

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



9835 Leslie Street – William Munro House

C. 1875

Part of Lot 19, Concession 3, Markham Township

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

History

The Hamlet of Headford

The subject property at 9835 Leslie Street is located on what was originally Lot 19, Concession 3, of Markham Township. Prior to colonization and settlement, the land now containing the subject property was inhabited by the Anishnaabe, Haudenosaunee, and the Huron Wendat First Nations. Following the Toronto Purchase in 1787, the area was subdivided into townships, concessions, and lots.

The story of Headford begins with the arrival of John Cleaver Burr on Lot 20, Concession 3 of Markham Township in 1832. Burr purchased land at the southeast corner of Leslie Street and Major Mackenzie Drive East with the idea of building a grist or flouring mill on the Rouge River. An agricultural community of Pennsylvania Germans

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and Berczy settlers was already long established in the area, providing a ready source of customers for his new enterprise.¹

The original Headford Mill on the east banks of the Rouge River was built in 1832. After only six years, John Burr sold the operation to his brother, Rowland Burr, the noted York County builder and millwright. Rowland improved and enlarged the mill and millpond dam.² When the mill was in operation, the Headford Mill Lane ran east from Leslie Street along the boundary between Lot 19 and 20 and continued across the millpond dam via a bridge, connecting to the mill property on the east side of the river (Figure 3). This original mill lane still exists as a private access road directly south of the Patrick Kelly House at 9853 Leslie Street. With the bridge long demolished, the lane now terminates at the west bank of the Rouge River.

In addition to his building and milling specialties, Rowland Burr was both a visionary for his time and an ambitious entrepreneur. Beginning in the 1840s, he began to sell off small building lots within Lot 20 on the east side of Leslie Street, north of the mill lane. These lots, intended for the cottages and businesses of local tradesmen, formed the centre of a new hamlet known as Headford. The origin of the name relates to the characteristics of the Rouge River in this area. A "ford" is a shallow place where a river can be crossed. Over time, properties located on both sides of Leslie Street on Lots 18, 19 and 20 became part of the hamlet of Headford.

Over the years, the Headford Mill saw many owners. John Eyer added a woollen mill to the complex in 1861, which operated until 1872. The last operator of the Headford Mill was David Hislop, a Scottish immigrant who became the owner in 1874. The milling operation obviously prospered, enabling Hislop to replace the earlier mill owner's house with a prestigious brick residence in 1877, built by celebrated local masons Patrick and John Kelly. While this Victorian Picturesque style house was demolished in 2022, the stone foundation of the Headford Mill still exist on the east banks of the Rouge River, south of Major Mackenzie Drive East.³

After many years of prosperity, old Markham Township's grist milling industry went into decline in the early 20th century when the Canadian west was opened for settlement and agriculture. To make matters worse, a particularly strong spring rainstorm washed out the millpond dam at Headford in 1912. Converted to a chopping mill, the Headford Mill operated under gasoline power until it closed forever in 1916. According to local tradition, the mill was eventually dismantled and sold for lumber.⁴

¹ George Duncan, "The Hamlet of Headford: A self-guided tour presented by the Richmond Hill LACAC." 2000.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

9835 Leslie Street

The property at 9835 Leslie Street originated as part of Lot 19, Concession 3, Markham Township. The subject property is located on the east side of Leslie Street, south of Major Mackenzie Drive East, and within the former hamlet of Headford in Markham Township. The subject building was originally located at 9801 Leslie Street, approximately 65 metres south of its current location, and was relocated to its current location at 9835 Leslie Street in 2006.

Land Registry records indicate that all 200 acres of Lot 19, Concession 3, Markham Township were patented from the Crown in 1804 by John Gray. A decade later, Gray sold the entire 200-acre parcel to Isaiah Willmott. The west 100 acres of Lot 19 (now containing the subject property at 9835 Leslie Street) were sold by Isaiah, Sr. to his son Isaiah Willmott, Jr. in 1822. From that date, the parcel transferred to D'Arcy Boulton, Jr., Henry Bousher, James Strachan, and eventually, Frederick Eckardt. In 1854, Eckardt sold the property to James Gamble for £1000.⁵

Gamble was a Methodist farmer born in the United States, recorded as 62 years old in the 1861 census. His wife, Jane, was born in Upper Canada about 1807. In the household were Jane Anne, 19, Albert, 17, [Moriah], 15, and Harrison, 8. The 1861 census describes the Gamble home as a frame, 1 ½-storey dwelling.⁶ This is believed to be the first dwelling constructed on Lot 19, formerly located at 9783 Leslie Street, southeast of the subject property (demolished in 1999). Gamble's ownership of the west half of Lot 19 can also be seen in a map of York County from 1860 (Figure 1).

Shortly after acquiring the west half of Lot 19 in 1854, Gamble sold one acre of the property to miller George Squire for £50. Gamble then sold the remaining 99 acres of his farm to Joseph Willmott for \$3000 in February 1865. Willmott resold the property to William Purdy Munro in October 1865 for \$4000. The sale was not registered until July 1869. Research has concluded that the Munro family likely lived in the Gamble's earlier frame house on Lot 19 until erecting their own brick residence (the subject building, now located at 9835 Leslie Street) on the property around 1875.⁷ This construction date is validated by the tax assessment rolls for Markham Township, which note a substantial increase in the assessed value of Munro's 99-acre farm property from \$2700 to \$4750 between 1875 and 1876.⁸ This significant increase in assessed value indicates the construction of a new building on Lot 19 during this time, likely the brick dwelling now located at 9835 Leslie Street. Due to the subject dwelling's date of construction and stylistic similarities with other brick houses in the vicinity, the Munro House has been

⁵ *Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book*, York Region, Concession 3, Lot 19, Markham Township.

⁶ *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

⁷ Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, "9801 Leslie Street: William P. Munro Residence." Prepared for the Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1997.

⁸ *Assessment Roll for the Township of Markham*. Markham Township, 1874-1876.

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attributed to Headford builders and masons Patrick and John Kelly, who lived just north of Munro's farm on Lot 20 in the 1870s.⁹

Munro sold his 99-acre property to James Thomson in December 1892 for \$6500. When James Thomson died in August of 1893, the property was granted to his widow, Martha Alice, and his brother, Thomas. According to James Thomson's Will, Thomas was allowed possession of the farm on the condition he permit "free use of the brick dwelling house, garden, and outbuildings to his wife Martha Alice for her lifetime and at her death to Thomas."¹⁰ Census records indicate that Thomas Thomson may never have lived in the brick house on Lot 19, but instead resided in the older frame dwelling on the farm throughout his life.¹¹

The 1901 census recorded Thomas Thomson as a bachelor born in Ontario on September 28, 1865. He was a farmer of Scotch Presbyterian origin. His sister, Margaret, who was born in Scotland on August 8, 1863, lived with him. The Thomsons were recorded as residing in a wood house with ten rooms on Lot 19, likely the Gamble farmhouse. By the 1931 Census, Thomas Thomson was still living in a wood house, along with his housekeeper Julia Dunlevy/Dunleavy, 24, and her husband Michael, 25, and son Joseph, 1, who resided as lodgers. It is unknown who resided in the brick dwelling on Lot 19 (the subject property, now at 9835 Leslie Street) from the 1900s to 1930s.

In December 1937, Thomas Thomson sold a 4-acre parcel of Lot 19 containing the subject dwelling to his housekeeper, Julia Dunleavy. When Thomas Thomson died in 1940, a codicil of his Will also acknowledged that he conveyed to Mrs. Julia Dunleavy, the house and lot on the north half of lot 19, concession 3, and the four acres surrounding the house.¹²

In 1967, Julia's executor, Michael Dunleavy, acquired the property. In 1975, Michael Dunleavy subdivided the property into three lots. Lot 3, which at the time contained the subject dwelling, was then sold to Margaret Kerby in October of 1980, who sold the parcel to 9801 Leslie Street Limited in 1987. In 2004, the property was bought by Baif Developments,¹³ who subsequently applied to demolish the subject dwelling, then located at 9801 Leslie Street in 2005. However, due to community opposition, the house was not demolished¹⁴ and was instead relocated approximately 65 metres north to its current location at 9835 Leslie Street in 2006.

⁹ Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, "9801 Leslie Street: William P. Munro Residence." Prepared for the Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1997.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Census of Canada*, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931.

¹² Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, "9801 Leslie Street: William P. Munro Residence." Prepared for the Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1997.

¹³ Linda Johnson, "Don't wreck heritage house, concerned residents plead." *Liberal*, Jan 13, 2005.

¹⁴ Linda Johnson, "House gets wrecking ball reprieve." *Liberal*, Jan 16, 2005.

William Munro

William Purdy Munro was born in Ontario around 1826.¹⁵ While little is known of his early life, he is listed as a farmer in Pickering Township in the 1851 Census, along with his wife, [Phebe] Ann, and son, Francis.¹⁶ Munro bought the west 99 acres of Lot 19, Concession 3 of Markham Township from Joseph Willmott in October 1865. Munro was an early community member and farmer in Headford from the 1860s to 1890s, and is responsible for erecting the brick dwelling now located at 9835 Leslie Street on his property around 1875.

The 1871 census records William Munro as a farmer, aged 44, of English origin but born in Ontario. His wife, Phoebe A., was 40, and children Francis, 20 (also a farmer), Minerva, 9, and Newbery, 6, were also in the household at the time. In 1871, the Census recorded that the Munro family held 99 acres of land within Lot 19, Concession 3 of Markham Township; their farm included 90 acres of 'improved' land, 17 acres in pasture, and two acres as orchard or gardens. The Munro family produced a wide variety of crops on their farm, including wheat, barley, oats, peas, potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots, hay, and apples.¹⁷ At the time, their property also contained one dwelling house, and three barns, stables, or outbuildings.¹⁸ Around 1875, William Monroe hired significant Headford builders and masons Patrick and John Kelly to build a new brick dwelling on his farm.

While the 1881 Census does not include a description of the Munro house, the 1891 Census records William Munro, 64, his wife [Phebie], 61, and daughter, Minerva, 28, as residing in a 2-storey brick house with nine rooms on their farm in Headford.

William Munro sold his 99-acre farm to James Thomson in December 1892 for \$6500. Archival records indicate that the Munro family left Markham Township for Toronto when they sold their farm. William Munro died in March of 1899, and Phoebe died in January of 1905. They are buried together in Toronto's Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Patrick and John Kelly

Due to the subject dwelling's date of construction and stylistic similarities with other brick houses in the vicinity, the Munro House has been attributed to Headford builders and masons Patrick and John Kelly, who, at the time lived just north of William Munro's farm on Lot 20, Concession 3 of Markham Township.¹⁹

According to the 1901 census, Patrick Kelly immigrated to Canada from Ireland in 1847 at about aged 28. It is likely that he trained as a stone mason and bricklayer in Ireland

¹⁵ *Census of Canada, 1871.*

¹⁶ *Census of Canada West, 1851.*

¹⁷ *Census of Canada, 1871.*

¹⁸ *Census of Canada, 1871.*

¹⁹ Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, "9801 Leslie Street: William P. Munro Residence." Prepared for the Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1997.

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and began to practice his trade in Markham Township shortly after arriving in the Headford area around 1852.²⁰ The Kelly family, comprised of Patrick, 37, his wife Briget, 25, and their children Mary, 8, and John, 4, are recorded as living in Headford in the 1861 Census.

Patrick's son, John, was born in Headford around 1857 and also trained as a mason. John would have been around 18 when the subject dwelling at 9835 Leslie Street was built, and he was likely apprenticing with his father at this time. The 1881 census reveals that Patrick, Bridget, Mary Ann, and John lived in the Kelly household in Headford, with both Patrick and John listed as masons. In 1891, the household consisted of Patrick, a widower, John and his wife Annie, 24, and their son Francis, 1. Patrick and John were, again, both listed as masons.

During the 1870s and 1890s, Patrick and John Kelly built a great number of buildings in Headford, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Toronto, and their skilled masonry work brought them much acclaim. An article in the *Liberal* on October 10, 1889 states:

“That energetic builder, Mr. John Kelly of Headford, is making things hum in this section. He has put up an astonishing number of buildings this season, notably John Palmer’s two houses on Yonge St., Reuben Pugsley’s house at Eglinton, Adam Henrick’s at Headford, Wm. McGill, Markham Tp., John Ellson, Buttonville, Wm. Rundle, Markham... The houses are mostly of brick, and the style and finish of the great majority of them reflect great credit on Mr. Kelly’s ability as a builder.”²¹

Tragedy struck the Kelly family in 1897 when Mrs. John Kelly, aged 30, died at Tottenham.²² Soon after this, John Kelly died at age 43 in November of 1898.²³ The couple left behind two young sons, Francis and Herbert, and were both buried at the Roman Catholic cemetery in Thornhill.

In 1901, Patrick Kelly, still a mason, had his grandson Herbert, aged 9, and a lodger John [Branne] living with him at the family home in Headford. Patrick Kelly died on October 10, 1901. He was 80 and was buried at the Thornhill cemetery. His estate was left to his daughter Mary Ann Cosgrove, wife of William Cosgrove, a Markham farmer. He gave \$50 each to his grandsons, Patrick John Francis and Herbert, both sons of Patrick's late son, John.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Building notes,” *Liberal*. Oct 10, 1889.

²² “Obituary notice,” *Liberal*. Jun 10, 1897.

²³ “Headford,” *Liberal*. Nov 10, 1898.

²⁴ Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, “9801 Leslie Street: William P. Munro Residence.” Prepared for the Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1997.

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As skilled masons and builders working throughout York County in the late 1800s, Patrick and John Kelly were instrumental in the development of Headford during an era of prosperity in the community during the latter half of the 19th century.

In addition to the William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street, Patrick and John Kelly are attributed with the brickwork of the Patrick Kelly House at 9853 Leslie Street, the Headford Church at 9550 Leslie Street (1882), 9838 Leslie Street (c.1885, demolished), the Adam Henricks House at 1600 Major Mackenzie Drive East (1889), the David Hislop House at 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive East (1877, demolished), and the Richmond Hill High School at 10268 Yonge Street (1897). There are, undoubtedly, other unidentified examples of their work in the vicinity.

Architecture

Dating to circa 1875, the William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street is a representative example of the late-Victorian Gothic Revival architectural style, which was prevalent in Ontario from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries.

The dwelling at 9835 Leslie Street is a 1 ½-storey, dichromatic brick building with a T-shaped plan. The house is oriented to face west towards Leslie Street, and features a complex cross-gabled roof form. In addition to east, west, and south gable-ends, the roof also features steeply-pitched central gables inset with single windows on its west and north elevations.

The subject building is clad in mixed red/orange brick, with playful buff brick detailing. The brick is laid in stretcher bond on the front (west) elevation, and common bond on all other elevations. The house's variegated brick colour was a common result of the technological inability to maintain consistency in brick composition and firing temperature. In the 1870s, the mottled effect was either accepted as normal or evened out with the application of a red or buff dye. The current brightness of the Munro house and the widespread mottling in brick colour suggest that the dye, if used, has weathered off or that the bricks have been cleaned. Buff brick detailing includes a projecting building base, just above the foundation, brick quoining, decorative brick banding, and door and window voussoirs. As it was relocated to its current location in 2006, the building now sits on a new concrete foundation.

The building features segmental-arched window and door openings, with wood lugsills, and a mixture of radiating and hood-mould voussoirs, all in buff brick. All window units appear to be modern vinyl replacements. The house's principal (west) elevation features a projecting bay window with a hipped roof at ground-floor level, as well as a main entrance located within the building's ell. This main entrance features a four-paneled wooden door with a transom (currently covered by plywood), and a verandah with a bellcast roof.

Context

The William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street is located on the east side of Leslie Street, south of Major Mackenzie Drive East, and within the former hamlet of Headford. The surrounding Hamlet of Headford was an agricultural and milling community that prospered during the mid-to-late-19th century around the intersection of Leslie Street and Major Mackenzie Drive East. The Rouge River, the source of power for Headford's early mills and industry, is located east of the subject property.

Although the surrounding context has been significantly altered by the development of contemporary residential subdivisions to the west and northeast of the subject property, as well as large industrial parks to the south, a cluster of Headford's 19th century built form still remains around the intersection of Leslie Street and Major Mckenzie Drive East. This built form is typified by the Gothic Revival architectural style popular in the late 19th century. Surviving buildings and properties that contribute to the Historical character of Headford include the Headford Church and Cemetery at 9550 Leslie Street, the William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street (the subject property), the Patrick Kelly House at 9853 Leslie Street, the John Montgomery House at 9875 Leslie Street, the Jacob Horner House at 32 Love Court, the Cyrus-Mapes House at 31 Love Court, the Adam Henricks House at 1600 Major Mackenzie Drive East, and the Horner Cemetery at 9950 Leslie Street.

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 circa 1875, the William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street has design and physical value as a representative example of the late-Victorian Gothic Revival architectural style. The building has retained its original 1 ½-storey scale, form, massing and western orientation towards Leslie Street. The building has also retained many original architectural details that are representative of the late-Victorian Gothic Revival style including its T-shaped plan, medium-pitched cross-gabled roof with additional central gables on its west and north elevations, red-brick cladding with decorative buff brick details, segmental-headed windows and doors, projecting bay window on its west elevation, and west-facing principal entrance with paneled wooden door and bellcast-roofed verandah.

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

The William Munro House also has design and physical value for the high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit displayed in its elaborate dichromatic patterned brickwork, attributed to significant Headford bricklayers and masons Patrick and John Kelly. Brick detailing at the William Munro House includes a projecting buff brick building base, quoins, window and door voussoirs/hood moulds, and decorative brick banding.

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 subject property has historical and associative value as the former residence of the Munro family, who moved to Lot 19, Concession 3, of Markham Township from Pickering around 1865. The Munros were early farmers and community members of Headford during an era of prosperity in the hamlet during the late 19th century. William Munro erected the subject dwelling on his 99-acre farm around 1875, and used the building as his family home for nearly 20 years until he sold the property in 1892.

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 Munro House also has historical value because it reflects the work of celebrated Headford bricklayers and stonemasons Patrick and John Kelly. As skilled masons and builders working throughout York County from the 1870s to the late 1890s, Patrick and John Kelly were instrumental in the development of Headford during an era of prosperity in the community during the latter half of the 19th century.

In addition to the William Munro House at 9835 Leslie Street, Patrick and John Kelly are attributed with the brickwork of the Patrick & John Kelly House at 9853 Leslie Street (c. 1876), the Headford Church at 9550 Leslie Street (1882), 9838 Leslie Street (c.1885, demolished), the Adam Henricks House at 1600 Major Mackenzie Drive East (1889), the David Hislop House at 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive East (1877, demolished), and the Richmond Hill High School at 10268 Yonge Street (1897). There are, undoubtedly, other unidentified examples of their work in the vicinity.

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

The William Munro House has contextual value because its scale, form, and Gothic Revival architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the historical 19th-century character of the hamlet of Headford.

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

The William Munro House has existed within Lot 19, Concession 3 since around 1875, when it was erected as part of a farmstead owned by the Munro family in the hamlet of Headford. As such, the William Munro House retains long-standing and significant physical, visual and historical links to its surroundings, including to significant landscape features such as the Rouge River and Headford Valleylands to the east. The subject property also has long-standing and significant physical, visual, and historical links to the former milling and agricultural community of Headford.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs



Figure 1 1860 Tremaine's Map of York County, showing the approximate location of the west half of Lot 19, Concession 3, Markham Township (in red). Note that at the time, the property was owned by James Gamble. (Source: University of Toronto Ontario Historical County Maps Project).



Figure 2 1878 Miles & Co. Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York, showing the approximate location of the west half of Lot 19, Concession 3, Markham Township (in red). Note that Lot 19 is now owned by William Munro. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).

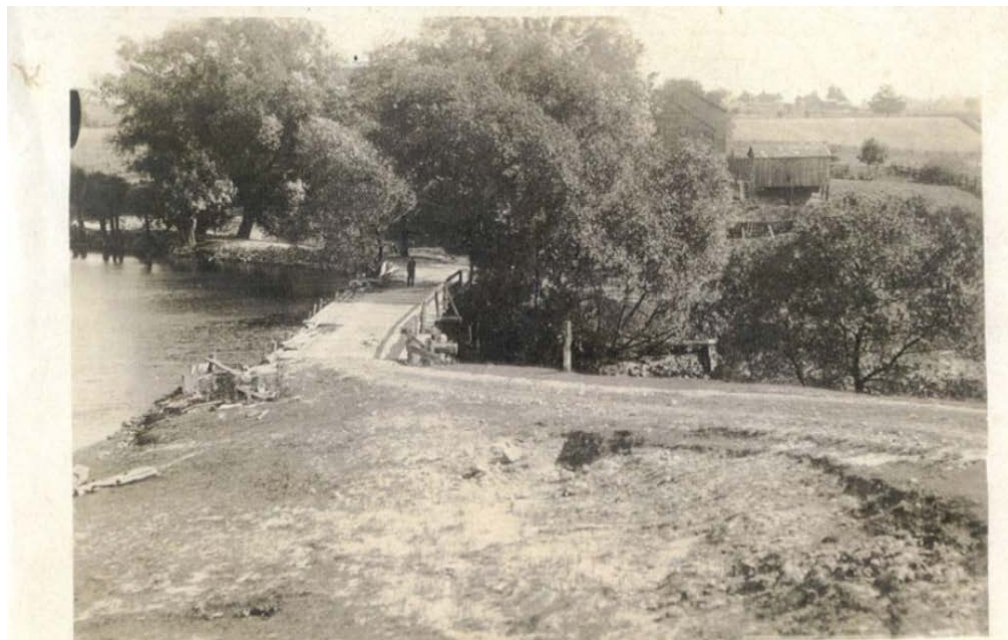


Figure 3 Early 20th century photograph of the Headford Mill Lane, which led east from Leslie Street to the Headford Mill, crossing over the mill pond dam via a bridge. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection).



Figure 4 1985 photograph of the William Munro House, before it was relocated to 9835 Leslie Street. Note that the bellcast-roofed front verandah was enclosed at this point, and later restored to an open verandah when the property was relocated in 2006. (Source: Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). "Heritage Building Summary – 9801 Leslie Street." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date unknown).



Figure 5 Photograph of the William Munro House's front (west) elevation, looking east from Leslie Street. Note the building's 1 ½-storey massing, medium-pitched cross-gabled roof with steep central gable on the building's ell, playful dichromatic brickwork, segmental arched windows, projecting bay window with hipped roof, and main entrance with a paneled wooden door and bellcast-roofed verandah (Source: HUD, 2024).



Figure 6 Photograph of the William Munro House's front (west) and south (side) elevations, looking northeast from Leslie Street. Note the building's 1 ½-storey massing, T-shaped plan, medium-pitched cross-gabled roof with steep central gable on the building's ell, playful dichromatic brickwork, segmental arched windows, projecting bay window with hipped roof, and main entrance with a paneled wooden door and bellcast-roofed verandah (Source: HUD, 2024).



Figure 7 Photograph of the William Munro House's north (side) and partial front (west) elevations, looking south from Leslie Street. Note the building's 1 ½-storey massing, medium-pitched cross-gabled roof with steep central gable on the building's north elevation, playful dichromatic brickwork, segmental arched windows and doors, and projecting bay window with hipped roof on the west elevation. Also note the original segmental arched basement window voussoirs visible on the north elevation (Source: HUD, 2024).



Figure 8 Detailed photograph of the William Munro House's main (west) entryway, featuring a wooden paneled door topped by a transom (currently covered with plywood as a protective measure). (Source: HUD, 2024).

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