

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



18 Arnold Crescent - Elmwood: William Pugsley House

1914

Part of Lot 46, Concession 1, Vaughan Township

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

History:

18 Arnold Crescent

The subject property at 18 Arnold Crescent originated as part of the 210-acre Lot 46, Concession 1, in Vaughan Township. It was patented from the Crown in 1803 by Abner Miles, a prominent figure in the early history of Richmond Hill. In 1840 (Registered 1841), a partition action occurred, resulting in the transfer of ownership of all of Lot 46 from Hannah Playter to Elizabeth Arnold, both daughters of Abner Miles. Over several decades, the property was subdivided into building lots and sold for speculation or development.

Land Registry records indicate that in August of 1860 J.R. Arnold, the son of Elizabeth (Miles) Arnold, sold a 1-acre portion of Lot 47 described only as "Pt. 1 acre" to Robert Raymond for £400. Raymond then resold this property, occupying village lots 34, 35 and 36 on the west side of Yonge Street, to John Palmer Jr. in 1872 for \$5000. John

Palmer Jr. then proceeded to build the Palmer House Hotel on this property, which opened in October of 1876.¹

Land Registry records indicate that in September 1912 John Palmer and his wife Ellen sold village lots 35 and parts of lots 34 and 36 of the Gibson Plan (Figure 1), which included the Palmer House Hotel on Yonge Street, to William H. Pugsley and Arthur E. Pugsley for \$7000. The Pugsley brothers took over the operation of the hotel, demolished existing rear sheds and stables on Arnold Street, and erected several new houses on both the north and south sides of Arnold Street.² The subject dwelling at 18 Arnold Crescent, located on parts of village lots 34 and 35 (Gibson's Plan), was built directly behind the hotel as a home for William Pugsley by significant local builder William H. Graham in 1914.³ An article in the *Liberal* that year indicates that Graham built Pugsley's house with bricks remaining from the M. L. McConaghy Public School directly to the south at 10100 Yonge Street, which was completed by Graham the same year.⁴

William Pugsley lived at the subject dwelling, known as "Elmwood", until his death in 1933.⁵ In April of 1934, the executors of William Pugsley's estate granted the subject property to William's son, Victor Pugsley. Victor Pugsley owned the subject property, then referred to as "Lot 380 Reuben's Plan", until he sold it to Wesley Clark for \$4000 in 1942.

William Pugsley

William Pugsley was born in 1851 in Devonshire, England, and immigrated to Canada in 1870. He and his brother, Arthur, settled in Richmond Hill, where they established a lucrative business as cattle buyers and butchers.

Apart from his business success, William Pugsley was also a prominent figure in Richmond Hill and York County politics, and was deeply involved in local municipal affairs from the 1880s to 1920s. His roles included being a Richmond Hill councillor from 1880 to 1883 and 1924 to 1925, and Reeve from 1885 to 1896, and 1907 to 1918. He also served as Warden of York County in 1891.⁶ Pugsley saw continuous electoral success in his political endeavors and played significant roles in various organizations, including serving as a chief sponsor for the Metropolitan Radial, presiding over the Ontario Good Roads Association, participating in the Toronto and York Roads Commission, supporting the Children's Aid Society, holding director positions in associations like the Ontario Plowmen's Association and the Richmond Hill Agricultural Society, among many others where he provided guidance. During his municipal career,

¹ "The Palmer House," *York Herald*. Oct 6, 1876.

² "Locals," *Liberal*. Aug 29, 1912.

³ Graham, "Biography of William H. Graham & Buildings Constructed by William H. Graham Builder and Contractor: 1909-1924." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, 1972.

⁴ "Locals," *Liberal*. Aug 27, 1914.

⁵ Canadian Census, 1931.

⁶ Reaman, *A History of Vaughan Township* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 120.

William strongly advocated for the abolition of toll gates on Yonge Street and championed quality highways and roads.⁷

In addition to his cattle and butchery business, William Pugsley and his brother Arthur also made money in real estate speculation and development in Richmond Hill. The Pugsleys bought the Palmer House Hotel and its surrounding property on village lots 34, 35, and 36 from John Palmer Jr. in 1912. The Pugsleys subdivided the property, erected a number of new houses on Arnold Street,⁸ and retained ownership of the hotel, which was refurbished and renamed Hotel Richmond,⁹ until they sold it to George Phillips in 1929.¹⁰

In February of 1918, while Reeve of Richmond Hill, Pugsley raised the idea of erecting a memorial to honour the Richmond Hill men killed in the First World War. Community residents debated whether a monument, or a memorial hall would be most appropriate. The cenotaph located in front of the McConaghy Seniors Centre was erected in 1923 and is one of the oldest war memorials in the Greater Toronto Area, marking 100 years in 2023.¹¹

After Pugsley's initial retirement from local politics in 1919, a 1922 article in the *Liberal* celebrated his achievements, which encompassed contributions to the drafting of the Metropolitan Agreement of 1891, his active role in the formation of the Ontario Good Roads Association, and his profound understanding of municipal law. William's influence was significant throughout Richmond Hill and York County.¹²

William Pugsley resided at his home at 18 Arnold Crescent from 1914 to his death in 1933. Following his death in 1933, a tribute was paid to the late William Pugsley in *The Globe* as follows:

*"The death of Mr. William H. Pugsley removed one of York County's outstanding public figures, a man who devoted to the affairs of time and municipality a great deal of time and unlimited fund of common sense. Time and again Mr. Pugsley was honored by the people who knew him best – the neighbours – and no greater tribute can be paid."*¹³

⁷ "Community mourns passing William H. Pugsley, veteran of County municipal life," *Liberal*. Apr 27, 1933.

⁸ "Locals," *Liberal*. Aug 29, 1912.

⁹ "Hotel Richmond," *Liberal*. Aug 14, 1913.

¹⁰ *Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book*, York Region, Concession 1, Lot 46, Vaughan Township (Richmond Hill).

¹¹ Stamp, *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930* (Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991), 271.

¹² "A prominent ex-warden," *Liberal*. Jan 12, 1922.

¹³ "Community mourns passing William H. Pugsley, veteran of County municipal life," *Liberal*. Apr 27, 1933.

William Graham

Prolific Richmond Hill builder William H. Graham was born on a farm in York Mills on December 25, 1881. Graham moved to Richmond Hill in 1900, when his parents took up farming on the east side of Yonge Street, around present-day Crosby Avenue. After initially working in construction under Mr. William Mackenzie, he started his own contracting and building company in the village in 1910. In 1911, Graham married Amy Gertrude Phillips, and built the couple's first frame home at 90 Centre Street East. In 1917, the Grahams moved to their second home built by William at 13 Church Street South. The couple had four children together: Philip James (1912), Marjorie Jane (1915), Wallace William (1918), and George Alexander (1919).¹⁴

William Graham entered the Masonic Order in 1914, and quickly rose through the ranks, becoming Junior Warden. William Graham died unexpectedly from heart failure on January 16, 1924 at the early age of 42. When Graham died in 1924, he had just been awarded the \$100,000 contract to build the new high school on Wright Street, a project that he was never able to complete.¹⁵ During his relatively short time as a builder in the boom years of Richmond Hill's flower industry of the 1910s and 1920s, he constructed many public buildings, as well as around 30 homes in the village.¹⁶ As a whole, Graham's buildings reflect the restrained Edwardian Classicism architectural style popular in the early 20th century, and have made an enduring impact on the built form character of Richmond Hill village, particularly on streets that were largely built out in the 1910s and 1920s, including Centre Street East, Church Street South, Roseview Avenue, and the south side of Arnold Crescent.

Existing buildings in Richmond Hill attributed to William Graham include the William Pugsley House at 18 Arnold Crescent (1914), the Herbert H. Hopper House at 26 Arnold Cres (1914); the Mrs. Fred Lynett House at 27 Arnold Cres (c. 1915); the Lewis Doner House at 42 Arnold Cres (c. 1913); the William Hord House at 48 Centre Street East (c. 1920); the George Glenn House at 58 Centre Street East (1921); the Joseph H. Hall House at 59 Centre Street East (1913); the John B. Hickson House at 75 Centre Street East (c. 1910); the George Gee House at 92 Centre Street East (c. 1919); the William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East (1911); the Magdalene Klinck House at 75 Centre Street East (1914); the William Graham House at 13 Church Street South (1917); the James Dixon House at 85 Church Street South (c. 1924); the William C. Savage House at 91 Church Street South (c. 1921); the Herbert Jackson House at 67 Roseview Avenue (1915); the M. L. McConaghy Public School at 10100 Yonge Street (1914); the Standard Bank of Canada at 10111 Yonge Street (1915); the Loyal True Blue & Orange Home at 11181 Yonge Street (c. 1921); and the J. H. C. Durham Cobblestone Cottage at 12761 Yonge Street (c. 1922).

¹⁴ Graham, 1972.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Architecture:

Dating to 1914, the William Pugsley House at 18 Arnold Crescent is a representative example of Edwardian Classical residential architecture in Richmond Hill. This architectural style is expressed in the building's simple, balanced form and composition, and restrained classical detailing.

The dwelling at 18 Arnold Crescent is a 2 ½-storey red-brick veneer building with a rectangular plan, side-gabled roof with pent eaves, and front dormer. The house's roof is supported on a plain cornice, and features wooden shingles within the front dormer and the east and west side gables.

The building's principal (north) elevation is organized in a balanced three-bay composition of windows and doors. The central entrance on this elevation is raised, has a stone lintel, and is sheltered by a gable-roofed front porch with pent eaves, supported by grouped square columns. The porch also features leaded glass transoms on its east and west sides, but a review of historical photographs of the property indicate that these are not original.

The house's basement and ground-floor windows are flat-headed and feature stone sills and lintels. The stone lintel of the east basement window on the building's north elevation features an inscription reading "Elmwood A.D. 1914." First-storey windows on the building's north (principal) elevation appear to be original wood casement windows with transoms and wooden storms. The house's second-storey windows are typically segmental-arched sash windows with stone sills and brick voussoirs. On the house's north (principal) elevation, second-storey windows are comprised of two wider side windows inset with paired sash units, which flank a narrower central sash window. Attic windows in the front (north) dormer and east gable are flat headed, and the window in the east gable is inset with a pair of sash windows with wood surrounds.

Windows on the building's west elevation have been altered to accommodate a non-original fire escape. The house also features a rear addition, which appears to have been added between 1978 and 1988, based on historical aerial photographs.

Context:

The William Pugsley House at 18 Arnold Crescent is located on the south side of Arnold Crescent, immediately west of Yonge Street and within the boundaries of the historic village of Richmond Hill. As a result of the building's proximity to the commercial thoroughfare of Yonge Street, the surrounding context to the north on Arnold Crescent features large surface parking lots, while Yonge Street is characterized by a mix of historical and contemporary low-rise commercial and institutional built form.

West of the subject property, both side of Arnold Crescent feature predominantly late-19th and early 20th century residential built form. The subject property's scale, form, and Edwardian Classicism architectural style define, support and maintain the predominantly fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape on Arnold Crescent to the west.

The M.L. McConaghy Public School (now a senior's centre) is located directly south of the subject property, on a deep lot fronting onto the west side of Yonge Street. A strong contextual link exists between the subject property and the M.L. McConaghy Public School to the south, as both buildings were built of the same brick by prolific Richmond Hill builder William Graham in 1914, and express similar classical revival architectural styles.

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 1914, the William Pugsley House at 18 Arnold Crescent is a representative example of Edwardian Classicism residential architecture in Richmond Hill. The building has retained many of its original architectural details that are representative of the Edwardian Classicism style, including its simple rectangular form and balanced composition, side-gabled roof with pent eaves inset with wooden shingles, and restrained classical detailing including its red-brick cladding, stone window sills and lintels, front porch supported on grouped square columns, and the inscription reading “Elmwood A.D. 1914” located on the lintel of a basement window.

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 William Pugsley House has historical value for its direct association with William H. Pugsley, who built the subject building as his home in 1914 and resided there until his death in 1933. Pugsley was a butcher and cattle dealer in the village who also became a prominent figure in Richmond Hill and York Region politics and was deeply involved in

local municipal affairs from the 1880s to the 1920s. He served as a village councillor from 1880 to 1883 and 1924 to 1925, and Reeve from 1885 to 1896, and 1907 to 1918. He also served as Warden of York County in 1891. Pugsley also held leadership positions in numerous organizations, including serving as a chief sponsor for the Metropolitan Radial, presiding over the Ontario Good Roads Association, participating in the Toronto and York Roads Commission, supporting the Children's Aid Society, and holding director positions in associations like the Ontario Plowmen's Association and the Richmond Hill Agricultural Society. In February of 1918, while Reeve of Richmond Hill, Pugsley also spearheaded the idea of erecting a memorial to honour the Richmond Hill men killed in the First World War, resulting in the erection of the Richmond Hill War Memorial Cenotaph in 1923.

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 William Pugsley House also has historical value because it reflects the work of prolific Richmond Hill builder William Graham during a period of rapid growth in the village as a result of the booming flower industry during the 1910s and 1920s. Graham, whose career was cut short by his early death at age 42 in 1924, constructed many public buildings, as well as around 30 homes in the village. Residential and institutional buildings constructed by Graham generally reflect the restrained Edwardian Classicism architectural style popular in the early 20th century, and have made an enduring impact on the built form character of Richmond Hill village, particularly on streets that were largely built out in the 1910s and 1920s, including Centre Street East, Church Street South, Roseview Avenue, and the south side of Arnold Crescent.

Other buildings in Richmond Hill attributed to William Graham include the M. L. McConaghy Public School at 10100 Yonge Street (1914); the Standard Bank of Canada at 10111 Yonge Street (1915); the Loyal True Blue & Orange Home at 11181 Yonge Street (c. 1921); the Herbert H. Hopper House at 26 Arnold Cres (1914); the Mrs. Fred Lynett House at 27 Arnold Cres (c. 1915); the Lewis Doner House at 42 Arnold Cres (c. 1913); the William Hord House at 48 Centre Street East (c. 1920); the George Glenn House at 58 Centre Street East (1921); the Joseph H. Hall House at 59 Centre Street East (1913); the John B. Hickson House at 75 Centre Street East (c. 1910); the George Gee House at 92 Centre Street East (c. 1919); the William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East (1911); the Magdalene Klinck House at 75 Centre Street East (1914); the William Graham House at 13 Church Street South (1917); the James Dixon House at 85 Church Street South (c. 1924); the William C. Savage House at 91 Church Street South (c. 1921); and the Herbert Jackson House at 67 Roseview Avenue (1915).

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

The William Pugsley House at 18 Arnold Crescent has contextual value because its scale, form, and Edwardian Classicism architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape to the west on Arnold Crescent, 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 physically, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings near the southwest corner of Yonge Street and Arnold Crescent. William Pugsley owned the Palmer House Hotel (later Hotel Richmond) at the southwest corner of Yonge and Arnold from 1912 to 1929, and constructed his home immediately west of the hotel in 1914. While the Palmer House Hotel was demolished in 1995, the historical and functional link between the subject property and the hotel property is still expressed in the house's location on the south side of Arnold Crescent, immediately west of Yonge Street.

The subject property also has contextual value for its visual and historical links to the M.L. McConaghy Public School (now a senior's centre) directly to the south. Both buildings were built of the same brick by prolific Richmond Hill builder William Graham in 1914, and express similar classical revival architectural styles.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

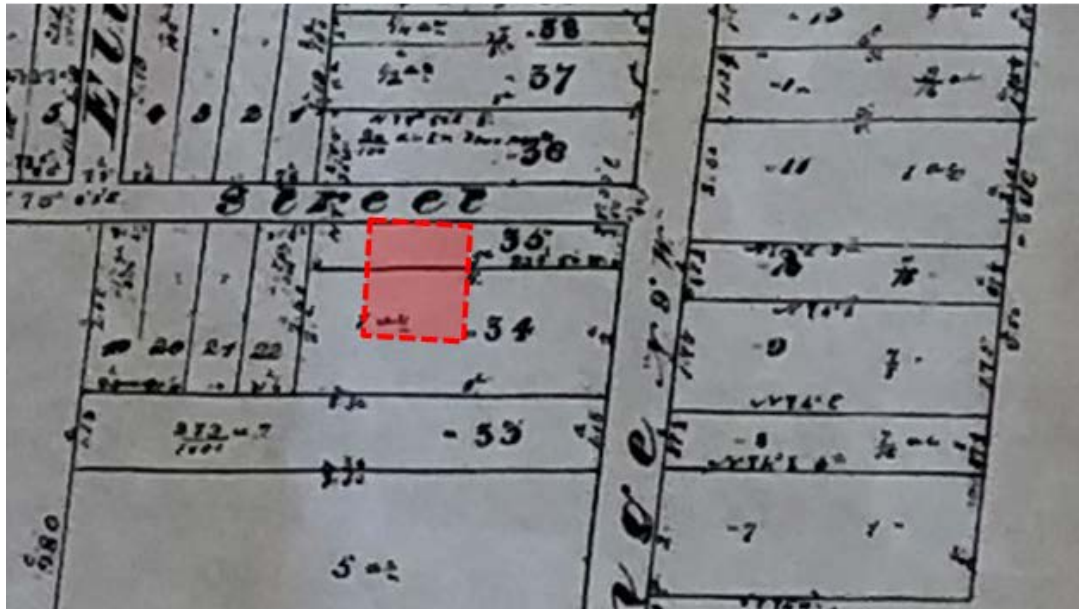


Figure 1 Detail of the 1879 Gibson Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill, County of York, with the approximate location of the subject property at 18 Arnold Cres shown in red, comprising parts of village lots 34 and 35 (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).

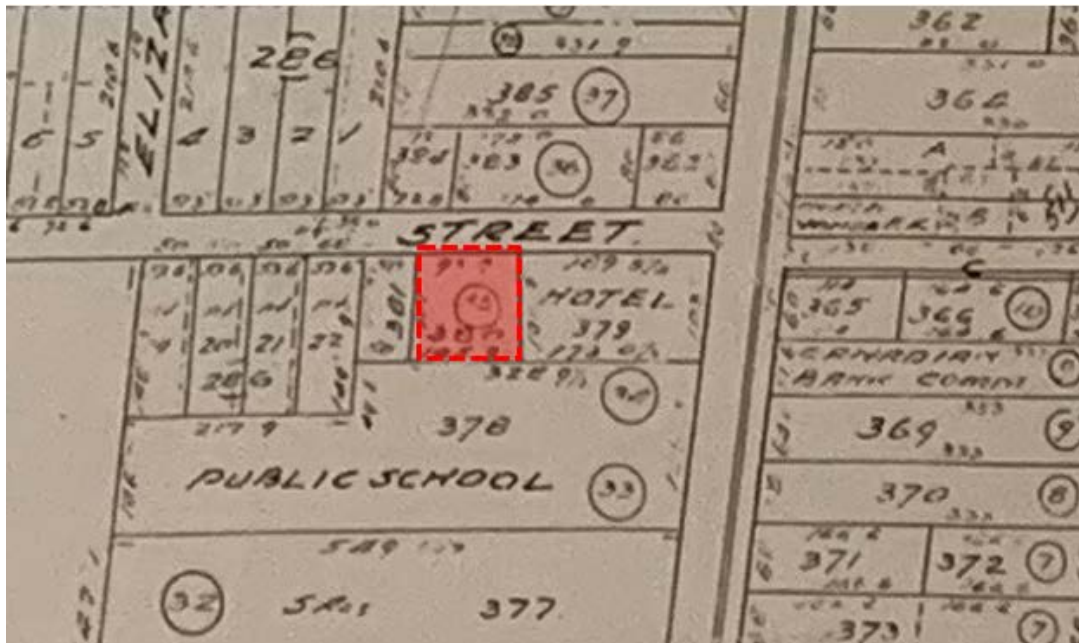


Figure 2 Detail of the 1938 Reuben Plan of Richmond Hill, with the current approximate location of the subject property at 18 Arnold Cres shown in red as lot 380. Note the hotel indicated to the east, and the public school indicated to the south (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).

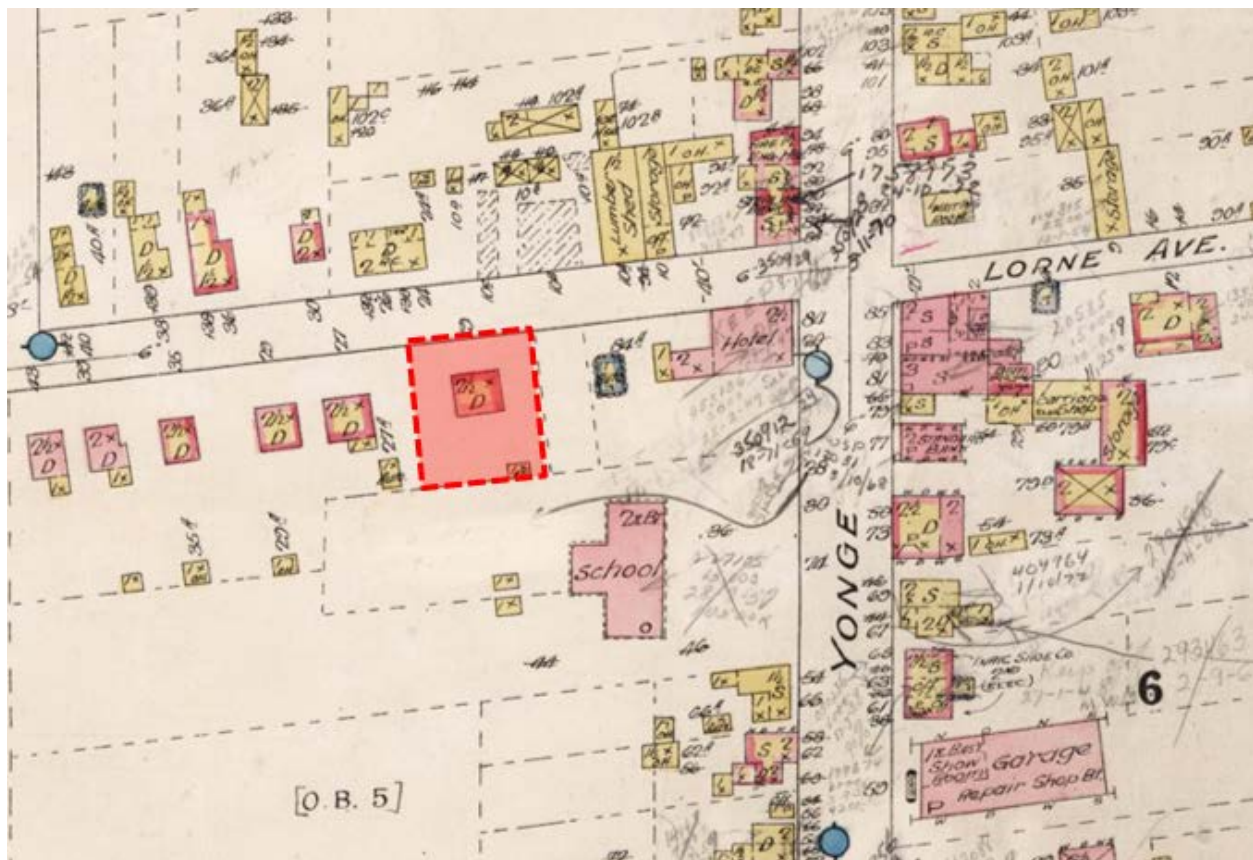


Figure 3 Detail of the 1923 *Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill*, with the approximate location of the subject property at 18 Arnold Cres shown in red. Note the hotel to the east and the school to the south. (Source: University of Toronto Library)

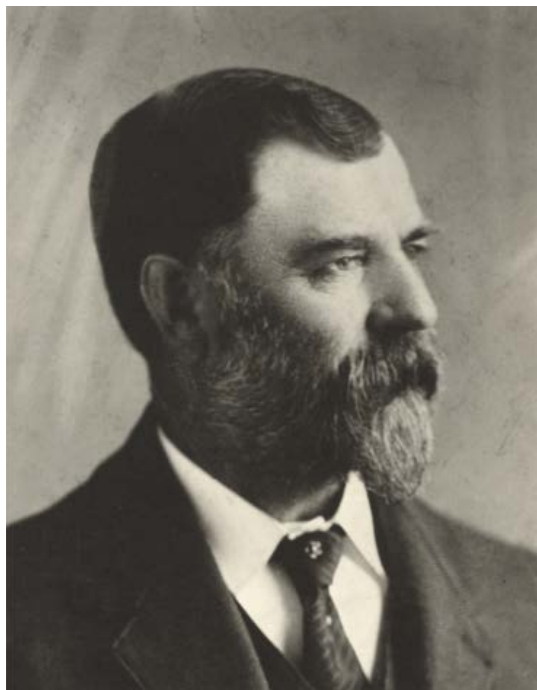


Figure 4 Undated portrait of William H. Pugsley, Reeve of Richmond Hill (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection)



Figure 5 Photograph of the William Pugsley House's main (north) elevation, looking south from Arnold Crescent (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 6 Photograph of the William Pugsley House's side (east) elevation and main (north) elevation, looking southwest from Arnold Crescent (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 7 Photograph of the William Pugsley House's side (west), looking southeast from Arnold Crescent. Note that many window openings on this elevation have been altered to accommodate a fire escape (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 8 Detailed photograph of the east basement window lintel on the William Pugsley House's front (north) elevation, inscribed with "Elmwood A.D. 1914" (Source: HUD, 2023).

Sources:

Archival Sources

"A Prominent ex-Warden." *Liberal*, Jan 12, 1922.

Canadian Census, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1931.

"Community Mourns Passing William H. Pugsley, Veteran of County Municipal Life." *Liberal*, Apr 27, 1933.

Gibson, P. S. *Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill in the County of York*, 1879.

Graham, Mrs. Wallace. "Biography of William H. Graham & Buildings Constructed by William H. Graham Builder and Contractor: 1909-1924." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, 1972.

"Hotel Richmond." *Liberal*, Aug 14, 1913.

"Locals." *Liberal*, Aug 29, 1912.

"Locals." *Liberal*, Aug 27, 1914.

Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book. York Region, Concession 1, Lot 46, Vaughan Township (Richmond Hill).

Reuben, C. G. *Map of the Village of Richmond Hill, County of York*, 1938.

Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). "Heritage Building Summary – 18 Arnold Crescent." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

Richmond Hill Public Library, Digital Archives.

Richmond Hill Public Library, Photographic Collection.

"The Palmer House." *York Herald*, Oct 6, 1876.

Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited. *Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, Ontario*. Toronto & Montreal: Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited, 1923.

Secondary Sources

City of Richmond Hill. "City of Richmond Hill Inventory of Cultural Heritage Resources." *Department of Planning and Building Services*, 2022.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900*. Markham: Markham District Historical Society, 1989.

Fayle, Janet. "A Brief History of Richmond Hill." Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1993.

Kyles, Shannon. "Edwardian (1890-1916)." Accessed December 11, 2023.

<http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/Edwardian.htm>

Maitland, Leslie, Jacqueline Hucker, and Shannon Ricketts. *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles*. Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 1992.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Reaman, G. Elmore. *A History of Vaughan Township*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Stamp, Robert M. *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930*. Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991.