

## Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



### 10239 Yonge Street - Hart House

Circa 1853

Part of Lot 1, Concession 47, Markham Township

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

## History

### Contextual History

The Hart House at 10239 Yonge Street is a two-storey Georgian structure located in 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. 10239 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 timber-frame two-storey structure was built circa 1853 and was occupied by the prosperous farming Hart family from 1862 to 1912. Throughout the course of its lifespan, the subject property has been referred to as Lot 47 Concession 1, Lot 36 on Lot 47, Judge's Plan 10030 Lot 12, and 10239 Yonge Street.

### 10239 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.<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that the next owner of the subject property was Samuel Stark, who purchased a 3/8-acre lot from Wright in 1852. Based on the property's 3/8-acre size and location,<sup>2</sup> this is likely the subject property. According to a report completed by Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, the subject building appears to have been built by Stark shortly after he purchased the land. Land registry records show that the lot was sold for £50 in 1852. Stark's property was then assessed at £60 in the 1853 tax assessment roll, and at £70 in 1854. The values for neighboring properties do not rise in the early 1850s. When a property's value jumps when the values for surrounding lots do not, it is typically indicative of a new structure being built on the property. Therefore, it is believed that Stark constructed a building on the property around 1853.<sup>3</sup>

According to land registry records, George Sloan was the next owner of the subject property, although the date of purchase is not available.<sup>4</sup> In 1857, Sloan sold his 3/8-acre property to Richard Nicholls. Archival records indicate that Nicholls did not reside on the property, and instead rented it out to tenants. According to the 1858 tax assessment roll, James Varney was a tenant on a property owned by R. Nicholls in this year.<sup>5</sup> Newspaper sources further confirm Varney's location, placing his shoe store on Yonge Street across from Abraham Law's<sup>6</sup> property.<sup>7</sup> Other tenants that Nicholls rented the property to include a Mrs. Campbell in 1859<sup>8</sup> and a Mrs. Morgan in 1860-1861.<sup>9</sup>

John Hart purchased the 3/8-acre property from Richard Nicholls in 1862<sup>10</sup> and used it as a retirement home for himself and his wife, Margaret. Archival sources confirm Hart's use and location on the property. The 1866 directory lists John Hart as a freeholder and a gentleman (property owner and retiree, respectively) on lot 47 concession 1,<sup>11</sup> and

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

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent descriptions of the subject property also describe it as being 3/8 acres large.

<sup>3</sup> "The Samuel Stark-John Hart Dwelling." *Su Murdoch Historical Consulting*, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

<sup>5</sup> *Assessment roll for the township of Markham, 1 concession*. Markham Township, 1858.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Law's property was located on the northwest corner of Yonge and Richmond Streets. Stamp, Robert M. *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930*. Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> "J. Verney, Boot and shoe maker." *York Ridings' Gazette*, August 14 1857.

<sup>8</sup> *Assessment roll for the township of Markham, 1 concession*. Markham Township, 1859.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1860-1861.

<sup>10</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

<sup>11</sup> *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.

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voter's lists from 1881 to 1896 list John Hart as the owner of lot 36 on 47 on Yonge Street.<sup>12</sup> In the 1891 census, Hart's residence is listed as being a wooden two-storey, seven room house, a description matching the subject building at 10239 Yonge Street.<sup>13</sup>

In 1897, after John Hart's death, lot 36 on 47<sup>14</sup> transferred to Jessie Hart, Hart's second wife.<sup>15</sup> According to the 1901 census, Jessie Hart lived in a seven-room dwelling, likely the subject building. In the 1911 census, Hart is confirmed to still live on lot 36 on 47.<sup>16</sup> In 1913, lot 36 on 47 was sold to Fanny C. Martin, who subdivided the land into two halves and sold it in 1919. Annie Palmer purchased the front half of the lot fronting Yonge Street, where the subject property is located.<sup>17</sup>

In 1921, Annie Palmer sold lot 36 on Yonge Street to Margaret J. Winterton. According to the 1921 census, the Winterton family lived in a wooden house on Yonge Street, and Margaret's husband, Charles, was a baker.<sup>18</sup> During this time, the property's use may have changed from residential to both residential and commercial. Newspaper advertisements show that Winterton opened a bakery on Yonge Street in 1922, and it is believed that the shop was located on the subject property.<sup>19</sup>

According to land registry and newspaper records, Grace Kidd purchased lot 36 from the Wintertons in 1923.<sup>20</sup> Kidd's husband, George Kidd, ran a shoe repair business on the subject property. Starting in 1924, advertisements in *The Liberal* state that Kidd's shop was located "in Winterton's old stand" on Yonge Street,<sup>21</sup> indicating that the property purchased from the Wintertons was the same property used for the business.

In 1937, lot 36 on 47 was sold to Myrtle B. Kidd, who sold the property to Marwood and Katherine Cunningham in 1946. The property was then sold to Lansing Securities Ltd. in 1967. According to land registry records, the lot was now called Judge's Plan 10030 lot 12, matching the legal description of the subject property today.

### John Hart

John Hart, an early Richmond Hill shoemaker and farmer, is the most prominent individual to live at 10239 Yonge Street. During his lifetime, Hart ran a prosperous farm, accumulated a large amount of land, and retired young at 48 years old.

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<sup>12</sup> *List of Voters for the Village of Richmond Hill*, Richmond Hill: Liberal Printing and Publishing House, 1881, 1891, 1894, 1896, 1897.

<sup>13</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1891.

<sup>14</sup> After the drawing of the 1879 Gibson plan, the subject property was called lot 36 on 47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

<sup>16</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1901, 1911.

<sup>17</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

<sup>18</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1921.

<sup>19</sup> "New bakery and confectionery." *The Liberal*, December 7 1922.

<sup>20</sup> *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township; *The Liberal*, May 17 1923.

<sup>21</sup> "All kinds of boot and shoe repairing neatly done." *The Liberal*, March 20 1924.

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John Hart was born in England in about 1813 or 1814<sup>22</sup> and emigrated to Canada sometime before 1845.<sup>23</sup> Hart purchased the subject property in 1862, and directories, tax assessments, and census data show that Hart was a retired farmer for the entire time he resided at 10239 Yonge Street. In the 1863 tax assessment<sup>24</sup> and in the 1871 directory,<sup>25</sup> John Hart is listed as a gentleman (retiree). In the 1881 census, Hart is again listed as a gentleman.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to his early retirement at the age of 48, John Hart was a shoemaker and a farmer.<sup>27</sup> Due to sparse records prior to 1850, little is known about his early career. In 1845, Hart bought the west half of Lot 59 Concession 1 in Vaughan Township, and purchased the adjoining property, the west half of Lot 58 Concession 1, in 1856, and he ran this large property as a farm. According to the *York Herald*, Hart grew turnips, peas, oats, and hay on his farm.<sup>28</sup> According to newspaper sources, Hart may have had a tenant, a man named Bean, on his farm property in 1867.<sup>29</sup> Since newspaper records did not exist in Richmond Hill until 1857, little is known about Hart's farms. However, according to census data, by 1871 John Hart was the owner of a total of 271 acres of land, including one village lot, four dwelling houses, and one carriage,<sup>30</sup> making him a remarkably wealthy retired farmer.

After his wife, Margaret Hart, died of pleuro-pneumonia in 1872,<sup>31</sup> John Hart married Jessie McIntosh in 1873.<sup>32</sup> According to census data, Jessie Hart was born in Scotland in 1835 and emigrated to Canada in 1854.<sup>33</sup> John Hart died in 1897,<sup>34</sup> and since he had no children, he left most of his estate to Jessie, including the subject property, its contents and furniture, and farmland on Lot 58 Concession 1 in Vaughan Township. According to censuses, Jessie Hart lived alone on the subject property<sup>35</sup> until her death in 1912.<sup>36</sup> After Jessie's death, Hart's estate, including the Yonge Street property and its household goods, was put up for public auction.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1871.

<sup>23</sup> Hart purchased Lot 59 Concession 1 in Vaughan Township in 1845. *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 47, Concession 1, Markham Township.

<sup>24</sup> *Assessment roll for the township of Markham, 1 concession*. Markham Township, 1863.

<sup>25</sup> *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.

<sup>26</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1881.

<sup>27</sup> "The Samuel Start-John Hart Dwelling." *Su Murdoch Historical Consulting*, 1998.

<sup>28</sup> "Auction Sales." *York Herald*, March 6 1863.

<sup>29</sup> "Our court." *York Herald*, March 8 1867.

<sup>30</sup> *Census of Canada, Schedule 3*, 1871.

<sup>31</sup> "Died." *York Herald*, November 29 1872.

<sup>32</sup> "Married." *York Herald*, December 5 1873.

<sup>33</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1901.

<sup>34</sup> "Notice to Creditors." *The Liberal*, March 11 1897.

<sup>35</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1901, 1911.

<sup>36</sup> "Deaths." *The Liberal*, October 17 1912.

<sup>37</sup> "Executor's Sale." *The Liberal*, November 7 1912.

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Today, Hart Street in Richmond Hill, near the corner of Bathurst and Major Mackenzie Drive, is named after John Hart.<sup>38</sup>

### Architecture

The Hart House, built circa 1853, is a rare surviving example of a pre-Confederation Georgian-style timber-frame structure, and is an uncommon example of a Georgian structure with a side-hall plan. The Georgian style is typified by its stately, muted features and simple designs. Georgian houses have balanced compositions, and are often, although not always, symmetrical. The Hart House is consistent with the Georgian architectural style because of its massing, side gable roof with medium pitch, high window placement, minimal and muted ornamentation, and balanced composition.

The Hart House consists of a main building, built circa 1853, and a rear addition, built between 1960 and 1970.<sup>39</sup> The structure fronts Yonge Street and is flush with the sidewalk. The original part of the building is a two-storey timber-frame structure with a medium-pitch side-gable roof with eave returns. The structure has a rectangular footprint and is currently clad in aluminum siding. The structure also has an uncommon side hall plan.

The building's front (west) façade features an asymmetrical, yet balanced, organization, consisting of three bays at grade and two bays at the second storey. At grade, there are two flat-headed windows to the north and a flat-headed principal doorway to the south. While this doorway features a neoclassical doorcase, photographs of the building from 1983 reveal that the exiting door surround is not original,<sup>40</sup> although it is sympathetic to the building's Georgian style. At the second storey, there are two additional flat-headed windows, very high up below the roofline. All windows, window surrounds, door, and shutters on the front façade are vinyl and not original, although the window and door openings likely are original to the design. There is a simple wooden porch leading up to the doorway, which is also not original.

The subject building does not have any window or door openings on its north and south (side) elevations. To the rear (east) of the structure, there is a two-storey rear addition with a hip roof, built between 1960 and 1970.<sup>41</sup> Like the original structure, the addition is clad with aluminum siding.

### Context

The Hume House at 10231 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 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial main street character,

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<sup>38</sup> Stamp, Robert M. *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930*. Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited. *Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, Ontario*. Toronto & Montreal: Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited, 1960.

<sup>40</sup> "The Samuel Start-John Hart Dwelling." *Su Murdoch Historical Consulting*, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited. *Fire Insurance Plan of Richmond Hill, Ontario*. Toronto & Montreal: Underwriter's Survey Bureau Limited, 1960.

which is typified by low-rise residential and commercial buildings with storefronts at-grade, typically built flush with the Yonge Street lot line. These residential and 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 predominate 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), 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), the Fireproof Store at 10225 Yonge Street (1866), the Hume house at 10231 Yonge Street (c. 1846), and the John Coulter Tailor Shop (1866).

### **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.**

Built circa 1853, the Hart House at 10239 Yonge Street has design and physical value because it is a rare and early example of Georgian architecture in Richmond Hill, and because it is an early remaining example of residential development along Yonge Street. The Hart House is a two-storey, timber frame structure with rectangular plan, three bays at grade, and two bays on the second floor. Original architectural features that contribute to the rare and early representation of Georgian architecture include its timber frame construction, medium-sloped side-gable roof with eave return, the asymmetrical, yet balanced, composition of the front (west) façade, and flat-headed windows and door on the front (west) facade. Original architectural features that contribute to the early representation of development along Yonge Street include its orientation 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

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**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 Hart House has historical and associative value for its direct association with John Hart, a prosperous early Richmond Hill farmer, shoemaker, and village resident whose family lived on the property from 1862 to 1912. Hart was a successful businessman, acquiring 271 acres of land, four dwelling houses, and one village lot, and retired to the subject building at 10239 Yonge Street at the relatively young age of 48. Hart Street in Richmond Hill has been named in commemoration of John Hart.

**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 Hart House has contextual value because its scale, form, and Georgian architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century main street character along Yonge Street. The property also contributes to the historic character of Richmond Hill's village core more broadly, which is typified by fine-grained residential, 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.

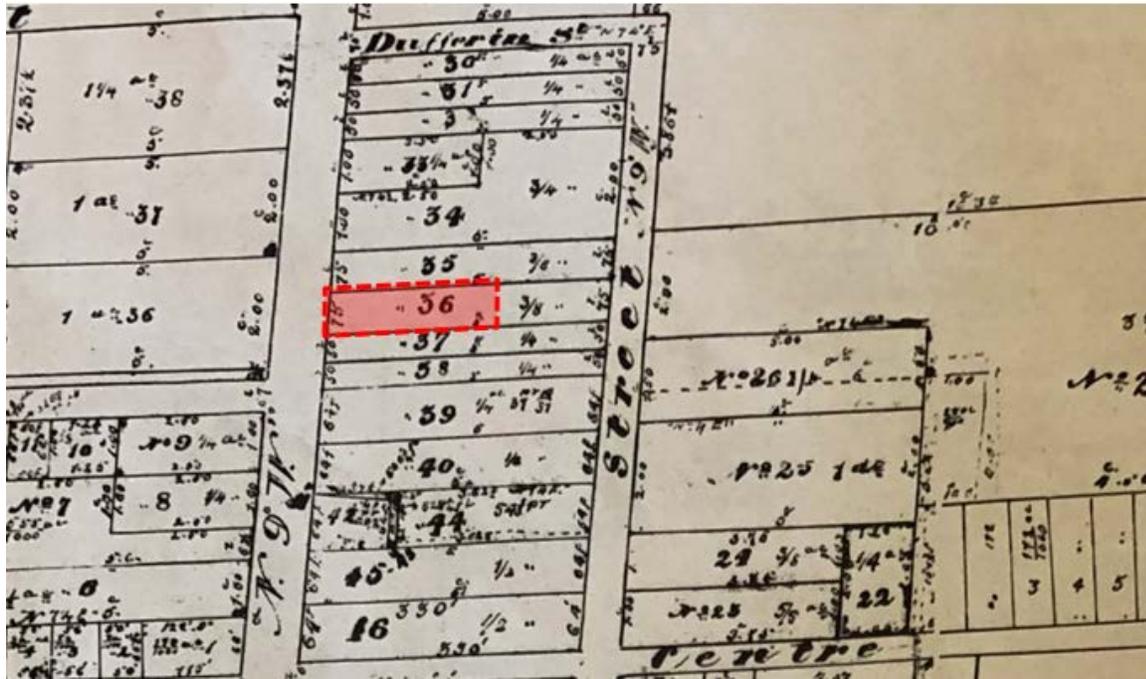
**8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.**

The Hart House has contextual value because it is visually and historically linked to its surroundings on the east side of Yonge Street in Richmond Hill's historic village core. The structure is visually linked to its surroundings because it has a similar scale, massing, material, and character to other 19<sup>th</sup> century structures still standing on Yonge Street. As one of the earliest structures remaining on Yonge Street in the village core, it is historically linked to the early wave of development that arose to accommodate the village's growing population in the early- to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

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

N/A

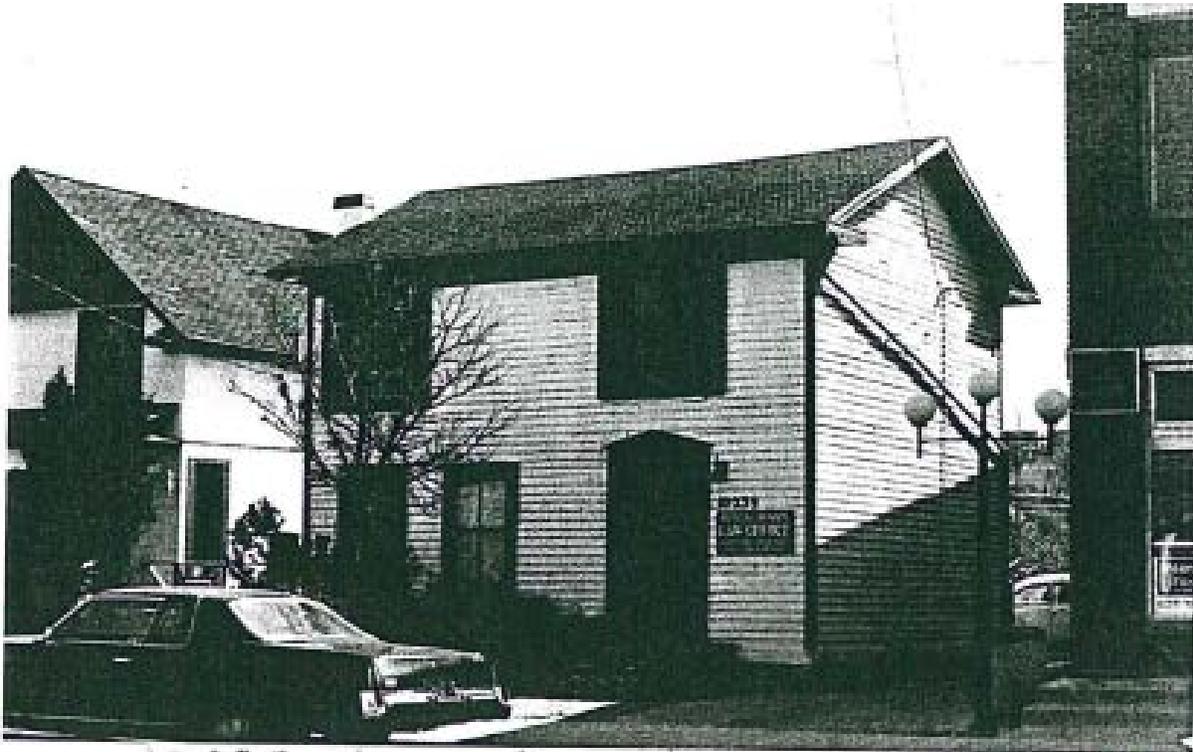
### Maps and Photographs



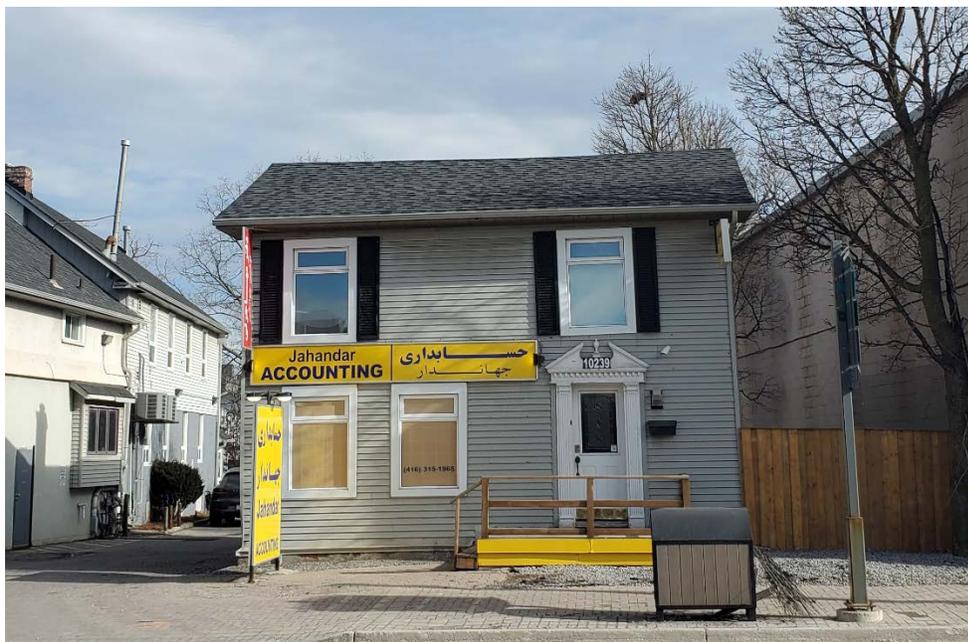
**Figure 1** Detail of the 1879 Gibson plan showing the approximate location of the Hart House at 10239 Yonge Street (in red). The Hart family purchased 3/8 acres of land on lot 36 in 1862. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library Local History and Genealogy Collection)



**Figure 2** Detail of the 1910 fire insurance plan showing the approximate location of the Hart House at 10239 Yonge Street (in red). Note that the one storey side north addition has since been removed. (Source: University of Toronto Map and Data Library)



**Figure 3** 1983 photograph of the Hart House, taken from Yonge Street looking east. Note the placement of the window and door openings, which have not been altered. Photograph also shows the subject property with a wooden door, wooden windows, and a neoclassical door surround, which have all since been removed. (Source: Su Murdoch Historical Consulting)



**Figure 4** Current photograph looking east, showing the principal (west) elevation of 10239 Yonge Street. Note the building's two-storey massing, side gable roof, asymmetrical three-bay composition, and side hall plan. (Source: HUD, 2024)



**Figure 5** Current photograph looking southeast, showing the north elevation of 10239 Yonge Street. Note the return eaves on the side gable roof. (Source: HUD, 2024)



**Figure 6** Current photograph looking northeast, showing the south elevation of 10239 Yonge Street. Note the return eaves on the side gable roof. (Source: HUD, 2024)



**Figure 7** Current photograph of 10239 Yonge Street, showing the site's context on Yonge Street in the historic Richmond Hill village core. Note the surrounding small-scale commercial structures. (Source: HUD, 2024)

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