

**Commercial Building at 968–976 Kingston Road and  
281–285 Scarborough Road**

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For Nomination to the Toronto Heritage Register  
January 28, 2019**



**Figure 1: Kingston Road, northeast corner of Scarborough Road, November 20, 2018  
Photo: Barbara Myrvold**



**Figure 2. Scarborough Road frontage, November 20, 2018**  
Photo: Barbara Myrvold



**Figure 3: Google map showing location of 968-976 Kingston Road**

## 1. SUMMARY

The commercial building at 968–976 Kingston Road, northeast corner of Scarborough Road, and 281–285 Scarborough Road<sup>1</sup> should be preserved because of its historical, contextual, and architectural importance to the local neighbourhood. Built in 1931, the building occupies about a third of the block on the north side of Kingston Road between Scarborough Road and Kingswood Road. Initially there were four storefronts, two smaller and two larger, on the Kingston Road frontage and four smaller storefronts on the Scarborough Road frontage.

The building is an integral part of the commercial strip along Kingston Road that has served the community for many years. The corner store was first occupied by a branch of Laura Secord Candy Shops and it remained a neighbourhood fixture until the 1970s. Other stores and services that also have been important to local residents over the years include a series of discount department stores at 972-974 Kingston Road, initially a Selrite Store, the first of the chain in Toronto, and later a Bargain Harold's, the first store in what became a chain of more than 50 stores.

With the notable exception of the R. C. Harris Water Treatment Plant at 2701 Queen Street East (designed by Thomas Pomphrey whose construction began in 1932), the building is a rare example of the Art Deco style in the local neighbourhood and the only one used for a retail establishment; being a single story is also very unusual for this style.

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<sup>1</sup> Street numbers of the various stores and services within the building have changed over the years.

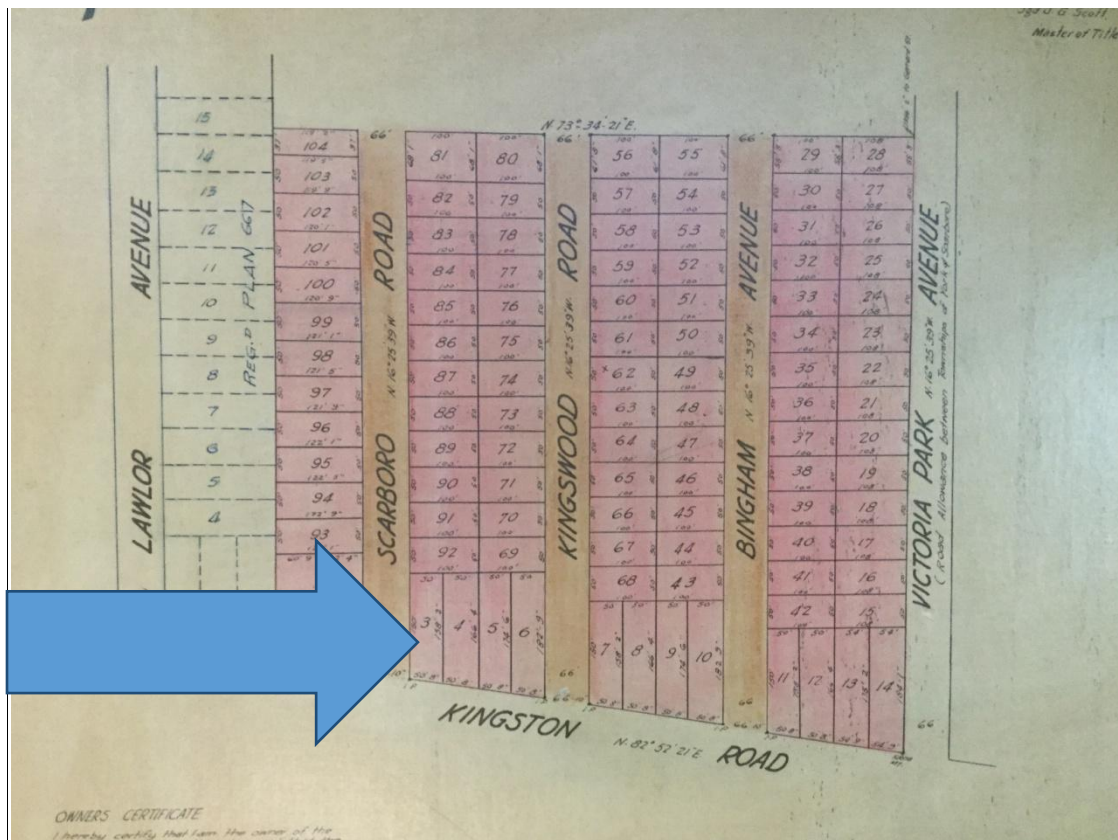
## 2. PROPERTY HISTORY

The building at 968-976 Kingston Road and 279-283 Scarborough Road is located on Lots 3 and 4 of Plan M336, registered on 28 June 1911.

For more details see Appendix 1: Property History, Prehistory to Creation of Plan M336, 1911

### 2.1 Creation and Development of Plan M336, 1911-1931

Plan M336 subdivided the section of the old Grasett Estate, Lot 1, Concession 1 from the Bay, north of Kingston Road to today's Woodale Avenue between the west side of Scarborough Road and the west side of Victoria Park Avenue into 104 building lots. The developer was Ira Standish (1865-1913), a Toronto barrister and a leading authority on real estate and commercial law,<sup>2</sup> who named the subdivision "Grosvenor Park," probably for his long-time home on Grosvenor Street. Plan M336 included four fifty-foot-wide lots – nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6 – fronting the north side of Kingston Road between Scarborough Road and Kingswood Road.



**Figure 4. Detail of Plan M336, registered 28 June 1911, showing lots 3 and 4 on Kingston Road, northeast corner of Scarborough Road.**  
Toronto Land Registry Office

<sup>2</sup> "Mr. Ira Standish dies in his forty-ninth year," Toronto Globe, 8 February 1913, 8.

No buildings were shown on any of these lots on Plate 108 of the Goad's atlases published in 1913 and 1924, although by the latter year the four side streets of Plan M336 - Scarborough Road, Kingswood Road, Bingham Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue - were filled with red brick houses.

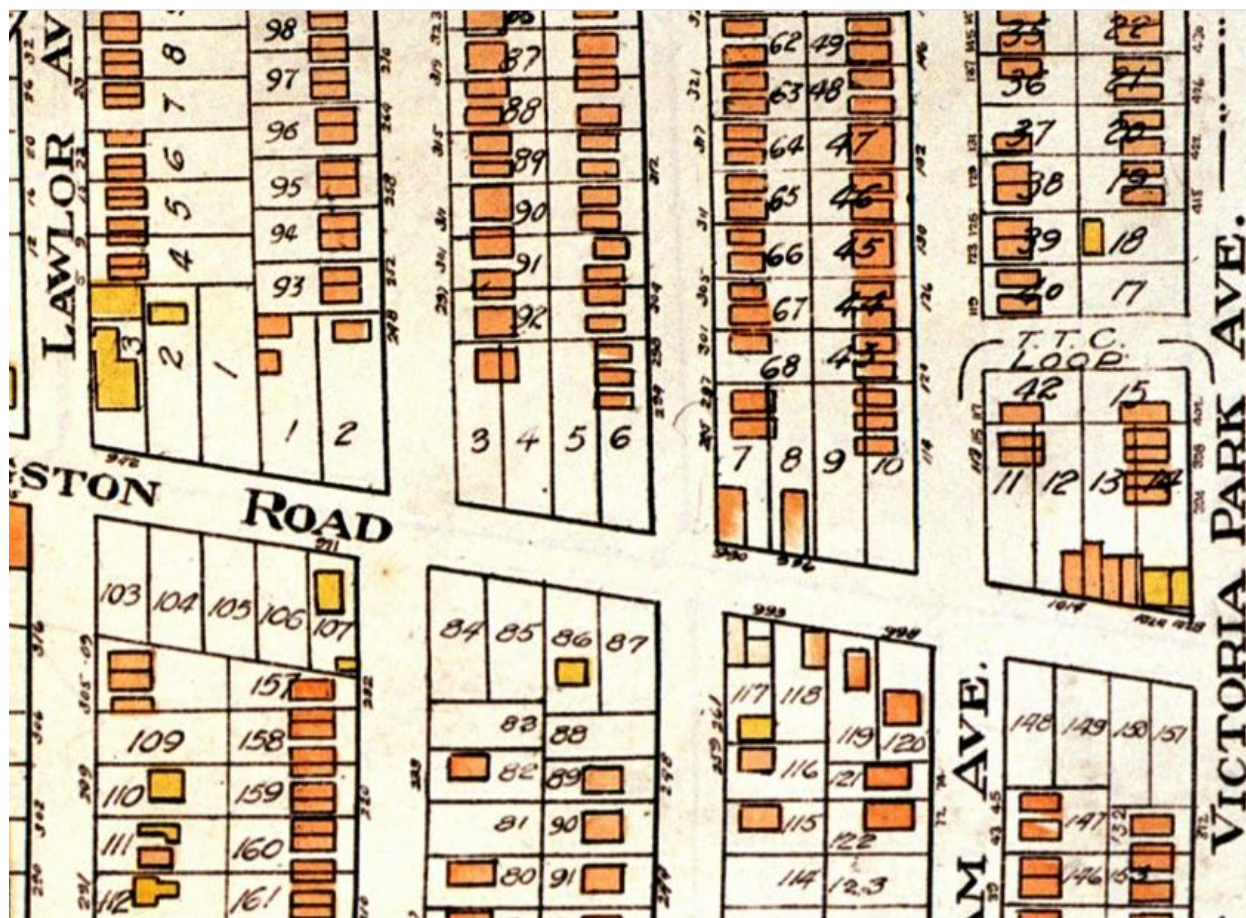


Figure 5. Detail of Goad's Atlas, Plate 108, 1924

<http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/datapub/digital/NG/goad/1924/00108.jpg>

No buildings are on the north side of Kingston Road Lots 1 to 6 between Scarborough Road and Kingswood Road.

The 1920s saw transportation improvements along Kingston Road encouraging development in Plan M336. The Bingham Loop opened on December 2, 1922, soon after the TTC took over service on Kingston Road between Queen Street East and Victoria Park. Up to that time, the area was served by the Scarborough Radial Line to West Hill, but residents welcomed the new, more comfortable and more frequent city service.<sup>3</sup> In February 1923, the Toronto Globe

<sup>3</sup> James Bow, "Venerable Bingham Loop" [<http://transit.toronto.on.ca/streetcar/4154.shtml>] (June 6, 2006).

observed “a very noticeable development of the vacant lots and a ‘building in’ of the property along the Kingston Road within the city limits.”<sup>4</sup>

Building activity has increased to a large degree since the installation of the double trackage, and the frequent trolley services between King street and the city limits has stimulated interest in building property in the neighbourhood of Kingston road and Victoria Park avenue, the terminal of the city car.

The newspaper went on to discuss construction on such streets as north Bingham Avenue and Scarborough Road, “where one builder last season erected 36 houses in a block”.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 6. Kingston Road, looking west from Victoria Park Avenue, October 16, 1922**  
City of Toronto Archives Fonds 16, Series 71, Item 1607

The block of Kingston Road between Scarborough Road and Kingswood Road saw significant development on both its north and south sides in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Kingston Road United Church, designed in 1927 by Toronto architect John Francis Brown (J. F. Brown & Son), was dedicated at the southeast corner of Scarborough Road on 15 April 1928.<sup>6</sup> By that time, a pair of three-story apartment buildings called Wyndene and Willington had been constructed between the church and the southwest corner of Kingswood Road. A few years later, the north

<sup>4</sup> “Building active on Kingston Road,” *Toronto Globe*, 23 February 1923, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>6</sup> “Church dedication is impressive event,” *Toronto Globe*, 16 April 1928, 13.

side of the street was developed with retail establishments. The Toronto city directory started to list a few stores at the Kingswood Road end of the block in 1930.

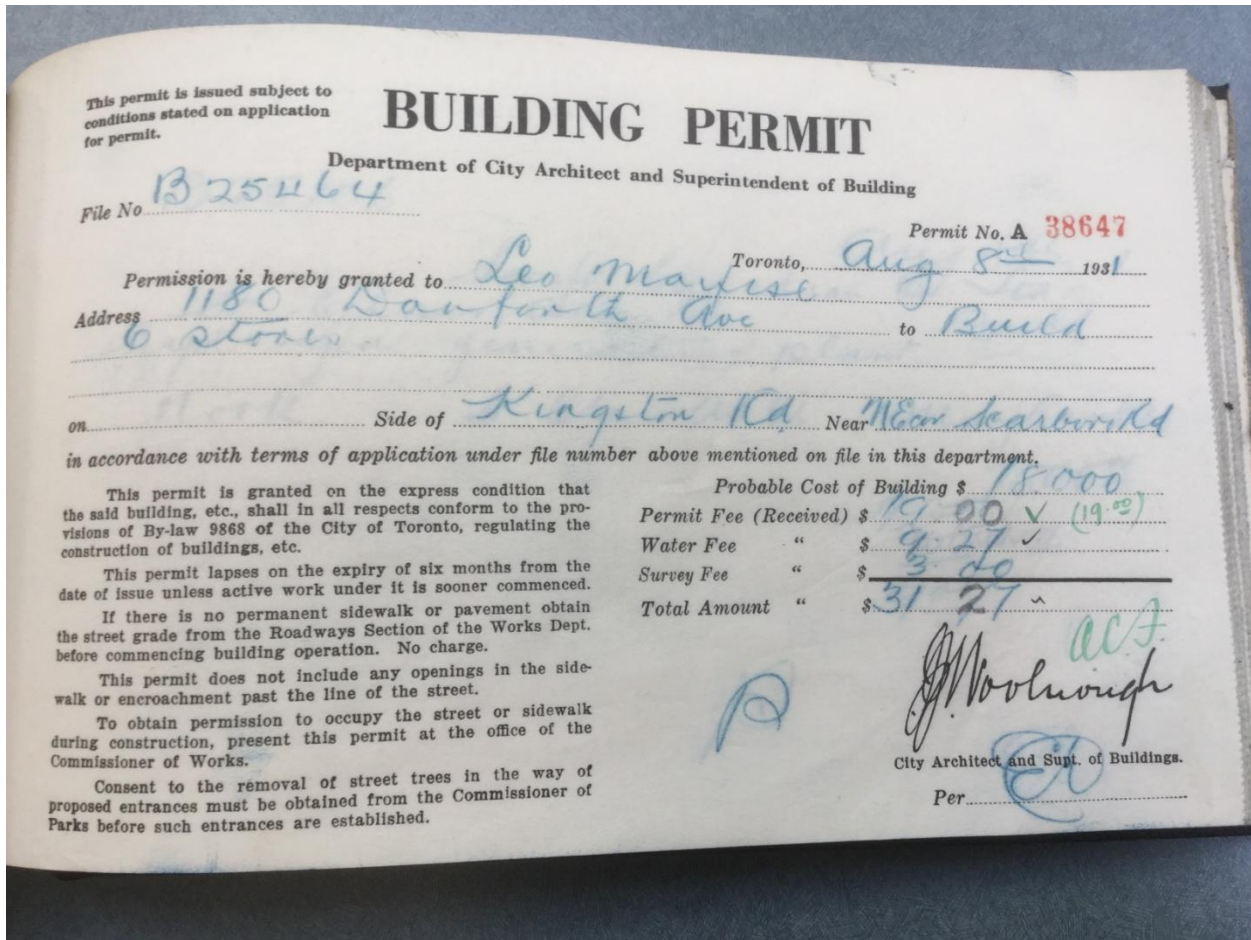


**Figure 7. Kingston Road United Church,  
Kingston Road southeast corner of Scarborough Road, 12 April 1928**

<http://www.beachmetro.com/2013/11/08/deja-views-46/beece-ave-united-church-scarboro-and-kingston-rds-april-12-1928/>

**3. CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF THE BUILDING ON KINGSTON ROAD, NORTHEAST CORNER OF SCARBOROUGH ROAD, 1931 on.**

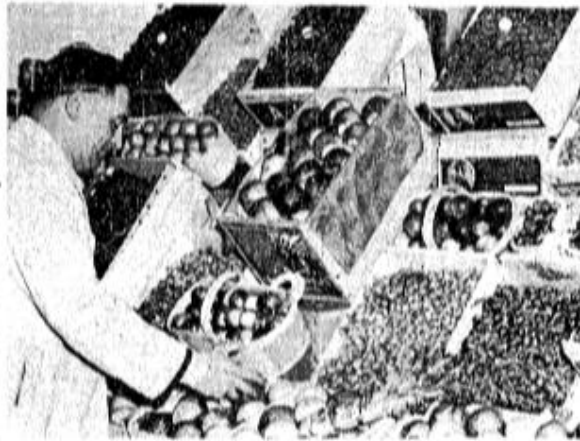
The building on Kingston Road at the northeast corner of Scarborough Road was constructed by Leo Marfise, who was issued City of Toronto Building Permit No. 38647 on 8 August 1931 to build six stores on Kingston Road at the northeast corner of Scarborough Road at a probable cost of \$18,000.



**Figure 8. Building Permit No. 38647 issued to Leo Marfise for six stores, Kingston Road, northeast corner Scarborough Road, 8 August 1931**  
City of Toronto Archives

Leo Marfise (1902-1977), the developer, then operated a fruit store, Jos. Marfise & Son, with his father, Joseph Marfise, at 1180 Danforth Avenue on the north side just west of Greenwood Avenue. Leo was born in Baltimore, Maryland and his parents were originally from Italy; Joseph Marfise had emigrated in 1890. By 1920, the Marfise family ran a fruit and vegetable store in Pittsburgh but in 1927 they left the United States and came to Canada.

***Fruits Here for the Asking  
To Decorate Holiday Tables***



**LEO MARFISE IS READY FOR THE FINAL CHRISTMAS SPLURGE**

**Figure 9. “Leo Marfise is ready for the final Christmas splurge”, Toronto Star, 17 December 1946, p. 17**  
Leo Marfise was then a salesman for the Ontario Produce Co. Ltd. on Market Street but he continued to live with his parents on Danforth Avenue.

A hosiery shop opened for business in Marfise’s Kingston Road development in mid-October 1931, a little more than two months after the building permit was issued.

**3 more .....**  
**ELLIS HOSIERY SHOPS**

970 Kingston Rd. — 2457 Yonge St. — 570 Bloor West  
At Scarboro Road At Erskine In Alhambra Theatre

**Opening Friday**

**FAVORS** for the **LADIES** at the three **NEW STORES**

Three more shops open Friday . . . making now 17 Ellis Hosiery Shops in Toronto . . . all grown within a few short years from one small shop . . . the strongest possible proof that we give exactly what the public want. In reality, a downtown store in your community . . . providing everything that is new in hosiery . . . a wonderful variety . . . and the low prices made possible by the buying power of a chain of 17 shops.

**SOUVENIRS** for the **LADIES** at the three **NEW STORES**

**Four Feature Specials**

All Ellis Hosiery Shops join in the opening celebration. These four outstanding specials are on sale in all Ellis Hosiery Shops . . . there is one in your community . . . so pay us a visit.

**Friday — Saturday  
and Monday**



**Figure 10. Detail of advertisement for Ellis Hosiery Shops announcing opening at 780 Kingston Road, Toronto Star, 15 October 1931, 38.**

A Laura Secord candy opened around the same time and can be seen in an image of Kingston Road and Scarborough Road taken in December 1931.



**Figure 11. Kingston Road at Scarborough Road, 19 December 1931**  
 City of Toronto Archives Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 3, Item 1284a

Stores in the building first were listed in the Toronto city directory in 1932.



**Figure 12. Stores on the north side of Kingston Road between Scarborough Road and Kingswood Road, Toronto City Directory, 1932, p. 1955**

<https://archive.org/details/torontocitydirectory1932/page/1954>

The first occupants of the four stores at 970-976 Kingston Road were not Mom and Pop operations but branches of chain operations. A Laura Secord Candy Shop had the desirable corner location, and an Ellis Hosiery Shop was beside it, the two businesses each using half of one store. A Selrite department store and a Dominion grocery store occupied the two stores at the east end of the building.

The Laura Secord store was a fixture in the neighbourhood for more than 40 years. Frank O'Connor (1885-1939) opened the first Laura Secord Candy Store on Yonge Street in 1913. He expanded the business across Canada and into the United States where it was known as Fanny Farmer Candy Stores. In 1932 there were 29 Laura Secord Candy Shops in Toronto including the newest one on Kingston Road at Scarborough Road.



**Figure 13. Laura Secord Candy Shops, Limited Toronto Studio**

The store at 970 Kingston Road is listed last in the Toronto city directory, 1932, p. 885

<https://archive.org/details/torontocitydirectory1932/page/884>

Ellis Hosiery Shop was the first occupant of the other half of the storefront at 970 ½ Kingston Road. It was one of three new shops that the Toronto chain opened in October 1931, for a total of 17. Edward Essa (1896-1936), a Syrian-born entrepreneur, had started the company a few years earlier with a store at Adelaide and Yonge. By the mid-1950s the chain had 26 stores in Ontario and was known as Lady Ellis Shops. The hosiery store remained at the Kingston Road location for about a decade. Successive occupants were a United Cigar Store branch, c.1940-late 1950s, followed by a variety store.

A series of discount stores occupied one and sometimes both of the larger storefronts on the Kingston Road frontage for about 70 years. The first was a Selrite Store, one of a chain of 5 cents to \$1 department stores controlled by Steadman Bros. Ltd. (established 1907). The location at 972-974 Kingston Road was the first Selrite Store in Toronto. In March 1933, when a second Toronto store opened at 1208 Bloor Street West – “the second of a chain of 12 such stores planned” - George Steadman pointed out to the Toronto Star, “that the firm controls some 81 stores, 34 of which are owned by Selrite Stores.”<sup>7</sup> By 1940, the Kingston Road location became a Steadman Store, operating there until the late 1960s.

In 1970, a start-up discount store called Bargain Harold’s took over the Steadmans location. Harold Kamin, for whom the store was named, and his partner Arthur Anisman, spent \$2,400 to open their first store at 974 Kingston Road. Eventually Bargain Harold’s occupied 976 Kingston Road as well. By 1985, when the “kitchy low-cost emporium” was sold to K-Mart for \$16 million, it had grown into a mini-empire of 52 stores, employing 2,000 people. The chain went bankrupt in March 1992.<sup>8</sup> Another discount store called Mr. Loonie soon went into part of the old Bargain Harold’s location.



Figure 14. Advertisement for Bargain Harold’s, 1970s  
<https://www.blogto.com/city/2016/12/lost-discount-shops-toronto/>  
 The first Bargain Harold’s store opened at 974 Kingston Road in 1970

<sup>7</sup> “Selrite Stores lease new shop, Toronto Star, 10 March 1933, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Denise Balkissoon, “Obituary Harold Kamin, ‘Bargain Harold’ co-founded chain,” Toronto Star, 7 July 2010, GT4



#### 4. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The building at 970 – 976 Kingston Road and 281 to 285 Scarborough Road is a rare, albeit modest example of Art Deco style in the neighbourhood, and being a one-story building makes it all the more unusual. Art Deco was popular in Toronto from about 1925 to 1940. The R. C. Harris Water Filtration Plant at 2701 Queen Street East (Thomas Pomphrey, 1937-41) is considered to be one of the most significant Art Deco buildings in Canada.<sup>9</sup>

The Kingston Road building is constructed of brick with some stone facing. The Kingston Road façade displays stone blocks above the store windows. The Scarborough Road façade displays variegated yellow rug brick in the Flemish bond pattern. The Art Deco style emphasized craftsmanship and the building displays features that required skill to produce. The store fronts along both facades are separated by fluted pilasters topped with conical caps, both constructed of cast concrete or stone. Two rows of dentils of the same material run the length of the upper part of the building along both facades. A straight row is above the store windows and a second row with straight and contoured lines is along the top of the building. The entrance to the corner store is angled.



**Figure 17. Kingston Road frontage, November 20, 2018.**

Note the stone facing, the fluted pilasters with conical caps and the two rows of dentils.

Photo: Barbara Myrvold

<sup>9</sup> In 1992, the R. C. Harris Water Treatment Plant was named a national historic civil engineering site by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering. It was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1998. The plant appeared on a stamp issued by Canada Post in 2011, in a series showcasing five notable Art Deco buildings in Canada.[5][6]



**Figure 18. Scarborough Road frontage, November 20, 2018.**  
 Note the yellow brick construction in the Flemish bond pattern,  
 the fluted pilasters with conical caps and the two rows of dentils  
 Photo: Barbara Myrvold



**Figure 19. Kingston Road frontage, showing number 974, November 20, 2018.**  
 Note that almost all of the red paint from the old Crayons store has been removed (see Figure 21).  
 Photo: Barbara Myrvold



**Figure 20. 970-976 Kingston Road, 200?**  
photo credit, courtesy of Bob Krawczyk  
[http://www.acotoronto.ca/show\\_building.php?BuildingID=9077](http://www.acotoronto.ca/show_building.php?BuildingID=9077)



**Figure 21. 970-976 Kingston Road, 200?**  
photo credit, courtesy of Bob Krawczyk  
[http://www.acotoronto.ca/show\\_building.php?BuildingID=9077](http://www.acotoronto.ca/show_building.php?BuildingID=9077)

## APPENDIX 1: PROPERTY HISTORY, PREHISTORY TO CREATION OF PLAN M336, 1911

The building at 970-976 Kingston Road and 279-283 Scarborough Road is located on Lots 3 and 4 of Plan M336, laid out on part of Lot 1, Concession 1 from the Bay, and registered on 28 June 1911.

The property is situated on Indigenous land and Dish with One Spoon territory. This is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Lot 1, Concession 1 from the Bay (or 1<sup>st</sup> Concession East of the Town) was laid out by British government surveyors in the 1790s. The 200-acre lot was in York Township, on the west side of the boundary with Scarborough Township (Victoria Park Avenue). The property ran north from the baseline (Queen Street) to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Concession Road (Danforth Avenue). Immediately south was Lot 1, Broken Front Concession, a 40-acre property that extended from the baseline south to the shore of Lake Ontario. Maps and others sources document that Lot 1 changed hands several times in the early years.

John Baskerville Glegg, (1773-1861), an English soldier and military figure in the War of 1812,<sup>10</sup> was the recipient of the Crown grant for the 240-acre Lot 1, Broken Front Concession and Concession 1 from the Bay.

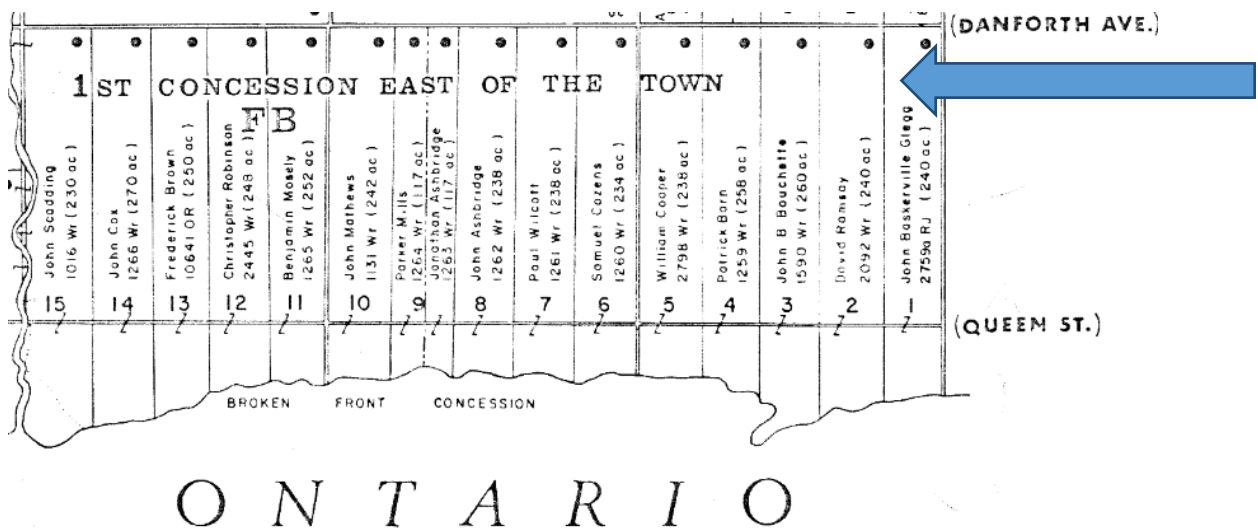


Figure 22. Detail of Disposition of Crown Lands. Township of York ....  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Plan no. T-2539, 1976.

<http://oldtorontomaps.blogspot.com/2014/06/contemporary-maps-with-historical.html>

John Baskerville Glegg was the crown grantee for Lot 1, Broken Front Concession and 1<sup>st</sup> Concession East of the Town.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/john-baskerville-glegg>

In 1860, Tremaine’s map of York County showed that Lot 1 had several owners. George Monro (1800?-1878), a successful Toronto businessman, former Toronto alderman and mayor, and one-time member of the provincial legislature, has purchased the eastern 60.5 acres of Lot 1 south of Kingston Road, including the broken front, in 1847. The property was known as the Painted Post Farm.<sup>11</sup> Rev. Henry James Grasett (1808-1882), a prominent Church of England clergyman and educator in Toronto, owned the east section of Lot 1, the part east of today’s Scarborough Road and north of Kingston Road.

The west part of Lot 1 had three owners in 1860. “Adam Wilson M.P.” (1814-1891), a distinguished Toronto lawyer, politician and later judge, held the section in Concession 1 from the Bay south of Kingston Road, as well as the Broken Front Concession. He had bought parts of Lots 1 and 2, including the Broken Front by 1853.<sup>12</sup> J. Lawlor had the section north of Kingston Road to today’s Gerrard Street East, and Robert S. Dalton, a Toronto barrister and court clerk, owned the part north of Lawlor’s property to the Don and Danforth Road (Danforth Avenue).



**Figure 23. Detail of Tremaine’s Map of the County of York Canada West, 1860**

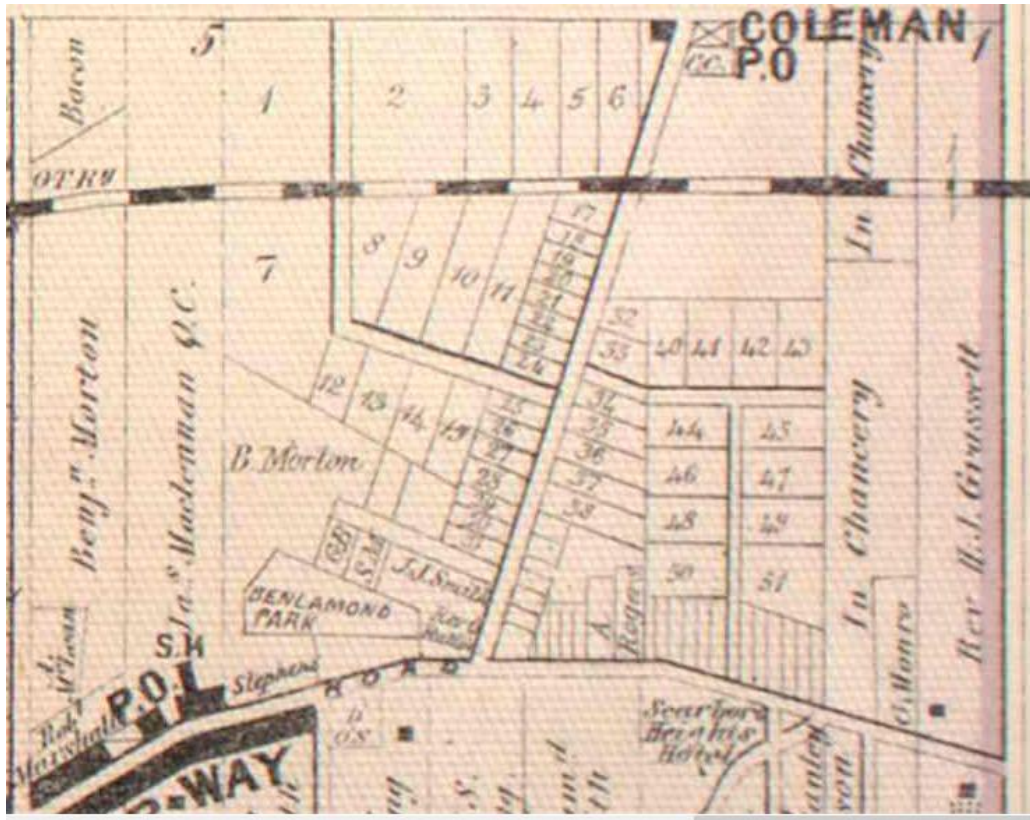
<http://oldtorontomaps.blogspot.com/2013/02/1860-tremaines-map-of-county-of-york.html>

Five owners are shown for Lot 1: George Monro and Rev. Henry James Grasett on the east half, and Adam Wilson, J. Lawlor [i.e. Lawlor], and Robert S. Dalton on the west half.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Campbell and Barbara Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures 1793-1932* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1988), 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

In 1878, the map for the “South East Part of York” in the illustrated historical atlas of York County showed that two of the lots in the west half of Lot 1, north of Kingston Road, were “In Chancery” – Lawlor and Dalton both having died. The third, a small parcel along Kingston Road, belonged to George Monro. Reverend Henry James Grasett continued to own the east half of Lot 1 north of Kingston Road.



**Figure 24. Detail of South East Part of York, Illustrated historical atlas of the county of York ... 1878**  
<http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/datapub/digital/NG/historicTOMaps/1878yor-m-york-sef.jpg>

Lot 1 on the north side of Kingston Road belonged to Rev. J. Grasett, G. Monro, or was “In Chancery”.

A map of “Toronto Suburbs, Eastern District”, published in the 1884 Goad’s Atlas, did not show names of property owners or subdivision plans on the east or the west halves of Lot 1, north of Kingston Road to today’s the Grand Trunk railway line.

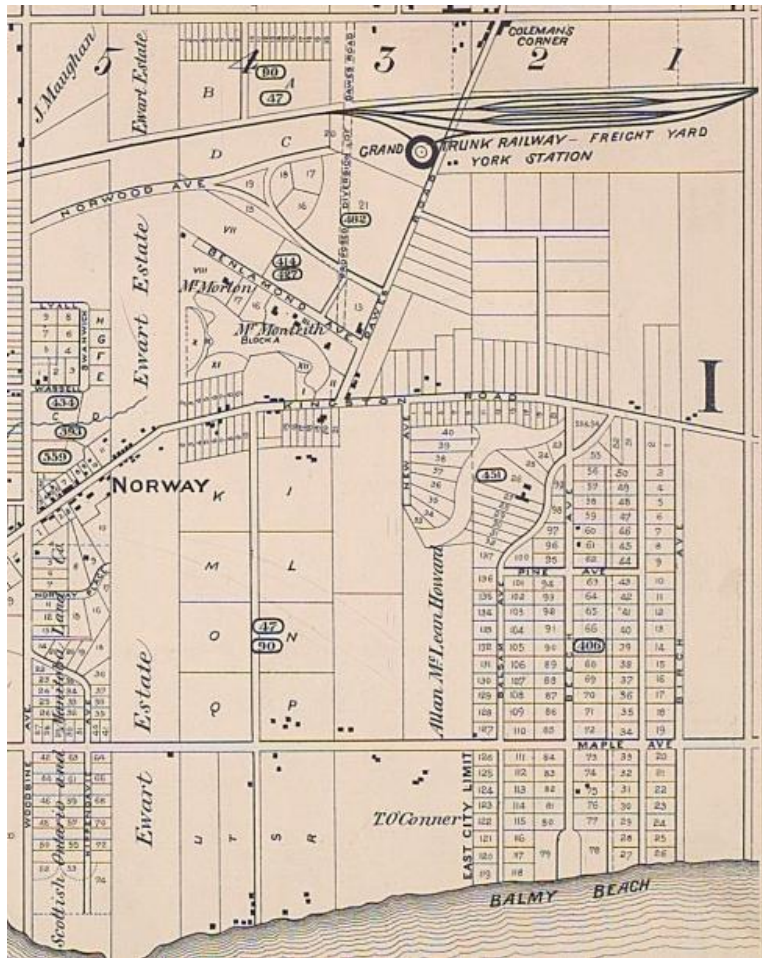


Figure 25. Detail of "Toronto Suburbs, Eastern District," Plate 38, Goad's Atlas, 1884.

<http://goadstoronto.blogspot.com/2012/03/goads-atlas-1884-toronto-fire-insurance.html>

Lot 1 of Kingston Road appears much the same as it had in 1878, but the Balmy Beach subdivision has been laid out on Adam Wilson's property south of Kingston Road to the lake.

A few years later the Lawlor Estate was subdivided by William Lee, a Toronto real estate developer, who registered Plan 667 on 9 July 1886. His firm had advertised the subdivision "at York Station"<sup>13</sup> in the Toronto Globe during the latter part of 1885:

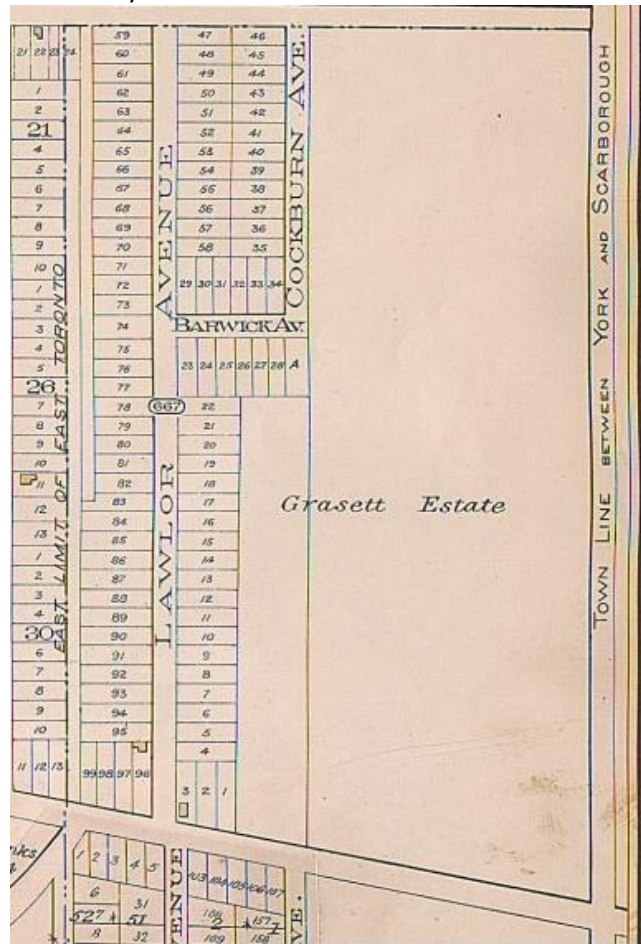
We have just had placed in our hands for sale 100 lots at York Station, fronting on Kingston-road, Lawlor, Cockburn, and Barwick avenues, close to the Grand Trunk freight yards and workshops, at prices ranging from \$150 to \$250 per lot, on easy terms of repayment, or will sell the same *en bloc*, to return the purchaser a large profit : plans at office. Wm. A. Lee & Son, 10 Adelaide street East.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "In 1883, the Grand Trunk Railway laid out a new freight assorting yard five and a half miles east of Toronto on the south side of the Danforth west of Dawes Road. Seven miles of tracks were built to store 420 cars....In 1884, a round house to hold thirty-two engines and the York Station for suburban travel opened." Barbara Myrvold, *The Danforth in Pictures* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1979), 22.

<sup>14</sup> "Property for sale, Toronto Globe, 17 October 1885, 2.

Plan 667 laid out 99 lots on the north side of Kingston Road, both sides of Lawlor Avenue running north from Kingston Road to Lake View Avenue (Gerrard Street East), both sides of Barwick Avenue (Swanwick Avenue) and the west side of Cockburn Avenue (Scarborough Road), south from Lake View Avenue to Barwick Avenue.

Plate 39 of the 1890 Goad's Atlas showed Plan 667 on part of the west half on Lot 1 and the Grasett Estate on the remainder of Lot 1 east to the boundary between York and Scarborough townships (Victoria Park Avenue).



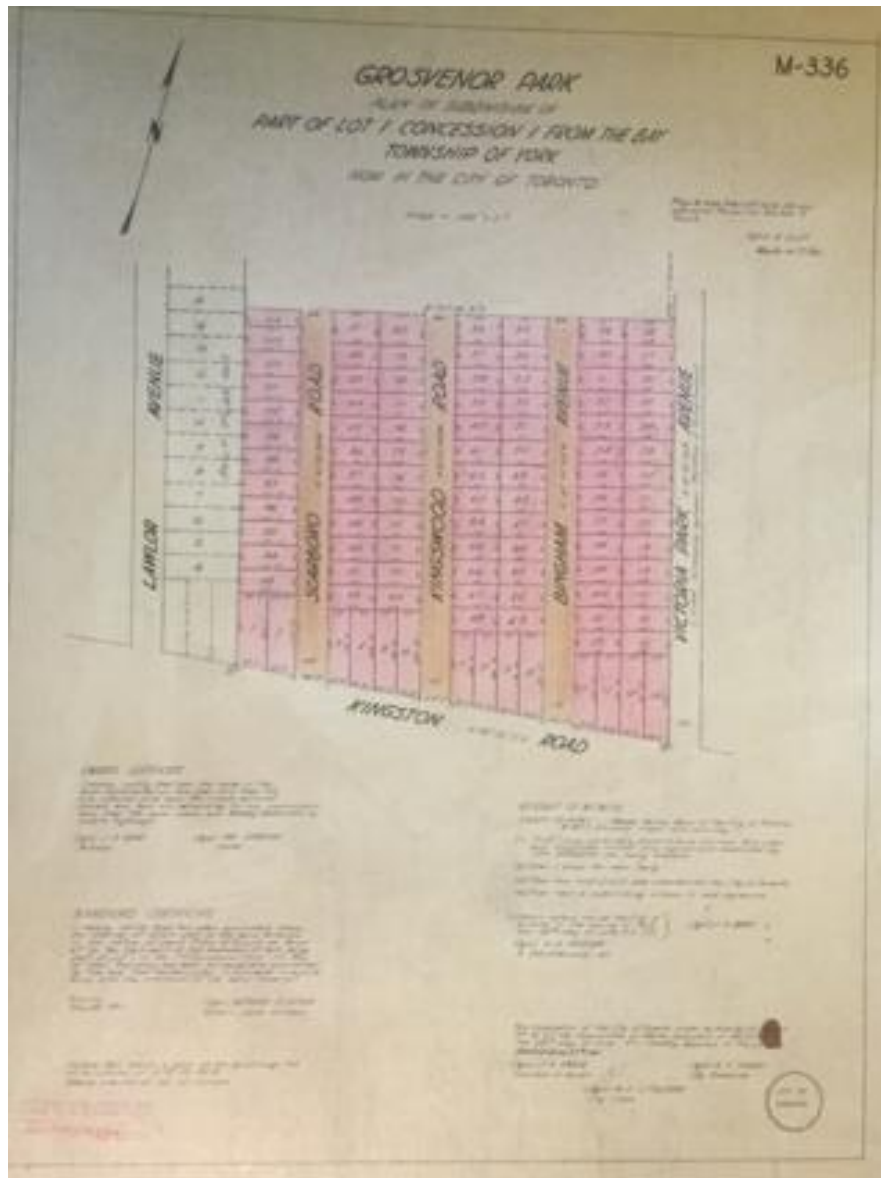
**Figure 26. Detail, Goads Atlas, 1890, Plate 39, showing Plan 667 on the Lawlor Estate.**

The Grasett Estate had not been subdivided.

<http://maps.library.utoronto.ca/datapub/digital/NG/goad/1890/39atlas-r-58.jpg>

Lot 1 between Kingston Road and Lake View Avenue remained in York Township when the Village of East Toronto was incorporated in 1888; the municipality was annexed to Toronto on 15 December 1908. Lot 1 from the lake to Gerrard Street joined the city a year later on 15 December 1909 in the so-called Balmy Beach annexation. As indicated above, some of the streets in this section eventually were renamed to avoid confusion or be consistent with city streets. Cockburn Avenue became Scarborough Road in 1913, for example, and Berwick Avenue was changed to Swanwick Avenue in 1931.

The old Grasett Estate on the east part of Lot 1 north of Kingston Road was subdivided by a few plans after annexation. The section between Scarborough Road and Victoria Park Avenue north from Kingston Road to today's Woodale Avenue was divided into 104 building lots in 1911. The developer was Ira Standish (1865-1913), a Toronto barrister and a leading authority on real estate and commercial law,<sup>15</sup> who named the subdivision "Grosvenor Park," probably for his long-time home on Grosvenor Street.



**Figure 27. Plan M336, registered 28 June 1911**

Toronto Land Registry Office

<sup>15</sup> "Mr. Ira Standish dies in his forty-ninth year," Toronto Globe, 8 February 1913, 8.