building also has contextual value for being historically and functionally linked to a collection of properties built and owned by the Innes family along Richmond Street, the road leading to the *L. Innes & Sons* lumber mill located at the western terminus of the street, south of Mill Pond. These properties include the subject dwelling, as well as the John L. Innes House at 131 Richmond Street (c. 1903), the Harry Innes House at 132 Richmond Street (1913), and the William Innes House at 297 Richmond Street (c. 1893).

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

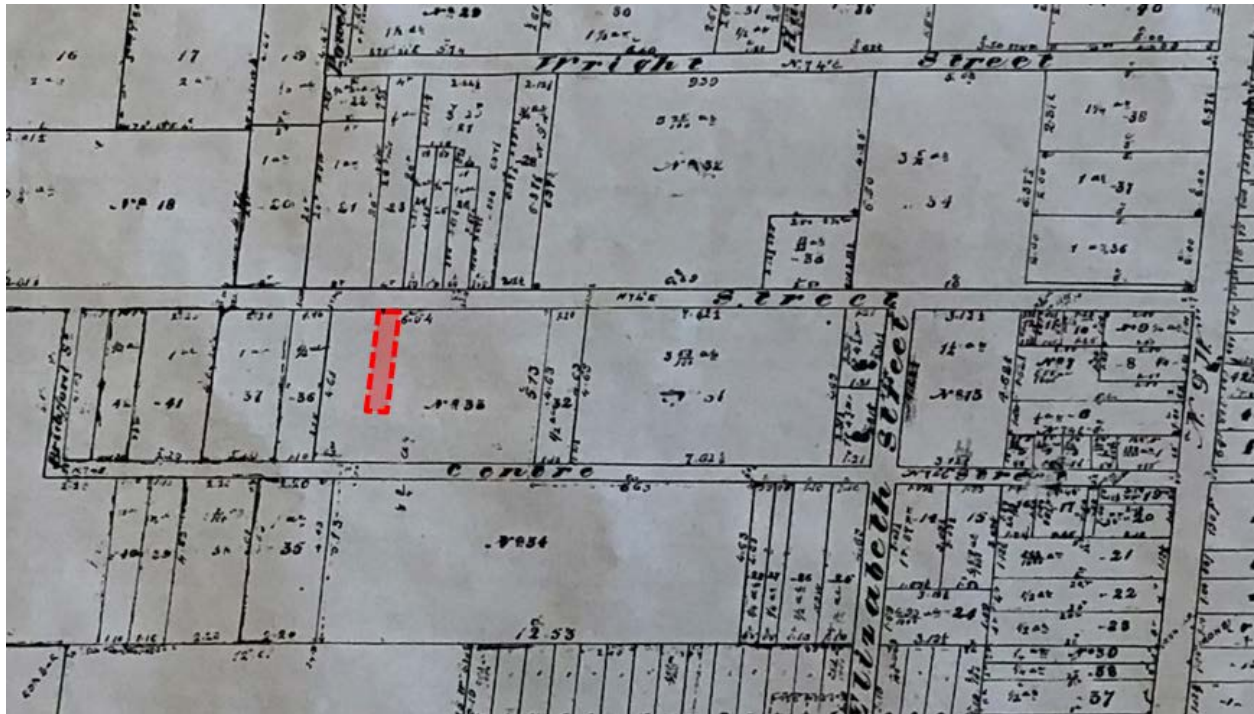


Figure 1 Detail of Gibson's *Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill*, 1879, showing the approximate location of the subject property at 124 Richmond Street in red, within the larger Village Lot 33 (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).

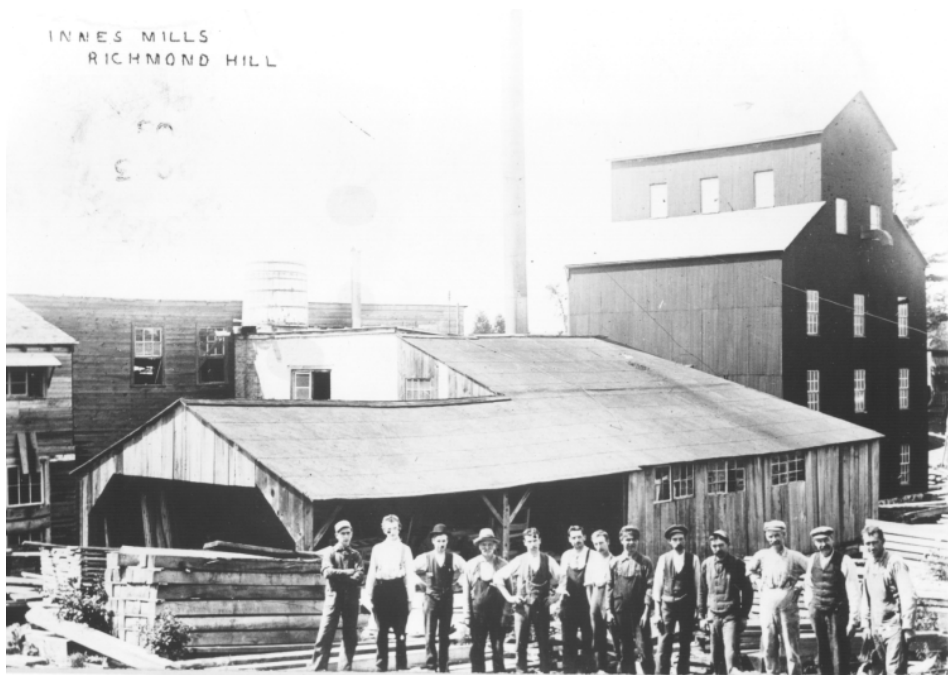


Figure 2 Photograph of the L. Innes & Sons sawmill and industrial complex on Richmond Street, c. 1920. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



Figure 3 1907 photograph of Leslie and Mary Innes and their three sons on the porch of their home at 124 Richmond Street. (Left to right) Top: Alexander, John L. and William Innes. Bottom: Leslie and Mary Innes (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



Figure 4 Photograph of 124 Richmond Street's front (north) elevation, looking south from Richmond Street. Note the building's 1 ½-storey massing, L-shaped plan, steeply-pitched cross-gabled roof, dichromatic brickwork with red-brick quoining and voussoirs/hood molds, projecting bay windows, and the 1888 date stone within the front gable (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 5 Photograph of 124 Richmond Street's side (east) and front (north) elevations, looking southwest from Richmond Street (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 6 Detailed photograph of the white brick inscribed with "1888" within 124 Richmond Street's front (north) gable (Source: HUD, 2023).

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