

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



42 Richmond Street - Clara Harrison Rental House

c. 1875

Part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township

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

History:

42 Richmond Street

The property at 42 Richmond Street originated as part of Lot 47, Concession 1, Vaughan Township. The subject property is located at the southeast corner of Richmond and Elizabeth Streets, 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. In 1879, Gibson's Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill was registered, which laid out Village Lot 13 on the east side of Elizabeth Street North, between Centre and Richmond Streets (Figure 1).

In November 1879, Henrietta and William Snowden sold the northern half of Village Lot 13 on Lot 47, identified in Land Registry records as “Pt. 72/100 acres, Richmond Street”, to William Harrison for \$500.¹ William Harrison then subdivided this property into three smaller lots, today known as 17 Elizabeth Street North, 32 Richmond Street, and 42 Richmond Street, which he developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for income purposes. As these lots were located at the southeast corner of Richmond and Elizabeth Streets, the area became known as “Harrison’s Corner.”

In 1905, William Harrison granted the property at 42 Richmond Street to his eldest daughter, Clara, for \$200. William also relocated the present dwelling onto the property from its original location on Trench Street in the summer of 1909.² The house’s existing front verandah was likely added shortly after the house was relocated to Richmond Street in the early 1900s,³ and is shown in an archival photograph of the house from around 1910 (Figure 2). This photograph also reveals that the house was originally clad in horizontal wooden siding.

Clara Harrison rented out the subject property at 42 Richmond Street for extra income, and never resided there herself. A review of Land Registry records indicate that the subject property remained in Clara Harrison’s name until it was purchased by Emma Tyndall in 1919 for \$1500. Emma Tyndall’s daughter, Annie, acquired the property in 1947 through Emma’s executors. The property was then sold to Ray and Sandy Luck in 1985.

William Harrison

William Harrison was born in the city of Bath, England on May 10, 1834. In 1842, his father John S. Harrison and mother Martha Harrison brought their family to Canada and settled on a farm two miles north of Richmond Hill. William established a saddle- and harness-making business in Richmond Hill in 1856, which operated until 1908.⁴ Harrison’s business and home were located on Village Lot 7, on the west side of Yonge Street between Centre and Richmond Streets, and in close proximity to the subject property at 32 Richmond Street. William Harrison married Christina Whelpton in 1867, and they had four children, Clara, Luisa, Martha, and Frederick.⁵

William Harrison was a significant member of the Richmond Hill community in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and greatly contributed to the village’s social development during his lifetime. Apart from running a successful harness-making business, he held leadership roles with the Methodist Church and Temperance Movement, and assisted in the organization of the first village fire brigade in 1856.

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

² Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). “Heritage Building Summary – 42 Richmond Street.” Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

³ City of Richmond Hill. *Museum of The Streets*. Richmond Hill, Ontario: Richmond Hill Heritage Centre, n.d.

⁴ “Late William Harrison – Noted Local Historian,” *Liberal*. Jan 26, 1956.

⁵ Ibid.

An investor in Richmond Hill's first local newspaper, *The York Ridings Gazette* (later becoming *The Liberal*), he also served as a contributor in editorials and correspondence. In 1858, he contributed to a series of letters regarding free public education, believed to have directly catalysed Richmond Hill being one of the earliest villages in Ontario to offer free public education.⁶ Harrison was also appointed auditor of the Board of Education in 1868 and 1870.⁷ William Harrison is also known as Richmond Hill's first historian, having written a series of newspaper articles on Richmond Hill's pioneers and early settlement.

In 1866, William founded the Richmond Hill Mechanic's Institute and Literary Society, which later became the Public Library in 1870, and boasted a library of over 5,000 volumes. William also played a significant role in the efforts to incorporate Richmond Hill as a village in 1873. Held to such esteem by the community, he was nominated for the office of the first reeve. Although William initially refused nomination for the position, he was nominated and elected as the village's second reeve in 1874.

Clara Harrison

Clara Harrison was the eldest daughter of William Harrison and Christina Whelpton. Clara was born in Richmond Hill in 1868, and was a student in the early schools of Richmond Hill village.⁸ Clara owned her own dressmaking business, which she operated out of her family's property on Village Lot 7, located on the west side of Yonge Street between Centre and Richmond Streets. Census records and archival newspaper advertisements indicate that Clara would have been around 17 years old when she started her dressmaking business. Her business was also frequently advertised in *The Liberal* from 1888 to 1894,⁹ and listed in the Ontario Gazetteer and Directory from 1901 to 1911.

Archival 'Personals' announcements in *The Liberal* from the 1880s to the 1930s also reveal that Clara and her sister Mattie (often jointly referred to as the "Misses Harrison"), lived an active social life in the village, hosting many out of town guests in their family home.

Census records indicate that Clara Harrison, who remained unmarried throughout her life, lived with her parents and siblings in their family home until Clara's death in 1942.¹⁰ Clara owned the subject property at 42 Richmond Street from 1905 to 1919, and used it as a rental/income property to augment her earnings as a dressmaker.

⁶ "Death of Wm. Harrison," *Liberal*. Mar 9, 1922

⁷ "Late William Harrison – Noted Local Historian," *Liberal*. Jan 26, 1956.

⁸ "Promotion Examination," *York Herald*. Dec 28, 1882.

⁹ "Dress Making – Miss Harrison," *Liberal*. Dec 27, 1888.

¹⁰ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2WY-TZMD> : 22 July 2020), Clara Ann Harrison, 1942; Burial; citing record ID , *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

Architecture:

Dating to c. 1875, the Clara Harrison Rental House at 42 Richmond Street is a representative example of modest late-19th-century vernacular cottage architecture in Richmond Hill showing Georgian stylistic influences. Architectural features expressing Georgian influences include the rectangular plan, side-gabled roof, flat-headed windows and doors, and the symmetrical three-bay composition of the principal (north) elevation featuring a classical doorcase.

The dwelling is a 1 ½-storey balloon-framed, side-gabled structure with a cross-gabled rear addition. The building is currently clad in vertical wooden siding, which replaces the original horizontal clapboard siding visible in archival photographs (Figure 2). The house features flat-headed window and door openings with wooden surrounds.

The house is oriented to face Richmond Street, and its principal (north) elevation features a symmetrical three-bay composition with a central entrance surrounded by a modest classical doorcase. This elevation also features a hip-roofed front porch supported on tapered, squared posts. The front porch, which displays an early 20th century style and appears in archival photographs from c. 1910, was likely added by the Harrisons shortly after the house was relocated to this property in 1909. The ground floor of the house's eastern elevation features a projecting square bay window topped with a hipped roof, which was a later addition to the house.

Context:

The Clara Harrison Rental House at 42 Richmond Street is located at the southeast corner of Richmond Street and Elizabeth Street North, west of Yonge Street and within the boundaries of the historic village of Richmond Hill. The subject property's scale, form, and vernacular late-19th-century architectural style support and maintain the fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of both Richmond and Elizabeth Streets to the west of the subject property. Surrounding residential buildings on Richmond and Elizabeth Streets contributing to the historical character of the streetscape include the William Harrison Rental House at 32 Richmond Street (1881), the William Harrison Speculative House at 17 Elizabeth Street North (1885), the Burton F. Caldwell House at 16 Elizabeth Street North (1912), the Klinck-Redditt House at 24 Elizabeth Street North (c. 1923), and Maple Villa at 55 Richmond Street (c. 1837).

As part of a collection of three properties comprising "Harrison's Corner" at the intersection of Richmond and Elizabeth Streets, the subject property is also visually, functionally and historically linked to its surroundings. Other properties in "Harrison's Corner" include the William Harrison Rental House at 32 Richmond Street (1881), and the William Harrison Speculative House at 17 Elizabeth Street North (1885).

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.

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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 Clara Harrison Rental House at 42 Richmond Street has historical value for its direct associations with both William and Clara Harrison. William Harrison bought a large parcel of land at the southeast corner of Richmond Street and Elizabeth Street North in 1879, and granted the property at 42 Richmond Street to his eldest daughter Clara in 1905. In 1909, William Harrison purchased a mill worker's cottage in the Mill Pond area, and moved it from Trench Street to its present location at 42 Richmond Street, to serve as an income property for Clara. The subject property remained under the ownership of the Harrison family until 1919. William Harrison was Richmond Hill's second reeve, owner and operator of a significant saddle- and harness-making business, and one of the village's first local historians. Clara, who remained unmarried until her death in 1942, operated a successful dressmaking business in the village from

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the 1880s to the 1910s. As local business owners and active citizens, William and Clara Harrison were significant members of the community who contributed to the development of Richmond Hill in the 19th century.

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 Clara Harrison Rental House at 42 Richmond Street has contextual value because it is important in maintaining and supporting the fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century residential character of Richmond Street and Elizabeth Street North, 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 Clara Harrison Rental House also has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings within "Harrison's Corner", a cluster of buildings at the southeast corner of Richmond and Elizabeth Streets that were owned by the Harrison family in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Other surviving buildings that form part of "Harrison's Corner" include the William Harrison Rental House at 32 Richmond Street (1881), as well as the William Harrison Speculative House at 17 Elizabeth Street North (1885).

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

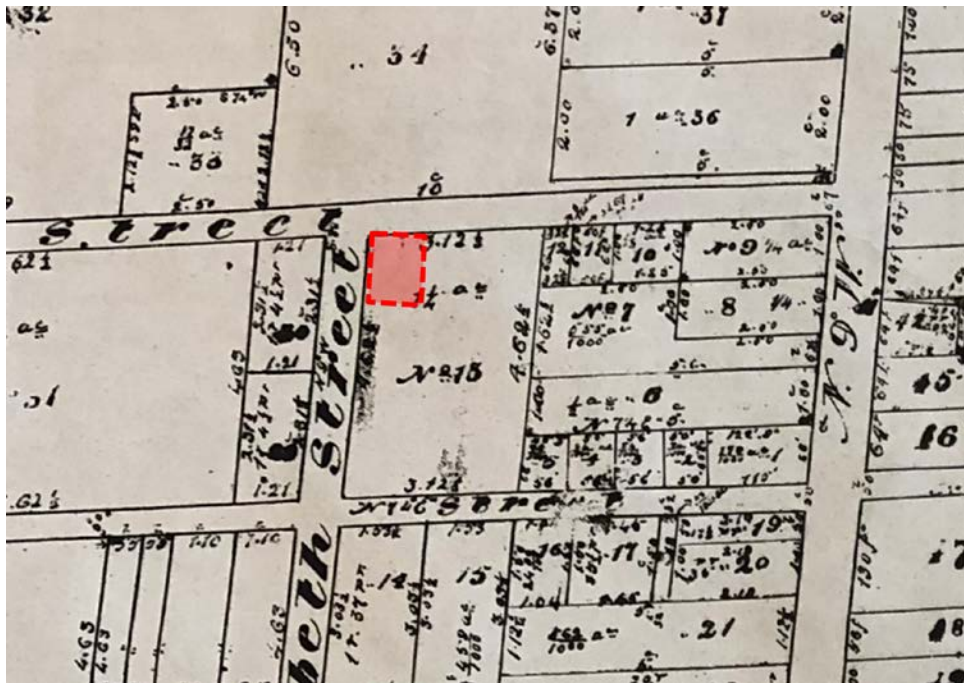


Figure 1 Detail of Gibson's Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill, 1879, indicating the approximate location of 42 Richmond Street within the northern portion of Village Lot 13 in red (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



Figure 2 Detail of Harrison's Corner Postcard c. 1910 showing the Clara Harrison Rental House at 42 Richmond Street, looking southeast from Richmond Street. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection)

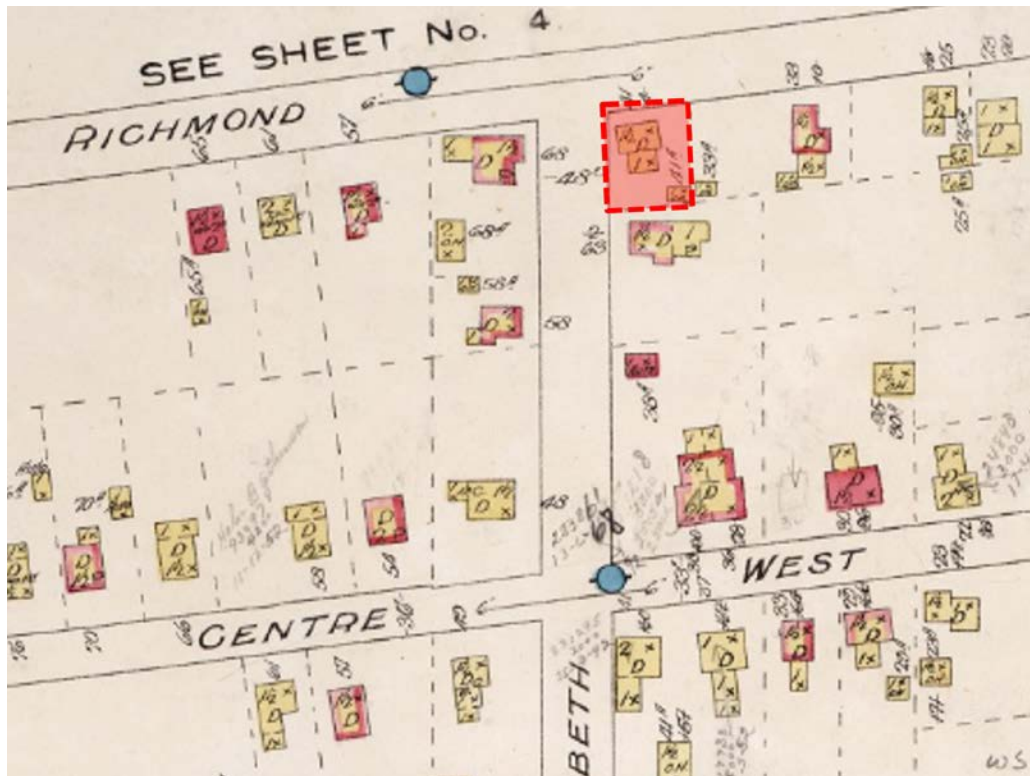


Figure 3 Detail of the 1923 Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, with the approximate location of 42 Richmond Street indicated in red. (Source: University of Toronto Library)



Figure 4 Detail of an archival photograph of 42 Richmond Street's north elevation from 1982, showing the stucco cladding existing in the 1980s. (Source: Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). "Heritage Building Summary – 42 Richmond Street." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.).



Figure 5 Detail of an archival photograph of 42 Richmond Street's west elevation from 1982, showing the stucco cladding existing in the 1980s. (Source: Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). "Heritage Building Summary – 42 Richmond Street." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.).



Figure 6 Current photograph of 42 Richmond Street's principal (north) elevation. Note the house's 1 ½ storey massing, medium-pitched side-gabled roof, hipped-roof verandah on square wooden posts, and the classical door case. (Source: HUD, 2023).



Figure 7 Detailed photograph showing the modest classical door case on 42 Richmond's north (principal) elevation (Source: HUD, 2023).

Sources:

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