

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



10217 Yonge Street - John Coulter Tailor Shop

1866

Lot 47 Concession 1 Markham Township

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

History

Contextual History

John Coulter's Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street is a mixed-use residential and commercial structure in the City of Richmond Hill's historic village core. Prior to colonization and settlement, the land 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. 10217 Yonge Street is located within the former Lot 47 Concession 1 in Markham Township, which is associated with a period of intense early development within the village along Yonge, Centre, Church, and Dunlop Streets from 1810 to 1850. The structure was built in 1866 by John Coulter after a fire destroyed the previous shop, and at the time of construction, it was surrounded by similar mixed-use commercial and residential buildings along Yonge Street.

10217 Yonge Street

The first owner of Lot 47 Concession 1 in Markham Township was Andrew Davidson, who was granted 190 acres by the Crown in 1802. Land registry records show that the full 190 acres passed hands several times in the early nineteenth century - it was sold to John H. Hudson in 1804, to William Allan in 1805, to Samuel S. Wilmott in 1808, to Jabez Lynde in 1817, and then to Amos Wright in 1832. After 1832, Amos Wright subdivided the lot and sold off smaller part-lots along Yonge Street to facilitate the development of the growing village.¹ Between 1844 and 1847, the property was purchased by Alexander Quinn, who used the land for pasture.² In 1856, Quinn sold a ½ acre property to John Coulter.³

The Coulter family owned, lived on, and worked at 10217 Yonge Street from 1856 to the late 1920s, and constructed the present mixed-use structure in 1866 to use as a dwelling and as a shop for Coulter's tailoring business. Archival sources confirm Coulter's location. Voter's lists from 1879 to 1897 list John Coulter at lot 40⁴ on lot 47 on Yonge Street east in Richmond Hill.⁵ According to the 1879 Gibson Plan, lot 40 is located on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Richmond, where 10217 Yonge Street is located today.⁶ Unlike today's property lines, lot 40 in the nineteenth century stretched from Yonge Street west towards Church Street. However, sources indicate that Coulter's structure was located at Yonge Street. An 1888 article from the *York Herald* discussing sidewalk repairs places Coulter's shop directly on Yonge.⁷

According to census records, the Coulter family lived in a 1 ½ storey frame structure prior to 1866.⁸ In April 1866, the block, including Coulter's tailoring shop, was burned down in a fire. Described by the *York Herald* as the worst fire the community had seen in twenty years, the blaze travelled from Mr. Henderson's grocery store to Mr. Crosby's dry goods store, then to John Coulter's tailoring shop and to Mr. Waterhouse's general store. According to the *Herald*, Coulter rebuilt his structure by autumn 1866. The new building was described as a two-storey brick building with a dwelling, a shop, and a brick rear addition.⁹

In 1900, Coulter retired from his tailoring business and rented his shop to A.H. Hume, who sold gentlemen's furnishings.¹⁰ The Coulter family continued to reside on the

¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

² *Census of Canada West*, 1851.

³ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

⁴ In addition to lot 40, Coulter also acquired the adjoining lot 44 on lot 4. In the twentieth century, Coulter's property was also renamed to lot 331, Lot 6 + Block A Judge's Plan 10030, 91 Yonge Street, and later to 10217 Yonge Street.

⁵ *List of Voters for the Village of Richmond Hill*, Richmond Hill: Liberal Printing and Publishing House, 1879, 1881, 1891, 1894, 1896, 1897.

⁶ Gibson, P. S. *Plan of the Village of Richmond Hill in the County of York*, 1879.

⁷ "Improvement." *York Herald*, July 12 1888, pg 2.

⁸ *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

⁹ "New buildings." *York Herald*, September 7 1866, pg 2.

¹⁰ "Locals." *The Liberal*, July 19 1900, pg 5.

property. Land registry records show that the property's next owner was Coulter's daughter, Mary.¹¹ Although the land registry records don't show when Mary inherited the property or from whom, a legal declaration signed by her sister, Margaret, in 1928 states that John Coulter's property was left to Mary Coulter after the death of John and his wife, Agnes.¹²

According to tax assessment rolls, Mary rented out part of the property to a grain seller, Jacob H. Ramer, from 1907 to 1913.¹³ Mary sold the eastern part of the lot along Church Street to David Hill in 1927. Land registry records show that Mary sold the western part of the property and the present structure to Phoebe Mills in 1928,¹⁴ though tax assessment rolls show her living there until 1929.¹⁵ Phoebe Mills and her husband Alfred lived on the property until 1950, when they sold part of the lot to Derek and Patricia Mills. The property was then sold to Joseph Cordone in 1969. Today, 10217 Yonge Street's legal description is Lot 6 + Block A, Judge's Plan 10030, which matches the 1969 property description in the land registry.¹⁶

The John Coulter Tailor Shop is now an example of Richmond Hill's 19th century commercial and residential development along Yonge Street.

John Coulter & the Coulter family

John Coulter and his family are the most prominent residents to own and occupy 10217 Yonge Street. The family lived on the lot for over 70 years, operated a longstanding and prominent tailor shop on the premises, and constructed the present building in 1866.

John Coulter was born in Down County, Ireland in 1819 and emigrated to Canada as a young man. He first settled in Kingston and Toronto before moving to Richmond Hill in 1855. His wife, Agnes Miller, was also born in Ireland and first settled in Kingston, where the couple married in 1842 before moving further west.¹⁷ The Coulters were active church members, with John serving on the board of trustees for the Presbyterian church.¹⁸

John Coulter ran a tailor shop on his Yonge Street property for over 40 years. The earliest records of his business date back to July 1857, with advertisements running regularly in the *York Ridings' Gazette*. Coulter promised the latest fashions and high-

¹¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

¹² "People of Richmond Hill, A-C." *Richmond Hill Public Library, Mary-Lou Griffin Local History Room*, date unknown.

¹³ *Assessment roll for the village of Richmond Hill*. Richmond Hill Public Library, Mary-Lou Griffin Local History Room, 1905-1929.

¹⁴ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

¹⁵ *Assessment roll for the village of Richmond Hill*. Richmond Hill Public Library, Mary-Lou Griffin Local History Room, 1905-1929.

¹⁶ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

¹⁷ "Mrs Coulter's Death." *The Liberal*, July 3 1902, pg 5.

¹⁸ Commemorative biographical record of the County of York, Ontario : containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens and many of the early settled families. Toronto : J.H. Beers, 1907.

quality garments,¹⁹ and advertised the business's location on Yonge Street.²⁰ Sources show that the tailor shop was a successful business and produced quality items.²¹ In June 1863, Coulter won three first prizes at the agricultural spring show in the categories Albert Coat, Summer Vest, and Summer Pants, indicating good craftsmanship. In 1886, Coulter received a contract to produce uniforms for the local Lacrosse Club.²²

The tailor shop was the subject of local news three times in the nineteenth century. In April 1860, there was a fire deliberately set at the Coulter property. According to the *York Herald*, Agnes Coulter woke in the night to find a blaze burning at the bottom of the stairs. Wood and hemlock shavings were found, indicating arson, although the perpetrator was not found.²³ In 1866, the shop was burned to the ground in a multi-structure fire that claimed many Yonge Street businesses.²⁴ While Coulter managed to save some of his furniture and stock from fire, he did not have insurance and suffered a loss of approximately \$1500.²⁵ In 1879, over a decade after the business was rebuilt on the same spot, the tailor shop experienced a burglary. According to the *Herald*, thieves entered the shop through the north end window in the night, and snuck through the workshop and into the storefront, stealing about \$30 worth of clothing.²⁶

Directories show that Coulter's tailoring business ran consistently until 1900.²⁷ According to the 1891 census, Coulter employed two workers,²⁸ although regular records of employment are not available. Coulter retired from tailoring in 1900²⁹ and the family remained at 10217 Yonge Street into the twentieth century. Agnes Coulter died in 1902,³⁰ and John died in 1904. Their daughter Mary remained at their home until the late 1920s.³¹ Like her parents, Mary continued to be an active member of the

¹⁹ "John Coulter, Merchant Tailor, Richmond Hill." *York Ridings' Gazette*, January 22 1858.

²⁰ "Business Directory." *York Ridings' Gazette*, various, 1857-9.

²¹ "Agricultural spring show prize list." *York Herald*, June 5 1863.

²² "New suits." *The Liberal*, May 13 1886, pg 1.

²³ "Fiendish attempt." *York Herald*, April 20 1860, pg 2.

²⁴ "Destructive fire in Richmond Hill." *York Herald*, April 20 1866, pg 2.

²⁵ "Destructive fire in Richmond Hill." *York Herald*, April 20 1866, pg 2.

²⁶ "Burglars at work." *York Herald*, September 11 1879, pg 2.

²⁷ *Mitchell & Co's general directory for the city of Toronto and gazetteer of the counties of York and Peel for 1866*. Toronto: Mitchell & Co., 1866; *County of York Gazetteer and Directory: First Edition (1871, 1881)*. Toronto: W.H. Irwin & Co., 1870-1, 1881; *Nason's east and west ridings of the county of York, or, Townships of Etobicoke, Markham, Scarboro, Vaughan & York directory*. Toronto: James Randle Nason, 1871; *Lovell's Business And Professional Directory of the Province of Ontario, for 1882, Alphabetically arranged as to Places, Names, Business and Professions, with a Classified Business Directory of the City of Montreal*. Toronto: John Lovell, 1882; *The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York, 1884-5: Vol. I (1884/5)*. Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1890, 1892, 1893, 1896, 1898, 1900.

²⁸ *Census of Canada*, 1891.

²⁹ "Locals." *The Liberal*, July 19 1900, pg 5.

³⁰ Commemorative biographical record of the County of York, Ontario : containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens and many of the early settled families. Toronto : J.H. Beers, 1907.

³¹ "The Late John Coulter." *The Liberal*, June 2 1904.

Presbyterian community in Richmond Hill, becoming an honorary president of the Women's Missionary Society in 1926.³²

Architecture

The John Coulter Tailor Shop, built in 1866, is a representative example of a nineteenth century mixed-use commercial and residential structure, and an uncommon example of a commercial Georgian-style building in Richmond Hill.

The structure includes an 1866 brick rear (east) addition and a 20th century brick side addition on the north elevation. The structure fronts Yonge Street and is flush with the sidewalk. The original part of the building, built in 1866, is a two-storey building with a rectangular footprint and a medium-pitched side gable roof with eave returns. The structure is constructed of red brick laid in a common bond, and includes one red brick chimney on the south side. The main (west) elevation along Yonge Street features a symmetrical three-bay composition, with two storefronts at grade and residential units on the second floor. At grade, there are two rectangular, flat-arched shop windows and three entranceways, none of which are original features. On the upper floor, there are three flat-arched one-over-one windows. The main façade has cement parging and angelstone quoins around the windows and corners that are not original to the building. However, archival material suggests that the original façade was red brick with buff brick quoins.³³ The structure is consistent with the Georgian architectural style because of its symmetrical layout, its design simplicity and minimal ornamentation, its balanced placement of building features, and its medium-pitched side gable roof.

The material on the south façade appears to be original to the nineteenth century. Unlike the main façade, the south façade is not symmetrical and has an irregularly-placed and -sized mixture of wooden hung and casement windows. The window openings are a mixture of flat- and segmental-arched, and their lintels and windowsills are both red brick. In addition, there is a secondary entrance with a brick and frame vestibule projecting from this elevation. The vestibule includes wooden two over one windows and a wooden door.

To the rear of the building (east elevation), there is a 1 ½ storey brick addition projecting from the structure. This rear addition was built alongside the original building after the 1866 fire. The rear addition has a saltbox roof, a mixture of wooden casement and hung windows, brick lintels and windowsills, and a rectangular building footprint.

The subject building also features a two-storey, one-bay addition on its north elevation, which dates to the mid-20th century. The north addition is constructed of buff brick and has a flat roof. Like the original structure, there is a storefront at grade and residential space on the upper floor of the main façade facing Yonge Street. At grade, the storefront window is rectangular and flat-arched. On the upper floor, there is a single-hung window with a segmental arch. The north elevation of the addition features a

³² "Presbyterian W.M.S. elected officers." *The Liberal*, December 9 1926, pg 6.

³³ *Paving machine on Yonge Street*. Photograph. Richmond Hill Public Library Photographs Collection. c1927.

mixture of flat- and segmental-arched window and door openings, which are irregularly sized and placed. As with the original structure, the windowsills and lintels are brick.

Context

The John Coulter Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street is located on the east side of Yonge Street, south of Richmond Street. Surrounding the subject property, Yonge Street features a predominantly fine-grained 19th and early-20th century commercial main street character, which is typified by low-rise commercial buildings with storefronts at-grade, typically built flush with the Yonge Street lot line. These commercial buildings are also interspersed with landmark heritage institutional/public buildings, including churches, schools, and a post office. While the surrounding streetscape along Yonge Street does feature some later development typologies, including surface parking lots and commercial plazas, the predominant character remains that of a historic commercial main street.

Nearby buildings that contribute to the historic main street character of the streetscape include the Hewison-Skeele House & Shop at 10155-10157 Yonge Street (c. 1859, designated) the Robinson Block at 10176-10178 Yonge Street (c. 1915, listed), the Old Post Office at 10184 Yonge Street (1936, designated), the Dominion Telegraph Building at 10185 Yonge Street (1877, designated), the Richmond Hill Methodist Church at 10201 Yonge Street (1880, listed), the Fireproof Store at 10225 Yonge Street (1866, listed), the Reid-Hume house at 10231 Yonge Street (c. 1846, listed), the Stark-Hart house at 10239 Yonge (c. 1852, listed).

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 569/22 – 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.

Built in 1866, the John Coulter Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street has design and physical value because it is a rare example of Georgian commercial architecture in Richmond Hill, and because it is a representative example of 19th century mixed-use construction along Yonge Street. The John Coulter Tailor Shop consists of an original Georgian-style 1866 structure with rear and side additions. Original architectural features that contribute to the Georgian style include its red brick construction, the medium-sloped side gable roof with eave return, the symmetrical and balanced three-

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bay composition of the main (west) façade, and the flat- and segmental-arched windows with brick lintels and sills and period wood windows. Architectural features that contribute to its 19th century mixed-use construction include its storefronts at grade and placement flush with Yonge Street.

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 John Coulter Tailor Shop has historical and associative value for its direct associations with John Coulter, a local tailor and prominent early member of the Richmond Hill community. John Coulter's business ran for over forty years on this site, and the Coulter family was present on the property for two generations until the late 1920s. Coulter contributed to Richmond Hill's growing community in different ways. After the Richmond Hill fire of 1866, Coulter rebuilt the present structure and used it as his tailor shop and dwelling, contributing to the built development of the village and to its post-fire recovery. Further, his longstanding tailoring business, running from the 1850s to 1900, contributed to the village's early economic development.

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 John Coulter Tailor Shop has contextual value because its scale, form, Georgian architectural style, and mixed-use building typology are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly fine-grained 19th and early-20th century commercial main street character of the surrounding streetscape on Yonge Street. The property also contributes to the historic character of Richmond Hill's village core more broadly, which

is typified by fine-grained commercial and institutional built form concentrated to Yonge Street, and fine-grained residential built form located on side streets east and west of Yonge Street.

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

The John Coulter Tailor Shop has contextual value because it is visually and historically linked to its surroundings on the east side of Yonge Street within the historic village of Richmond Hill. The building is visually linked to its surroundings because it has a similar scale, form, and character to the other 19th century commercial buildings still present along Yonge Street. The structure is also historically linked to the early wave of commercial development along Yonge Street in the early- to mid-19th century, which arose to service travelers along Yonge Street as well as early residents of the growing village.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

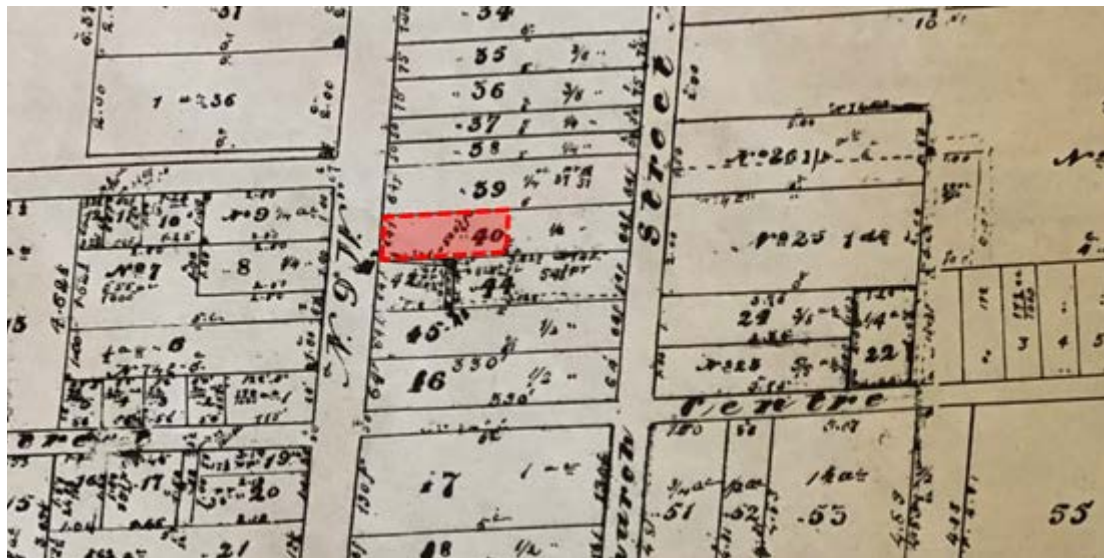


Figure 1 Detail of the 1879 Gibson plan showing the approximate location of the John Coulter Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street (in red). The Coulter family originally owned lots 40 (now containing the subject property) and 44 to the south. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection)

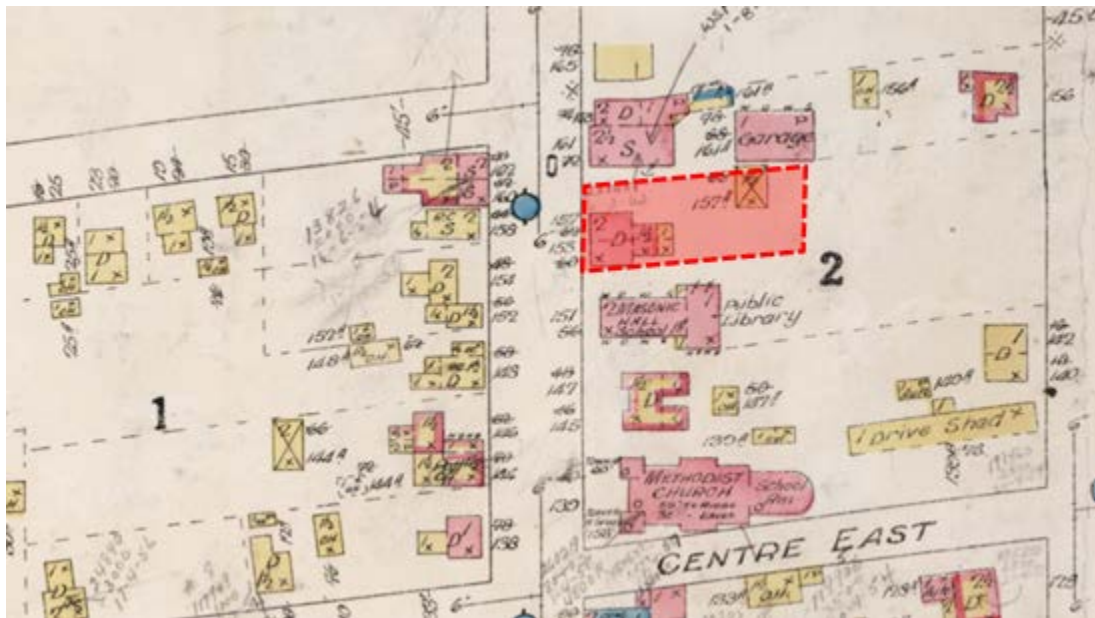


Figure 2 Detail of the 1923 fire insurance plan showing the approximate location of the John Coulter Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street (in red). (Source: University of Toronto Map and Data Library)



Figure 3 C1927 photograph of the John Coulter Tailor Shop (indicated by the arrow), taken from Yonge Street looking southeast. Photograph indicates that the building was originally red brick with buff brick quoins on the front (west) façade. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Digital Archive)



Figure 4 Detail of the 1960 fire insurance plan showing the approximate location of the John Coulter Tailor Shop at 10217 Yonge Street (in red). (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection)



Figure 5 Current photograph looking east, showing the principal (west) elevation of 10217 Yonge Street. Note the building's two-storey massing, side gable roof, and symmetrical three-bay front (west) façade on the main portion of the building. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 6 Current photograph looking northeast, showing the south elevation of 10217 Yonge Street. Note the wooden window units and brick lintels and sills. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 7 Current photograph of 10217 Yonge Street looking northeast, showing the site's context on Yonge Street. Note the surrounding small-scale commercial structures. (Source: HUD, 2024)

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