

Cabbagetown People

The Social History of a Canadian Inner City Neighbourhood



Adversity, Resilience, Prosperity

The Odyssey of a Canadian
Inner City Neighbourhood
Cabbagetown 1941-2011



Second Edition

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Introduction

Background

Mark Kingwell¹ has written that Toronto can best be described as a “linked series of towns held loosely together by the gravitational force of its downtown core.” He argues that Toronto has no “normative or mythic centre, no single narrative.” While one might be inclined to agree with Kingwell’s description – think, after all, of the diverse pattern of neighbourhoods that make up even the inner city – a recurring theme of the present document will lay emphasis on the various ways in which these communities are precisely what gives Toronto its identity and character. Broadly, our interest here is how



CBC Still Photo Collection

Hugh Garner 1913-1979

Author and witness to depression era Cabbagetown. He worked as a copy boy at the Toronto Star and rode the rails in both Canada and the United States. He joined the International Brigades in Spain and was in the Canadian Navy during World War II. The best known of his realistic novels is *Cabbagetown* (1950).

this diversity has shaped Toronto at its regional scale. More directly, our interest lies in the ways in which this diversity is locally rooted and transcendent of the constantly changing nature of Toronto’s neighbourhoods. To do so, we concentrate on Cabbagetown’s most volatile changes to date, which have occurred during the seventy years between the 1940s and the present. While several excellent studies exist that describe the manifestations of Toronto’s social history, it is our working prejudice that this story now needs to be told by examining the underlying causes of social change. Cabbagetown is one of the city’s oldest communities and is situated in the eastern reaches of Toronto’s downtown.

Since its inception in the late 1840s, when Irish immigrants flocked to Toronto in order to escape the Potato Famine and other epidemics, Cabbagetown has always been one of the most colourful as well as one of the most disparate places in the city. For much of its history, its boundaries have shifted northward, while witnessing periods of volatile redevelopment, stagnation, official neglect, and deprivation. Although once famously described by Canadian writer Hugh Garner in his novel *Cabbagetown* as “North America’s largest Anglo-Saxon slum” (a misnomer, given the presence of many residents of Celtic, Francophone, and other origins), since the early 1970s, much of Cabbagetown has been changed in fundamental ways by gentrification and redevelopment into affluent enclaves populated by professionals and artists alike. On the other hand, other sections, including Regent Park and St. James Town, continue

¹Kingwell, Mark. “Toronto: Justice Denied”, *The Walrus* (magazine), January/February 2008.

to experience entrenched deprivation. Now, however, public initiatives promoting both stability and “deghettoizing” proposals hold promise for the future. The disparity and shifting boundaries of this community lie behind the lack of consensus on where the core and edges of Cabbagetown might be located; nor do we intend to address this. Rather, because many of our sources are derived from the Canada Census, we prefer to cast a wide net determined by census tract definitions.

It is important, while dealing with the underlying causes of social change, to illustrate them by referring to their effects on the lives of individual inhabitants of Cabbagetown. We do so to emphasize the sheer complexity of the social tapestry, one that cannot be reduced to mere data.



Castle Frank, watercolour by Elizabeth Simcoe (1796)
Archives of Ontario, I0006352, Ref.: F47-11-1-0-228

Francis Gwillim Simcoe 1791-1812

Son of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and his wife Elizabeth. He was, at age 3, the first private owner of the lands now known as Cabbagetown (east of Parliament and north of Carlton).

The Simcoes built (1796) their summer residence - a log cabin - on Francis’ land and called it Castle Frank. It was likely the first structure built in Cabbagetown by Europeans. It burned down in 1829. Francis was killed in action in Spain during the Napoleonic wars.

Specifically, this research project examines data/facts related to Cabbagetown's population over time: size, density, language, birthplace, religion, ethnicity, household size, composition, income and longevity — supported by maps and graphs. In addition, it also looks at changes in the local economy, public regulations, policy initiatives, and private decisions. These characteristics are enhanced by illustrating their efficacy through descriptive biographies of some remarkable individuals who have lived through Cabbagetown's volatile evolution. This report of necessity depends largely upon broadly-drawn pictures that are derived from aggregate historical data. We concede, however, that



Bélanger Family

Albert (Frenchy) Bélanger

1906 – 1969

Albert Bélanger, simply known as “The Champ” in Cabbagetown, became a sports icon. In 1927 he won the National Boxing Association's World Flyweight title at Toronto's CNE Coliseum. He retired after 61 bouts, later opening a boxing club to help the youth of Toronto.

much of the subtlety, detail, and colour of social events can be lost by the exclusive dependency upon large numbers. For this reason, the report is enriched by weaving a set of brief biographies of Cabbagetown individuals into the text.

The biographies are derived from the Cabbagetown People Program(CPP)'s ongoing investigation of the lives of inspiring individuals who lived in

Cabbagetown, who made significant contributions, and who eventually achieved prominence. Many have excelled despite enduring many of the hardships that we record as a continuing partial legacy of Cabbagetown's history. Including these stories is intended to reveal some of the complexities that underlie the data such as, for instance, the predominance of an artistic sub-community that flourished intermittently as a “bohemian” circle in the midst of deprivation. They are stories of people for whom Cabbagetown didn't impede success, maybe grounding them with a strong value system and life skills.

Role of the Cabbagetown People Program

Evolving out of an idea to salute the remarkable men and women who were Cabbagetown residents and whose achievements provide a cultural and heritage link to Canada's colourful past, the CPP researches these lives and tells their stories through biographies available online, in various publications and on guided walking tours.

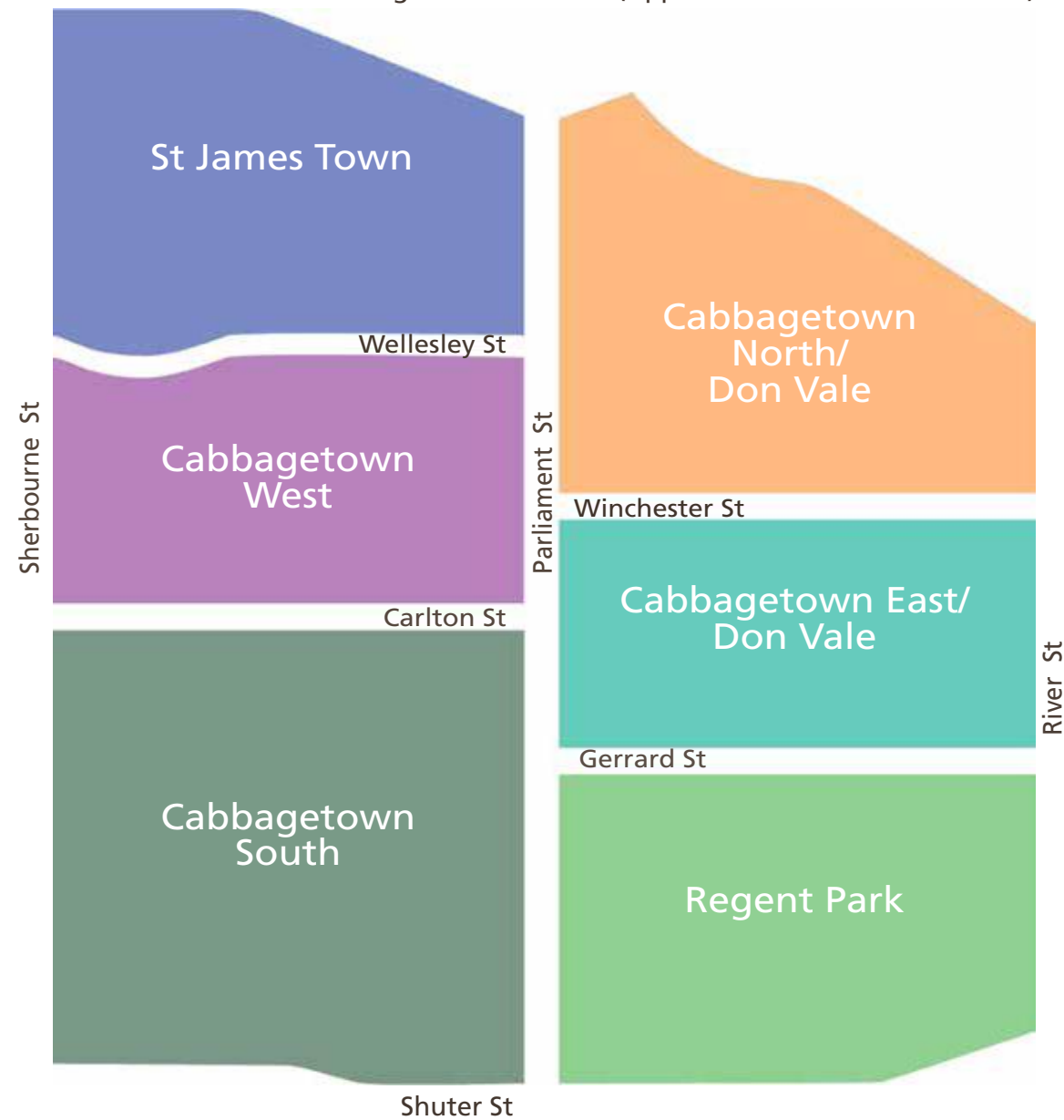
Particularly in the early days of the Program, there were several commemorative plaques installed at residential and other strategic places throughout the neighbourhood to honour a number of these remarkable lives from Cabbagetown's past. The list of these plaques and short biographies appears in a brochure which serves as a tool for self-guided walking tours, and a directory board offering this information to the public has also been installed in Riverdale Park West, near the corner of Winchester and

Facing: Detail, 169-71-73 Oak Street, July 12, 1948
Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 33b, Item 84



Cabbagetown Districts

Fig 1: Census Tracts (Approximate Census Boundaries)



Sumach streets. The Program also recognizes outstanding pioneers in various fields whose stories, More Remarkable Lives, are documented on the website, and which also form the basis of themed scripts for the various educational walking tours which the CPA/CPP lead for schools and other groups throughout the neighbourhood.

The CPP aims to complement the work undertaken by the City of Toronto's Heritage Preservation Services and its partners in preserving Toronto's human and built heritage by bringing a better understanding of neighbourhoods of historical importance and the people who lived in them.

To date, the Cabbagetown People program has concentrated upon an educational and public awareness strategy primarily oriented towards the lives and achievements of several deceased and prominent inhabitants of the Cabbagetown community. This document attempts to set the existing CPP's work within the scope of a historical and present day socio-economic context within which these biographies should be embedded.

The evolution of this community, one that began with some pockets of wealth, is largely a story of Cabbagetown people who were, and in places remain, largely underprivileged and deprived. We shall tell this story, together with the nature of the myriad problems and attempted resolutions that are integral to it. In doing so, we have concentrated on the period from the mid-twentieth century onwards (period of decline and urban renewal and period of preservation and gentrification - see below). The periods prior to this must await another project, because our task has been constrained by the vagaries of the Canada Census, in which tract definitions and boundaries shifted from a Ward system to the present one. Rather than extrapolate from the one to the other - a statistically risky enterprise - we prefer to narrate the recent history of our community.



The Eclipse Theatre was at 393 Parliament. It opened in 1947 and closed in 1951. Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 41, Item 809

Scope of the Research

In focusing on the changes occurring over the last seventy years, it has been necessary to adopt a relatively liberal definition of the geographic boundaries of this community, which, over time, have varied substantially, and will no doubt continue to do so. Secondly, it has been important to acknowledge that Cabbagetown is now far from being internally cohesive, to the extent that we have divided the community into five subdistricts, at one time or another comprising popular definitions of Cabbagetown, and each more-or-less coincident with Census Canada tracts and possessing substantial (although not complete) internal consistency.

They are:

Don Vale. Roughly coincident with census tracts 067 and 068, bounded by Rosedale Valley Road, the Don River, Gerrard Street, and Parliament Street.

St. James Town. Roughly coincident with tract 065, bounded by Bloor Street, Parliament Street, Jarvis Street, and Wellesley Street.

Cabbagetown West. Roughly coincident with census tract 066, bounded by Wellesley Street, Parliament Street, Carlton Street, and Jarvis Street.

Cabbagetown South. Roughly coincident with census tracts 032 and part of 033, bounded by Carlton Street, Parliament Street, Shuter Street, and Jarvis Street.

Regent Park. Roughly coincident with census tracts 031 and part of 030, bounded by Gerrard Street, Parliament Street, the Don River, and Shuter Street.

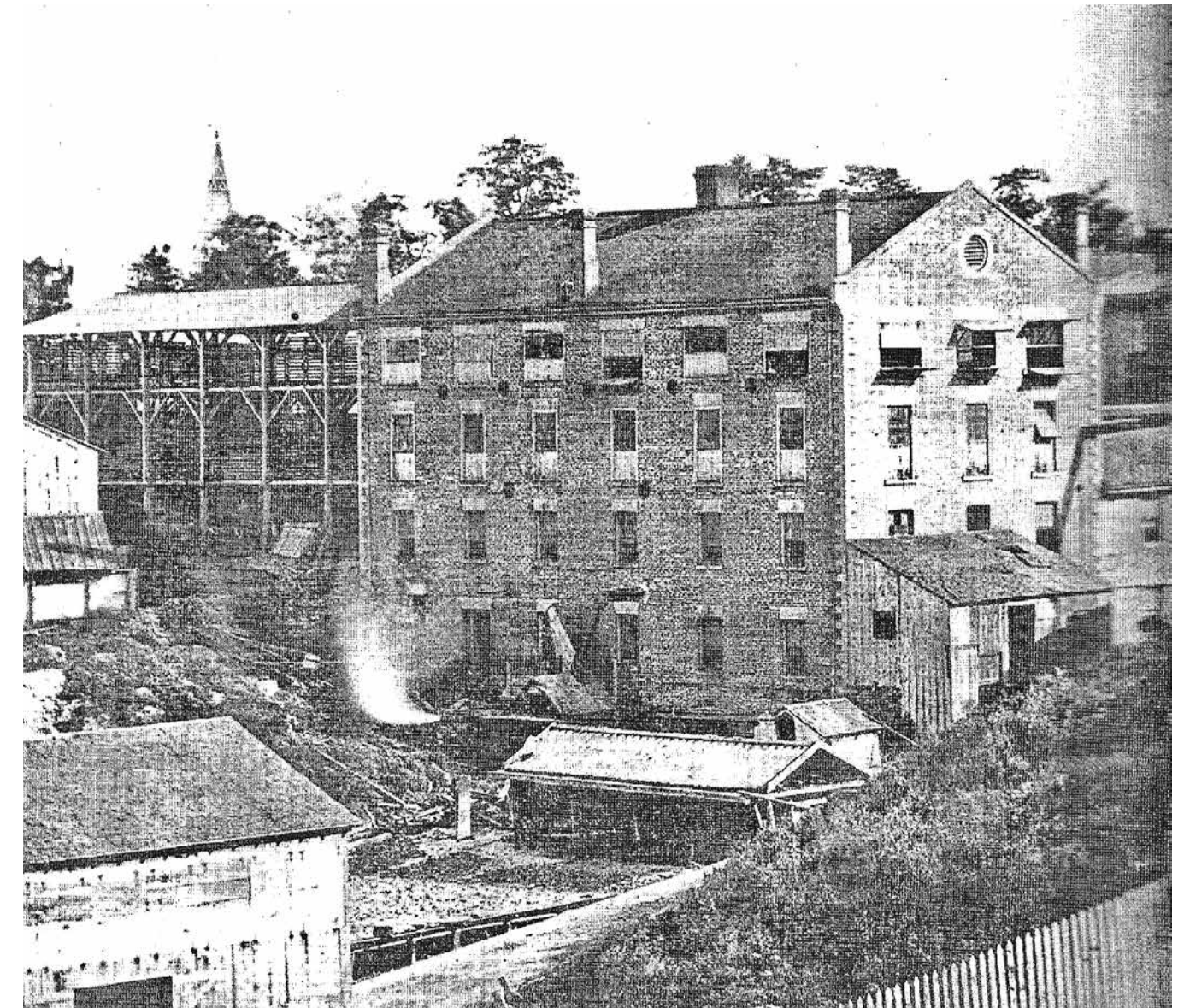
We acknowledge that both Sherbourne and Jarvis streets, both of which are at the western boundaries of our study area, were, in the nineteenth century, relatively affluent, with a residential architecture that reflected the presence of wealth, and fell outside the orbit of deprivation that affected most of the remainder of Cabbagetown. However, both streets declined considerably in the first half of the twentieth century, and for the same reasons that affected most of Cabbagetown, as we shall see below.

It is important to recognize that, until the mid-twentieth century, Cabbagetown was far more homogeneous - socially, ethnically, economically, and architecturally - than it is today, to the extent that any analysis of current conditions necessarily entails a subdistrict-based division. Moreover, whereas this former homogeneity was closely representative of Canadian central cities at the time, the present-day continuing shift towards an increasing central-area complexity that we witness in Cabbagetown now characterizes the centres of mature Canadian cities such as Montreal and Vancouver as well as American cities like

New York, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, and many older European centres. Thus, the forces that have led to these conditions are not unique to Toronto. Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine the more widespread factors that underlie urban structural change before proceeding to more localized ones.

Large-Scale Changes Affecting Cabbagetown

An ubiquitous force underlying the sustained alteration of central Toronto has been the irreversible industrial decentralization that began to gather momentum around the Second World War until today, when hardly any manufacturing or port-related activity remains. In the central city, several factors have contributed to this momentum,



Lamb factory before it burned down
City of Toronto Archives

including the shift towards horizontal manufacturing assembly, requiring relatively large parcels of inexpensive land; and the necessity for heavy industry to migrate away from congested locations that reduced vehicular accessibility and exacerbated negative side effects.

By 1983, manufacturing jobs in the old (pre-amalgamation) City of Toronto had declined to 47,303. In the period 1959-1985, over 36,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost to



Daniel Lamb
1842-1920

Industrialist, he took over his father's glue factory in the 1860s. After the factory burned down (1888), he turned to politics and became a city councillor. He's credited for establishing the first Toronto Zoo, the Rosedale Valley Road, and other municipal infrastructures.

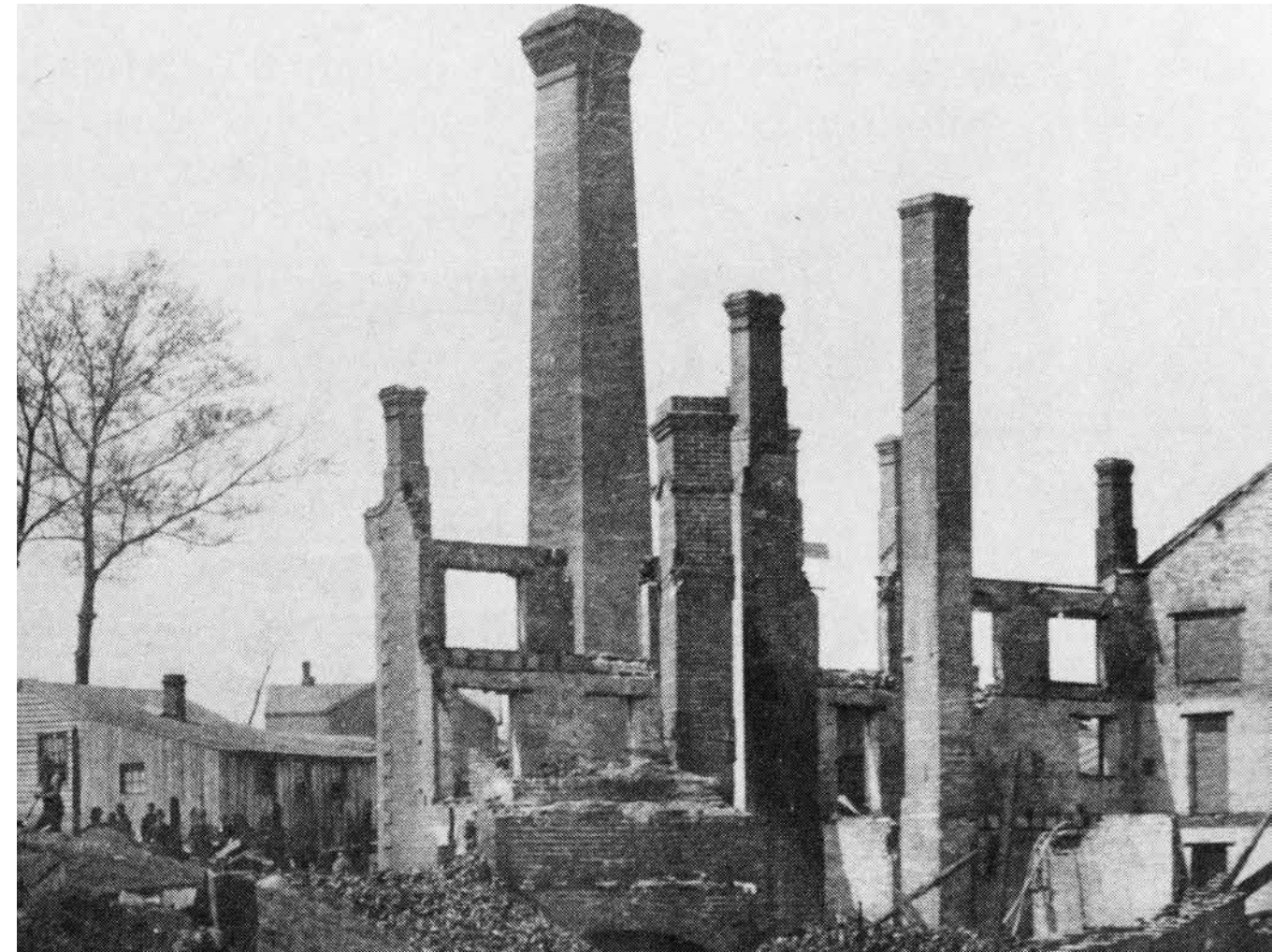
the suburbs and beyond, leaving behind many contaminated, empty sites along the waterfront and south Cabbagetown. In the meantime, financial and other tertiary employment continue to burgeon in the central city.

Given that, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of Cabbagetown provided both the land and labour for a substantial part of Toronto's industrial economy, the former patterns of land use and population composition were markedly different from those of today (Spelt; Careless)². Then, multi-storey factories were common, such as the P.R. Lamb Glue and Blacking Manufactory, housed in a series of 4-5 floor buildings in what became Wellesley Park at the eastern end of Amelia Street in 1848. The factory, a significant source of employment but also noise and pollution, did not survive a fire in 1888, by which time the site was almost completely surrounded by housing, including workers' cottages on Sumach and Amelia Streets, housing many of the upwards of 200 men employed at the factory³.

A second factor was the rudimentary nature of land use controls. The pattern and width

² See bibliography for works by Jacob Spelt and J.M.S. Careless. An early photograph of 1894 shows the extent of industrial congestion along the Esplanade East, which was largely devoted to freight railway facilities. James Worts founded what became the Gooderham and Worts distillery as early as 1837 at Mill and Parliament streets, where the City of Toronto Gas, Light, and Water Company was first established in 1841 (providing the City's first gaslight in December of that year). These were all preceded by Kormann's brewery (became Labatt's) in 1815 at Richmond and Sherbourne. Copland's Brewery and the Don Brewery were located nearby from the 1840s. Davies Meat Packers (established 1861 at Front and Frederick streets became Canada Packers, eventually expanding and decentralizing to west Toronto. General Steel Wares were housed in a multi-storey building at River and Gerrard. See also Lemon, James, *An Illustrated History of Toronto*; Rust D'Eye, George, *Cabbagetown Remembered*; Cotter, Charis, *Toronto Between the Wars: Life in the City, 1919-1939*; Gibson, Sally, *Toronto's Distillery District: History By The Lake*.

³Daniel Lamb, the son of the founder Peter Lamb, took over the factory in the 1860s but decided, after the fire, to enter local politics.



Lamb factory after it burned down
City of Toronto Lamb collection Print 178

of roads were determined to some extent by statute, whereas zoning bylaws governing use, coverage and building height were virtually absent. Fire prevention bylaws that stipulated use of materials date from the 1860s⁴. The general lack of regulation encouraged a rich intermixture of land uses, whereby shops, small workshops and factories, and various forms of housing, including stables for livestock and horses, existed side by side. Builders would buy up subdivided tracts for residential purposes, which provided the incidental benefit of homogeneous streetscapes (e.g. along Metcalfe, Laurier and Wellesley Avenue, and formal arrangements such as the entrances to Laurier and Wellesley Avenue).

Nevertheless, the paucity of regulation did not precipitate anarchic patterns. Market practices often determined that smaller residences, often row housing, were

⁴Cf. Goad's Fire Insurance Atlases, 1880-1924, which specified lot and ground floor shape, building location on the lot, and materials. See also Boulding's Atlas, 1858.

often located amid workshops and stables along back lanes, while grander housing usually was established along the wider streets, such as Sherbourne, Jarvis, Carlton, and Winchester. Shops, meanwhile, occupied the street corners, which were the first

places to be illuminated after dark, and became gathering places for children and neighbours. These rudimentary controls remained in place beyond the period – around 1900 – when Cabbagetown was fully developed, so the advent of zoning bylaws had little effect upon its original, and largely

Arthur Schawlow
1921-1999

Arthur Schawlow, after earning a scholarship, attended the University of Toronto to begin his studies in physics. In 1981 he won the Nobel Prize for Physics for his contribution to the development of laser spectroscopy.

extant, built form⁵. Thereafter, however, zoning brought about the spatial separation of differing socio-economic types by stipulating lot size and housing types⁶.



Robert Lansdale, University of Toronto Archives



Toronto General Hospital on Gerrard Street East.
City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 3056

⁵With the exception of Regent Park and St. James Town.

⁶Although exclusionary zoning, the goals of which are to protect relatively wealthy areas from lower economic people, while legal in the United States, was never permitted in Canada.

More recently, work was undertaken by the new amalgamated city to harmonize the 43 disparate bylaws that characterized one of the most complicated zoning system in North America. The advent of mixed use zoning and, by inclusion of Section 37 of the *Ontario Planning Act*, of “incentivized zoning”, whereby developers are encouraged to provide public facilities in exchange for density and other concessions, are having a marked positive effect upon Cabbagetown streetscapes and elsewhere in the City.

A third factor is more locally-based. Since the inception of Toronto/York as the new capital of Upper Canada at the end of the 18th century, what became Cabbagetown was officially designated as a “Park Lot”. This stipulated that the land was to be used as a source of timber and as locations for strictly public purposes. Thus the first parliament buildings were located at the foot of what became Parliament Street. Later, several important medical facilities, such as the Toronto General Hospital on Gerrard Street (between Sumach and Sackville streets), occupied land in Cabbagetown until the early 20th century. Both the St. James Cemetery (1844) and the Necropolis (1850) were also opened in the area. This delayed the development of non-institutional uses in Cabbagetown until the surge in urbanization following the American Civil War occurred in Toronto in the 1870s and 1880s.



“Guardian Angel” carved on Toronto General Hospital, Gerrard Street - [1910?]
City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244; William James family fonds, Item 1205

Demographic Change in Cabbagetown

Perhaps the most reliable evidence of the more recent evolution referred to above can be gleaned from an examination of Canada Census data and related empirical sources.



Frederick Hagan
1918-2003

Renowned art teacher and artist. For 37 years, he was one of the pillars of the Ontario College of Arts and Design. Canada Post commissioned him to create a set of stamps on the theme of Canadian explorers. Some of his works are shown at the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The evolution occurring at the local scale of Cabbagetown can be embedded within the region-wide demographic shifts most recently explained by David Hulchanski (Professor of Housing and Community Development) and his team at the University of Toronto, “the middle-income area of the city shrank dramatically between 1970 and 2005, while the high-income area increased slightly and the low-income area increased substantially”⁷. How has this wider trend affected Cabbagetown? “Poverty has moved from the centre to the edges of the city.

In the 1970s, most of the city’s low-income neighbourhoods were in the inner city [...]. Some of these neighbourhoods have gentrified and are now home to affluent households”⁸.



Looking east on Spruce Street from Parliament 1948
Toronto Archives Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 58, Item 1792

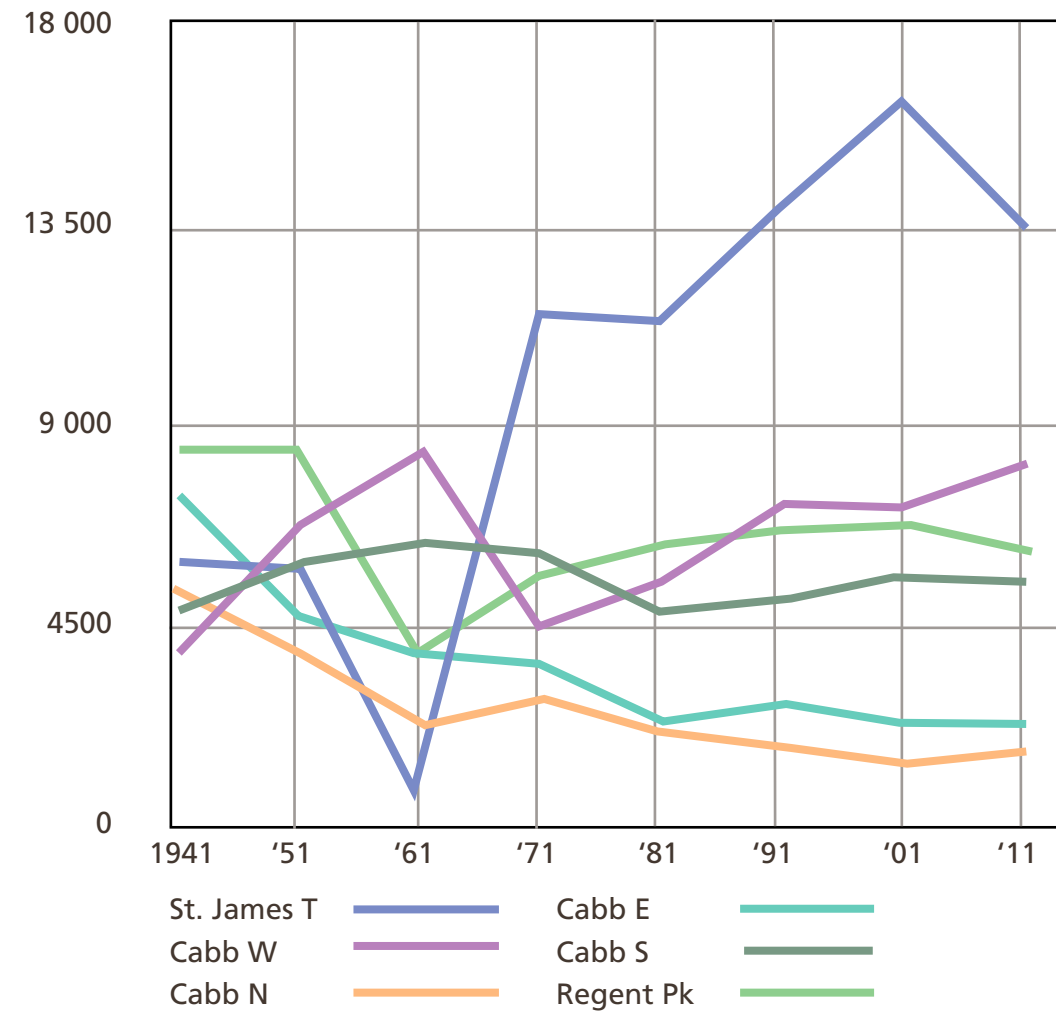
Population

The above general observation applies only partly to Cabbagetown. The major exceptions have occurred largely in St. James Town and completely in Regent Park, due mainly to their exemption from private market forces by their preponderance of rent geared-to-income

⁷ Hulchanski, J. David. *The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization Among Toronto’s Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005*.

⁸ Hulchanski, J. David. *ibid.*

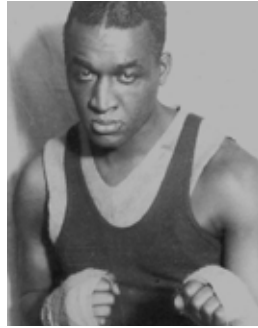
Fig 2: Population By Tract



Year	St. Jas Town	Cabb W	Cabb N	Cabb E	Regent Pk	Cabb S	Total
1941	5873	3828	5301	7358	8384	4928	35672
1951	5672	6599	4018	4683	8534	5840	34434
1961	862	8287	2241	3936	3850	6311	25478
1971	11420	4030	2885	3610	5575	5870	33880
1981	11462	5334	2049	2333	6228	4770	32506
1991	13765	7162	1836	2571	6652	5020	37036
2001	16225	6965	1429	2183	6868	5413	39083
2011	13474	8032	1677	2344	6167	5264	37467

(RGI) housing units. However, as we shall see, there have been dramatic upward shifts in income elsewhere in Cabbagetown over the period 1971 to 2006⁹.

As a market phenomenon, gentrification is mirrored not only in upward income movements, but in population decline. This occurs because low incomes are associated with the urban



**Lawrence Samuel “Larry” Gains
1900 – 1983**

Canadian heavyweight boxer, Larry Gains was champion of the Dominion of Canada and the British Empire. He was denied the opportunity to become World Champion because there was a bar on black boxers competing for the title.

overcrowding that exists prior to gentrification. As the original inhabitants are forced out by the increasing demand for central locations which causes increases in rent, they are forced out by higher income households demanding increases in per household space. What follows is the uncommon market phenomenon whereby economic intensification (increases in investment per unit of habitable space) leads to population de-intensification (fewer inhabitants

per unit of habitable space). Conversely, the more common phenomenon, whereby greater economic intensification is positively and causally related to population intensification, occurs not through gentrification, but through urban demolition and redevelopment. Both conditions are illustrated by Figure 2, Population by Tract, 1941-2011.



335 Parliament Street in 1947
City of Toronto Archives Fonds 200 Series 372, Subseries 41, Item 0815

⁹ Using the latest data available as, unfortunately, the federal government no longer requires that the long-form census (which contains income data) be mandatory.

St. James Town underwent wholesale demolition of its nineteenth century housing stock and redevelopment in the 1960s. The demolition is apparent in the reduction of its population from 5,672 in 1951 to 862 in 1961, thereafter dramatically increasing by over 1300% to 11,420 in the subsequent decade as high density apartment blocks were developed. This figure reached a high of 16,225 in 2001, to become what is reputed to be Canada’s densest housing project (see Figure 2).

The population size of Regent Park on the other hand as a public housing project, has been governed by government initiatives, first by the ‘slum clearance’ of the area between Gerrard and Dundas streets in the 1940s and 1950s, then by further clearance and rebuilding in the 1960s. In consequence, the population dropped from 8,535 in 1951 to 3,850 in 1961, then to between 5,575 and 6,868 since¹⁰.



Spruce Court Cooperative by architect Eden Smith

The remaining subdistricts have generally shown a decline in population as the gentrification of their Victorian housing stock has proceeded since the late ‘sixties and ‘seventies. Thus, the population of Cabbagetown North (Don Vale north of Winchester Street) represents an extreme case, declining from a high of 5,301 in

¹⁰ The population of Cabbagetown West has experienced a rather more complex history, given that a few enclaves in the predominantly single-family area have been subject to public and private housing redevelopment.

1941 to a low of 1,429 in 2001. Similarly, Cabbagetown East (Don Vale south of Winchester Street) has declined from 7,358 in 1941 to a low of 2,183 in 2001. Only a few streets in Cabbagetown South have thus far undergone gentrification, so its population has declined only slightly.

Despite this history of large-scale population changes, Figure 2 shows that in terms of total population numbers, very little variation over time has occurred. The Cabbagetown total in 1941 was 35,672, rising only slightly to 37,467 in 2011. Clearly, the losses incurred by gentrification have been compensated by a largely sustained population in Regent Park and by dramatic increases in St. James Town.

Household Income

Changes in median household income generally reflect the population changes described above, as illustrated by the figures. Instead of adjusting reported income for inflation over time, we have preferred to compare reported household

Table 3: Median Household Income

Year	St James Town	Regent Park	Cabb South	CMA
1961	7628	3012	3926	9970
1971	8430	5630	6050	17242
1981	16070	10031	24797	29794
1986	22437	14048	41992	46623
1991	28645	18807	36853	65116
1996	29537	22204	58581	68964
2001	34275	39793	53635	69125
2006	44645	25850	66371	80343

Table 4: Don Vale Variation

Year	Cabb West	Cabb North	Cabb East	CMA
1941				
1951	2149	2184	2209	
1961	4730	5026	4601	9970
1971	6405	9900	6685	17242
1981	19506	32749	33110	29794
1986	37065	61863	48646	46623
1991	40250	102430	74608	65116
1996	32236	131014	65081	68964
2001	71464	150324	124004	69125
2006	56036	154641	88204	80343

Fig 3: Median Household Income

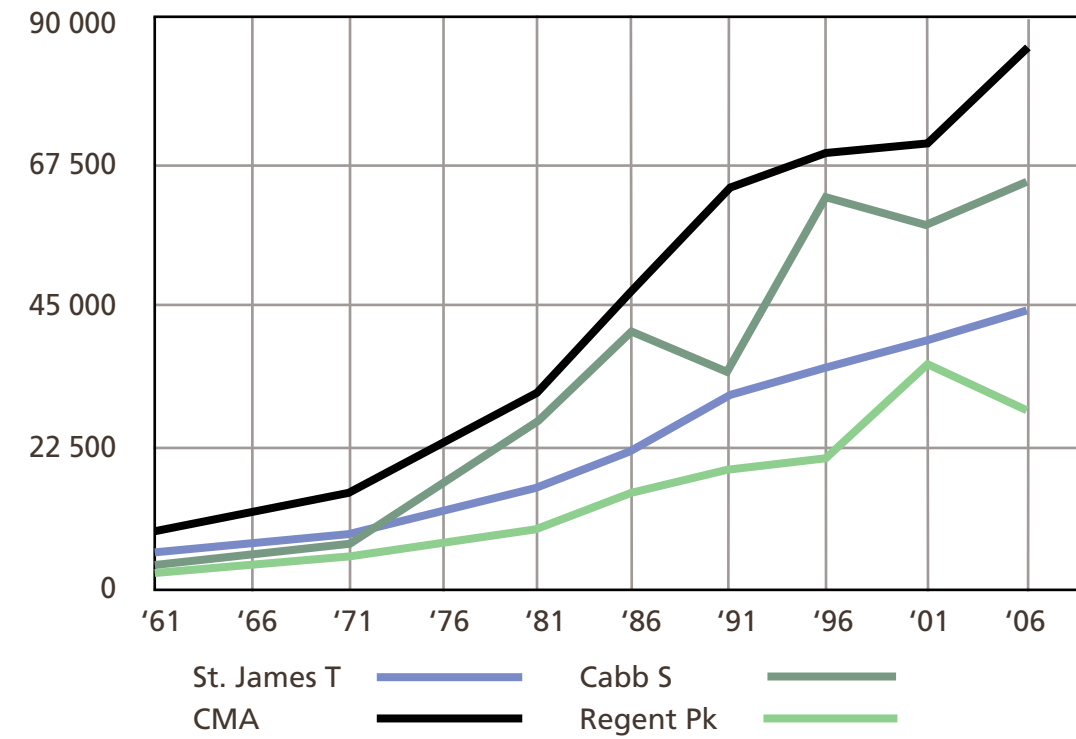
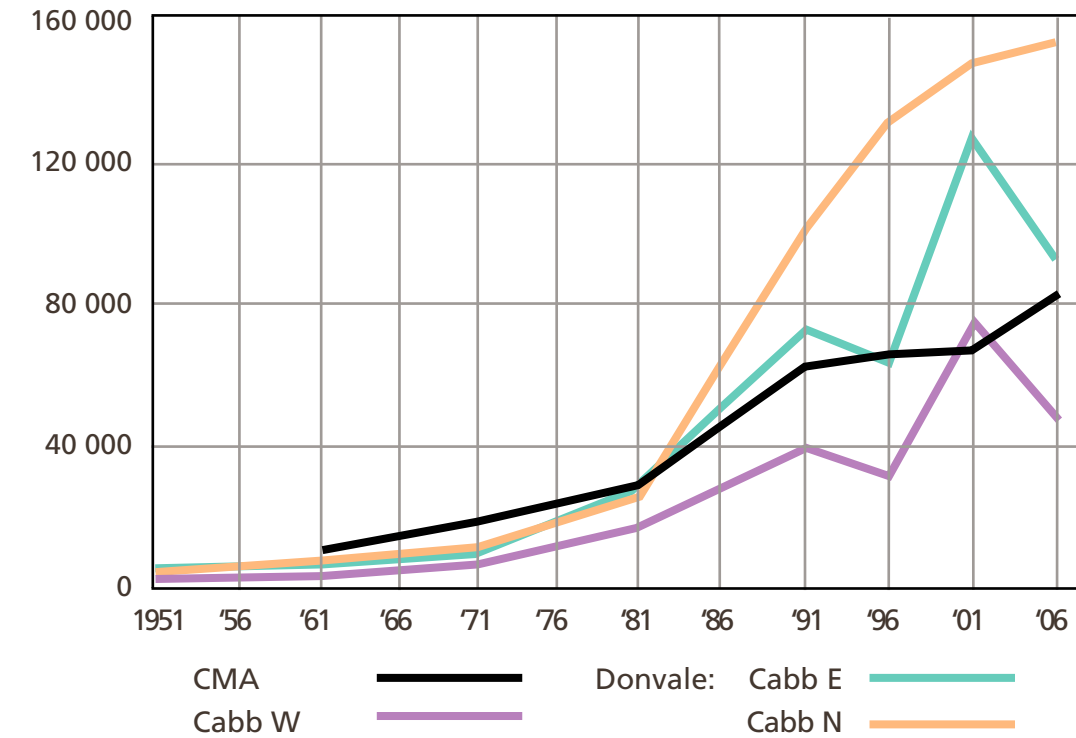


Fig 4: Don Vale Variation



income to the changing reported median household income for the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) as a whole.

Figure 3 illustrates shifts in the median household income of three of our six census tracts, namely St. James Town, Regent Park, and Cabbagetown South. All have reported incomes consistently lower than those of the CMA since 1971. Regent Park, in particular, declined to only 32% (\$25,850) of the CMA income (\$80,343) in 2006, from a high of 58% (\$39,793) of the CMA figure (\$69,125) in 2001. Cabbagetown South, on the other hand, reported 78% of the CMA figure in 1996, rising to 83% in 2006, revealing the effects of continuing gentrification activity in this tract.

Figure 4 traces the median household income of the two Don Vale tracts (Cabbagetown North and East) that report incomes consistently higher than the CMA levels, and that of Cabbagetown West, which just surpassed the CMA figure in 2001. The performance of Don Vale clearly illustrates the trend towards an increasing centralization of affluence described by Hulchanski (although a dip in the 2006 income reported by Cabbagetown East requires explanation). The decline in population illustrated above and in Figure 2 that has occurred in these tracts is consistent with these income shifts.

Age and Household Size

Generally, the Canada Census reveals that, over the past forty or fifty years at least, more affluent households are smaller and older on average than the less affluent ones. Thus, in 1971, affluent households in Toronto had an average of 3.0 people compared to 3.6 in less affluent ones. By 2006 these

numbers had fallen to 2.3 and 2.9 respectively. This relationship also holds for our Cabbagetown households. In 1971, Don Vale had an average household size of 3.1 while Regent Park had 3.4. By 2011, these numbers had fallen to 2.0 and 2.4 respectively.

Margaret Paton Hyndman
1901-1991

Pioneer in the legal field. First woman receiving the Q.C. designation in Canada. Her work constituted the beginning of legal aid in the country. She was instrumental in establishing Ontario's equal-pay legislation.



With respect to median household age, in 2011 the figure for Don Vale was 46 years, and 33 years for Regent Park. Similarly, more affluent households contain fewer persons ages 15 or less; the 2011 figure for Don Vale was 10.5%, while Regent Park contained an average of 22.1 % aged 15 or less.

Gentrification

While indicators like income, education, architectural quality, and property values are the various positive outcomes of the gentrification process in Cabbagetown, this has occurred at the expense of other factors that mostly have affected the more vulnerable sectors of the neighbourhood population. It is apparent that, while the total population levels over the study period have remained remarkably constant, this has occurred because the redevelopment of St. James Town since the late 1960s has accommodated an increase that has compensated for the loss of roughly two thirds of the population level of Don Vale (Cabbagetown North plus Cabbagetown East) through gentrification. In 1941, Don Vale housed 12,659 people, compared to 4,021 in 2011. The eventual location of this large involuntary migration has never been determined.



Example of a once modest worker's cottage, now a modern beautiful home

However, we do know some of the consequences for Cabbagetown. The relatively poor original population supported — and depended on — the presence of a dozen corner stores scattered through the neighbourhood. This, in conjunction with the high population density and lack of private means to afford paid entertainment precipitated an active year-round social life in the streets and parks, at church, at the former Riverdale Zoo, at the Cabbagetown Youth Centre, and at local beer halls such as the Winchester Arms (as described by George Rust-D’Eye, James Lorimer, Penny Coopersmith, J.V. McAree, etc.¹¹). Much of the post-gentrification population, on the other hand, is far less dependent on



Sculpture of Purdy by Edwin and Veronica Dam de Nogales, commissioned by the Griffin Foundation.

Al Purdy 1918-2000

Al Purdy has been called “The Most Canadian Poet” of the twentieth century. He wrote 33 books of verse, and twice won the Governor General’s Literary Award as well as being awarded the Order of Canada.

these facilities, and is inclined to follow recreational pursuits either indoors, on newly built private rear patios, or outside the neighbourhood. In the case of both populations, the presence and value of what Ray Oldenburg has called “third places” as locations of civic engagement (as essential as workplace and home) is evident.¹²

A further significant consequence of gentrification, as noted above, is the transformation in the size and age structure of Cabbagetown families. In 2011, the 0-14 age group in Cabbagetown West and Don Vale comprised only 7% of their population, or 54% lower than the Toronto average; the 65 and over age group, on the other hand, was 4.3% higher than the Toronto average. The presence of fewer children and more seniors has remained almost constant since 2001.

Community Organizations

One striking exception to this shift towards private activity is the founding of new local community organizations that act as foci and anchors for relatively affluent newcomers seeking readymade ties to the neighbourhood. Apart from the Cabbagetown Preservation Association (CPA), an early group was the Don Vale Cabbagetown Property Owners Association, founded in 1967, later revitalized as the Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association (DVCRA), now reincarnated as the Cabbagetown Residents Association (CRA). On the west side of Parliament Street, circa 1980, the Winchester Park Residents Association was in existence and was active in the community for 25 years. The Aberdeen Avenue Residents’ Group (AARG) was created in 2006, and the Cabbagetown South Residents’ Association (CSRA) was formed in 2002 from the amalgamation of Central

¹¹George Rust-D’Eye, op cit.; James Lorimer and Myfanwy Phillips, *Working People*; Penny Coopersmith, *Cabbagetown: The Story of a Victorian Neighbourhood*; J.V. McAree, *The Cabbagetown Store*.

¹²Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, Marlowe & Co. 1989, 1991.



Still from the 1953 movie *Farewell to Oak Street*
National Film Board

Cabbagetown Residents Association (CENTRA) and the Seaton Ontario Berkeley Residents Association (SOBRA). The Regent Park Residents Association is long-standing, but since 2002, re-established as the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI), is concerned to participate in, and report on, the Revitalization Program. The Cabbagetown Regent Park Community Museum was founded in 2004. The Riverdale Farm Advisory Council, drew from local residents and had several tasks, including fundraising. It was disbanded and replaced, in early 2013, by the Riverdale Farm Stewardship Group.

Current Status of Cabbagetown Neighbourhoods

Regent Park

Regent Park is the original Cabbagetown. It had developed in the late 19th Century and had been in decline since the turn of the Century. Most residents of the area were poor and working-class people of British and Irish descent. As mentioned earlier, Garner’s description of the area as “the largest Anglo-Saxon slum in North America” provided a sobering description of life in this sub-standard housing area. By the end of the 1940s, the situation had become intolerable. This led the City of Toronto to undertake, in 1948-49, the complete demolition of the block bounded by Gerrard, Parliament, Dundas, and River streets. They then built a mixture of brick row-housing and three-four storey walkup apartment residences arranged in the so-called “garden city” manner for low income residents, many of whom had been displaced by the demolition. Called Regent Park, it became one of Canada’s earliest and largest public housing projects, and was



Regent Park 1940s building slated for demolition

expanded beginning in 1954 south to Shuter Street with a mixture of row housing and fourteen storey apartment blocks. Upon completion, Regent Park contained 1,778 apartment units and 305 townhouses. The 2006 population was 7,110¹³.

Modelled after many “projects” in the United States, the design was based upon the superbloc principle, whereby existing streets were closed, to be replaced by short cul-

de-sac from the perimeter streets giving access to surface parking and service locations. The revised Regent Park Secondary Plan¹⁴ states that the project “was initially successful in that it provided quality, new housing to many low income families”. As the neighbourhood evolved, it developed many strengths, including cultural diversity and a strong sense of community among its residents.



Patricia (Pat) Cole
(1943-1998)

For twenty years, an inspiring community leader in, and advocate for, Regent Park. Cole Street has been named in her honour and is the first new street to be established since Regent Park was first built.

With time, challenges emerged as housing deteriorated. With the street closings, the project became both physically and socially isolated. The poor relationships between housing and open spaces encouraged criminal behaviour, and the design gave no scope to ameliorate these problems by making adjustments to the layout. No employment was offered on site, and very

¹³City of Toronto. Social Policy and Analysis, Neighbourhood Profile 72.

¹⁴Toronto Community Housing Corporation. Regent Park, Secondary Plan Amendment, 2012, p. 1.



The ‘new’ Regent Park (Parliament and Dundas streets)

few recreation facilities existed¹⁵. In 1966, management of the program was taken over by the newly-formed Ontario Housing Corporation as increasingly the resident demographic pattern changed from a predominantly “Old Canadian” population to younger immigrants from China, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean. The subsequent record became increasingly complex: While a community health centre was constructed in 1973 at the corner of Dundas and Parliament, and several vigorous cultural groups emerged – drama, music, theatre, scat singing, cappella, comedy, and storytelling – single parent families and underachieving children increased. In 1999, nine murders were committed in Regent Park as a different culture of guns, drugs, and hopelessness began to spread among young men.

Encouraged by the success of the St. Lawrence area (discussed further below), a number of planning initiatives throughout the 1990s by the City of Toronto to revitalize Regent Park came to nothing. By then, 80% of the inhabitants were visible minorities, few families earned more than \$18,000 per annum (i.e. one third of the Canadian average), and the high school dropout rate had risen to 56%¹⁶.

¹⁵In the 1970s, a monthly rental surcharge of \$2 was imposed. By 1986, \$17,000 had been raised, sufficient to start the construction of a community centre on Sackville Green in Regent Park South.

¹⁶Toronto Community Housing Corporation, *op cit*, p. 8-13

School-based initiatives had proven ineffective in improving this record. Then, in September 2001, a community initiative called Pathways to Education (PTE) was established in the Community Health Centre by its Director, Carolyn Acker, and Norman Rowen, who became the first Program Director. By attracting volunteer tutors and mentors, and distributing funding from the Trillium Foundation and others, PTE embarked on a program of offering academic, financial, and social supports to youth in Regent Park. These included tutoring four nights per week, a \$4,000 scholarship for post-secondary tuition, group mentoring for grades 9 and 10, and career mentoring for grades 11 and 12.



V. Tony Hauser

Betty Oliphant
1918-2004

Renowned innovator of ballet education. She came to Canada as a war bride. She co-founded the National Ballet School with Celia Franca.

By 2010, PTE had tutored 900 students, or 92% of the 9-12 grades Regent Park population by deploying over 200 volunteers, and had reduced the dropout rate by 70%. Postsecondary enrolment has increased from 20% to 80%¹⁷.

An important lesson from Toronto's 1970s St. Lawrence area experience was that merely

changing the physical setting of residential areas does not bring about social well-being without being carried out in conjunction with community consultation and the simultaneous integration of socio-economic, cultural, and educational programs like PTE. Accordingly, when the City approved the new Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw for Regent Park in 2005, it did so based upon a "multi-stakeholder process" and "support for the (Regent Park) resident association to play a lead role". Also crucial are a "focus upon economic development and youth" and a "growing interest in culture and arts"¹⁸.

As Regent Park's revitalization program is not complete, it is too early to assess its effectiveness. To date, however, all commentary lauds the effectiveness of integrating new architectural/urban design, and sustainability principles with educational, employment, and cultural practices.

Not to be overlooked are the benefits that accrue from Regent Park's central location. Not only is the development situated close to downtown amenities and employment opportunities and well served by existing transit, the ongoing recentralization of Generation Y demographic types sustains a market for expanding private housing, both rental and

¹⁷By 2012, PTE programs were serving low income communities across Canada and expect to serve over 10,000 students by 2016.

¹⁸Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Regent Park Revitalization Report on Presentation to Design Review Panel, April 25, 2013.



Old and new: Cabbagetown West in the shadow of St. James Town

condominium. Thus the symbiotic partnership between the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and the Daniels Corporation, whereby private funds accruing from the leasing of publicly-owned land underwrites the cost of building rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units enables TCHC to replace all the existing low-income units. At the same time, locational advantages have enabled the Daniels Corporation to sell \$360 million worth of housing on-site by 2013¹⁹. Following the principle of mixed development, the program currently proposes a 70%-30% private/RGI mix, including 446 rental units, 309 RGI replacement units, 137 new affordable rental units, and 966 new market units for a total proposed population of 17,000²⁰.

In keeping with the goal of providing on-site employment and recreational opportunities, the Daniels Corporation has sponsored the construction of the Daniels Spectrum, a major multifunctional facility located at the Dundas St. entrance to the main pedestrian spine of Regent Park. By applying Section 37 of the *Planning Act*, which marshals public amenities in exchange for granting above as-of-right density, a new Aquatic Centre has been built on Sumach Street. In addition, in agreement with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, various new commercial establishments in Regent Park have so far employed over 600 young residents at, for instance, Sobey's Fresh Mart, Rogers, the Paintbox Bistro, and Tim Hortons.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Thereby bringing about a marked relative change in household income levels. In 2006, 67.9% of Regent Park families were designated "low income". City of Toronto. *Op cit.* Profile 72.

St. James Town

In contrast to the optimism generated by the revitalization of Regent Park and in the absence of any public-private initiative of an equivalent scale and ambition, the future of St. James Town would look bleak if it were not for recent evidence of a strong upwardly mobile ambition on the part of many younger residents. As Canada's largest high-rise community, St. James Town has been designated one of Toronto's thirteen "economically deprived" communities. Despite (or because of) this situation, St. James Town is the only Cabbagetown community under study here that has experienced an increase in population since first being constructed in the 1960s following rezoning to high density prior to the advent of the City's Reform Council²¹ (core members of City Council elected in 1972, more on this below).

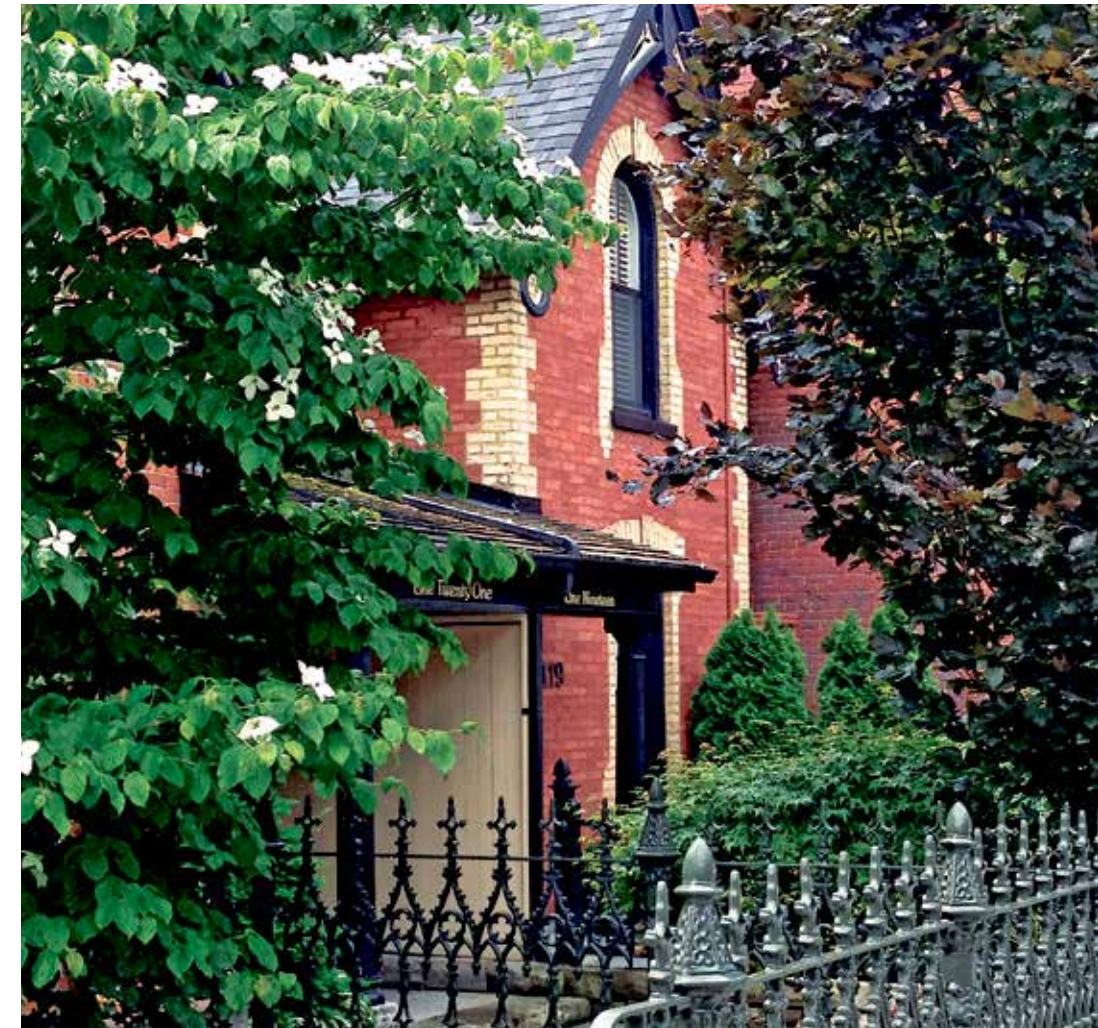
²¹St. James Town's 2011 census population (probably seriously undercounted) was 13,474. This actually represents a census decline of almost 3,000 since 2001 (Census of Canada, 2001, 2011). Some estimates placed up to 25,000 inhabitants in St. James Town in the 1990s.



St. James Town today

The developer of St. James Town, Meridian, acquired practically the complete block of 19th century middle class housing between Sherbourne, Wellesley, Parliament, and Howard streets, conducted wholesale demolition, and closed all the internal public streets²². Based on the same "Modernist" planning model as Regent Park, 19 rental apartment towers were built between 14 and 32 storeys high, making it by far the densest residential development in Canada. The towers are surrounded by formless green space and service culs-de-sac, thereby, like Regent Park, isolating the development from its surroundings. Originally marketed to "swinging singles", the absence of amenities and forbidding appearance rendered St. James Town unattractive to this group, so the housing became poorer and, by the 1980s, was inhabited mainly by poor immigrants from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and East

²²According to some sources, Meridian conducted the acquisitions by practicing "blockbusting", i.e. buying properties strategically, allowing them to deteriorate to the point where the amenity and value of remaining adjacent housing declined, then buying the intervening properties



Homes and trees co-habiting in Don Vale

Asia. The Ontario Housing Corporation added four public housing buildings in the 1970s. Many (65%) of the current inhabitants are second generation residents, upwardly mobile, who list English as their census language²³. Of the remaining 35%, 8.1% speak Tagalog, 5.5% speak Tamil, and 5% speak either Mandarin or Cantonese²⁴.



Darrell Kent
1942-1989

Visionary real estate agent and philanthropist who started the gentrification of Cabbagetown.

Meridian originally intended to extend St. James Town south of Wellesley Street into West Cabbagetown, and acquired and cleared the land along Wellesley Street accordingly. However, a group of activist citizens, supported by Alderman John Sewell, halted progress until recently, when a number of housing cooperatives and condominiums were constructed²⁵. Meanwhile, several attempts have been made to establish an internal street grid as the basis for infill housing between the apartment blocks. To date, none has come to fruition, although this is now a matter affecting Cabbagetown West rather than St. James Town.

²³Interestingly, a public library has been built in 2001 as a component of a new community centre at the corner of Sherbourne and Wellesley. Within a few months, the library became almost the most intensively used in Toronto.

²⁴Statistics Canada, Census 2006.

²⁵ They are described below under the Cabbagetown West section.



Spruce Court Cooperative

Don Vale

Don Vale is comprised of Canada Census tracts 067 and 068²⁶. It is by far the most affluent and architecturally attractive of all the Cabbagetown communities under consideration here and the only one to register household and family income levels higher than that of the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) since the 1981 census. This is especially the case in tract 067 (north of Winchester Street) where, in 2001, the median family income was \$150,234 versus \$80,343 in the CMA as a whole. Prior to 1981 Don Vale's income levels were less than the CMA average and, in 1951, at \$2,190, were about half the CMA

Richard Bradshaw
1944-2007

Canadian Opera Company Conductor and Visionary. He was the driving force behind the establishment of Canada's first purpose-built opera house. Under his direction, the Canadian Opera Company's local productions, recordings and tours earned the company widespread recognition and numerous awards.



median household income. Trends in tract 068 (south of Winchester) have also been remarkable, although not so comprehensive. While the population there has been halved and household income has risen above the CMA median, the existence of three sizeable cooperative housing complexes, namely Spruce Court Cooperative (77 units, Toronto's oldest public housing, founded in 1913), Don Area Cooperative of Homes Inc. (DACHI) at 225 Carlton (75 units), and Three Streets Cooperative (39 units, 1981) at Winchester and Metcalfe has modified the gentrifying trends slightly²⁷.

This remarkable reversal can be attributed to the recentralization, beginning in the early 1970s, of relatively affluent households who were no longer enamoured of the suburban lifestyle, wishing to live close to the burgeoning amenity and service sector employment opportunities in the central city. In the process, they restored/renovated and embellished Don Vale's largely rundown Victorian housing stock through the process of gentrification, and replaced most of the existing households, many of whom – particularly the inhabitants of rooming houses – were left with little choice but to leave the neighbourhood.

This recentralizing phenomenon had the contradictory effect of greatly increasing (intensifying) the amount of money invested into each renovated housing unit, yet decreasing

²⁶With the exception of Castle Frank Crescent, which lies north of Rosedale Valley Road, and is therefore located outside Cabbagetown.

²⁷The income in tract 068 fell sharply between 2001 and 2006, from \$124,004 to \$88,204, as it did in Cabbagetown West. Canada Census, 2001, 2006.

the population density (de-intensifying) such that, by 2001, the Don Vale population of 3,612 was only 41% of its 1951 population of 8,701²⁸. Over the intervening forty year period since 1971, the Don Vale inhabitants, once integrated into the surrounding neighbourhoods by common low income levels, ethnicity, and lifestyles, are now isolated within



Miss Margaret Robins
Archives, Women's College
Hospital

Rowena Hume M.D.
1877-1966

Pioneer physician. First Chief of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Women's College Hospital that she helped establish. She was murdered in her home (on Carlton Street) by a vagrant worker she had hired.

their community. This has occurred because of the "ghettoizing" present in both St. James Town and Regent Park: an insular pattern of streets, and a largely homogeneous ethnicity, upper middle class

occupations, and lifestyles, all of which differentiate Don Valers from the other Cabbagetown residents, and therefore both minimizes inter-community relations and problematizes the functioning of neighbourhood activities such as retailing.

Don Vale's gentrification is now almost complete. Only a handful of rooming houses have survived, along with the cooperative projects referred to above, and some peripheral non-residential buildings on Gerrard and Parliament streets. The proportion of the population between 25 and 64 years of age is almost 20% higher than the CMA average, the proportion of seniors (65+) is 8% higher, and children and youth are over 33% lower. The preponderance of working people and seniors, and the relative absence of children implies that social and cultural attention would not be oriented locally, but elsewhere. However, there is anecdotal evidence that the intense, street-oriented built forms do much to capture and localize the attention of residents towards the community.

²⁸Statistics Canada, Census, 1951, 2001, tracts 067 and 068.



Cabbagetown's main commercial street: Parliament Street

Cabbagetown West

With respect to income, ethnicity, housing tenure, and architecture, Cabbagetown West is the least homogeneous of the communities studied here. It has also witnessed considerable demolition and construction, particularly west of Ontario Street. In consequence, the population declined from a high of 8,287 in 1961 to a low of 4,630 in 1971. Since then, largely through multiple residential rebuilding, the population increased to 7,162 by 1991 (although some decline, then further increase have occurred since). However, the available data, based on census tract 066 make it

difficult to analyze the demographically heterogeneous components separately. According to David Hulchanski, Cabbagetown West was one of the 103 tracts in Toronto (out of 527 tracts) witnessing an increase of more than 20% in average individual income between 1970 and 2000²⁹. However, the substantial (apparent) internal disparity means that this statistic gives only an imprecise understanding of the tract's evolution over the past decades. For instance, while in 2001 the median household income was \$71,464 - more than \$2,000 higher than the CMA median - this declined dramatically to \$40,162 by 2006. This occurred because, in the interim, the large vacant lots along Bleeker Street near Wellesley Street, left by Meridian's failed 1970s attempt to build high rise apartments, were developed as largely affordable cooperative housing³⁰. In addition, several clusters of rooming houses on Wellesley Street, Prospect Street, Winchester Street, Parliament Street, and Carlton Street are operated by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation³¹.

Cabbagetown West, unlike the other communities studied here, contains a significant amount of non-residential uses: Winchester Public School, the Cabbagetown Youth Centre, and continuous retail establishments along Wellesley, Parliament, and Gerrard Street. Their incorporation into the community's physical layout, in addition to the awkward spatial juxtaposition between the older housing along Ontario and Winchester

²⁹Both 067 and 068 (Don Vale) are also included in these 103 tracts. Conversely, St. James Town (065) and Regent Park (031) are among the 192 tracts whose income declined more than 20%. Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 2007, Neighbourhood Change University Alliance.

³⁰Including the Hugh Garner Housing Cooperative.

³¹Several of these are historically and architecturally significant Victorian structures, ostensibly protected by the Cabbagetown West HCD. Unfortunately, the TCHC has admitted that it has insufficient funds to maintain them properly.



Veterans Affairs Canada

Walter Seymour Allward
1876-1955

Renowned Canadian artist. He sculpted many Canadian historical personalities. His most important commission was the Vimy Ridge Memorial to Canadians killed in the First World War. His works have become part of our national heritage.

streets, and Rose Avenue and the newer, denser, housing projects mirrors the relative absence of socio-economic cohesiveness in the community³².

In consequence, although separated only by Parliament Street, there are few socio-economic or cultural ties between Don Vale and Cabbagetown West. To date, therefore, Parliament Street, which ideally should act as a socio-economic seam, uniting the activities on each side, acts primarily as a barrier, which in turn diminishes the street's retailing function's success.

³² The arrangement around Winchester Park is particularly unfortunate, in that most of the large new projects flank, rather than face the park, which in turn loses its potential as a community focus.



Cabbagetown South home

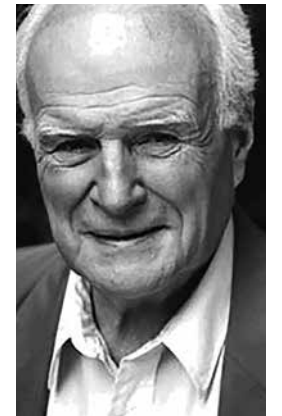
Cabbagetown South

Like Cabbagetown West, the area to the south has, almost since the earliest development in the 1860s, contained a disparate mix of building quality and land use. In total, the population has remained the most constant of all the tracts under study here, while the composition has varied considerably over time. The numbers declined from 7,358 in 1941 to 4,770 in 1981, but have remained at about that level since. The loss may be attributed largely to gentrification in the 1970s, thereby both reducing the average household size and raising the aggregate median household income³³.

Fraser Mustard M.D.

1927-2011

Medical pioneer and champion of early learning. Early in his career, his heart research focused on blood platelets, arterial disease, and the effects of Aspirin. His interests shifted to early childhood education research where he influenced decision-makers all over the world. Mustard's findings paved the way to create a Ontario-wide full-day kindergarten program.



Most of this gentrification has occurred in the area north of Gerrard along Berkeley and Ontario streets. Carlton Street contains some of the finest Victorian houses in Toronto, most of which have been restored. The south side, particularly between Berkeley and Sherbourne, forms a majestic gateway to the heart of Cabbagetown.

South of Gerrard Street, with the exception of some relatively affluent gentrified pockets along Berkeley, Ontario, and Seaton streets, has a different history. This has occurred through its location, which straddles the unstable, yet expanding outer edge of the city's downtown commerce and the vulnerable inner boundary of residential zones. As elsewhere in similar North American locations, the most deprived and transient groups tend to congregate here, subsequently followed by the various institutions that support them. They are followed by the various institutional and volunteer organizations that serve this type of population, such as religious establishments, food banks, community housing, shelters, halfway houses, and other welfare services³⁴. The area surrounding the intersection of Sherbourne and Dundas Streets has been especially prone to the various social problems that accompany these conditions³⁵.

³³ Statistics Canada, Census, 1941-2006. Income in 2006 was \$53,635, still less than the CMA figure of \$69,125.

³⁴ Thereby perpetuating the life of such locations as deprived.

³⁵ The Toronto Community Housing apartment at 251 Sherbourne Street, near Dundas Street East was recently reported as being "overrun with drug dealers and drug users". According to Mr. Brian Ricciardi, an eight-year resident, the stair wells are contaminated by "feces, needles, people selling crack". He claims that all complaints are always ignored by police. CBC.ca report, May 9, 2013. ³⁶ The 2006 census population totalled 38,000, declining by 1500 to 2011. Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2001.



Old and new: A few victorian homes at Howard and Bleecker streets spared by the wholesale demolition that took place to give way to St. James Town

Of all the areas under study here, Cabbagetown South is the one most exposed to the rapid expansion of high density condominium development that is currently enveloping the Downtown. The future of Dundas Street and Sherbourne Street, as components of the City’s “main streets” growth strategy, remains in doubt in this respect.

Further Factors Affecting Cabbagetown’s Future

Whether examining economic or social status, employment, housing or ethnicity, the current trends in Cabbagetown point to an increasing diversity, even disparity, of the population. Moreover, apart from long-term increases in the population of St. James Town (except for a stabilization – even slight decline – since 2006³⁶), and a projected increase to 17,000 from 6,000 in Regent Park following completion of the planned revitalization in 2025³⁷, the remaining Cabbagetown numbers have stabilized or declined.

Data from the period prior to 1970 indicate, with some few exceptions in Don Vale, that the income of most Cabbagetown families and individuals fell within the lowest 35-40% of the Toronto population, a condition that had prevailed back to the 1930s and, in the areas south of Gerrard Street, back to the 1880s and before. Now, household and family income varies significantly across the study area, from a median of \$150,324 in Don Vale

³⁶The 2006 census population totalled 38,000, declining by 1500 to 2011. Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2001.

³⁷Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Regent Park Revitalization Plan, March 2013.

to \$38,441 in St. James Town³⁸. With respect to ethnicity, the predominant source was the British Isles (including what is now the Republic of Ireland). As late as 1951, the four census tracts 96, 97, 98, and 99 (covering most of Don Vale, St. James Town, Regent Park, and Cabbagetown South and West), of a total of 24,014 persons, 16,880 (70.3%) were of British origin, while the next largest groups were French with 1,948 (8.1%) and “Other European” with 1,409 (5.9%)³⁹. In 2006, by contrast, in the area of Cabbagetown West, 5,390 persons (50.3%) are of British descent in a population of 10,720⁴⁰.

Whereas once the wider Cabbagetown community, while poor, tended to be integrated by language, class, and cultural norms, now it is divided into several geographically-bounded domains, each one housing a largely inwardly-oriented population sharing an exclusive set of socio-economic attributes. On the positive side, several community and municipal initiatives have salvaged an otherwise market-driven history from a U.S.-style central city disaster. These are listed below.

City of Toronto 1974 Central Area Plan

Throughout most of Toronto’s history, municipal politics has been dominated by pro-business Councils, whose members took their cues from development industry lobbying and governments in power at the provincial level. In consequence, the long period of economic growth that began after the Second World War led to a virtually wholesale overhaul of the central city by private commercial and residential development. In the downtown area, Toronto’s 19th century architectural legacy was virtually wiped out and replaced by the high rise structures permitted by, for instance, the 1965 Official Plan.

Janet Hamilton Neilson

1873 – 1953

Pioneer of public health nursing and, from 1907 to 1911, the only city nurse in Toronto. She was the city tuberculosis visiting nurse.



Toronto Archives, Series 474, Subseries 3, File 2, Item 53

By 1970, this expansion began to intrude into the old established neighbourhoods that surrounded the central business district, most notably east of Jarvis Street. This precipitated a vocal populist reaction, spearheaded most notably by Alderman John Sewell who, together with a number of like-minded allies brought about the election of the so-called Reform Council in 1972. The new Council appointed several young, progressive planners to overhaul the essentially laissez-faire 1965 Official Plan and replace

³⁸Statistics Canada Census 2006. While no definitive comprehensive income data are available for this period, housing conditions, sickness, and longevity records, and anecdotal stories confirm the conclusion that Cabbagetown, since its inception, remained a deprived community.

³⁹Statistics Canada Census, 1951

⁴⁰Statistics Canada Census, 2006



New Regent Park street named in honour of late community leader Pat Cole

it by the 1974 Central Area Plan, which, for the first time in Toronto’s history, placed sophisticated limits on the ability of private developers to level existing properties. Instead, further growth was related to expanding the capacity of the transit system, rather than that of the road network. Mixed use zoning (whereby residential and commercial activity was allowed to occupy the same building), affordable housing, streetscape design, and historic preservation were encouraged.

Josef Škvorecký
1924-2012

Czech-Canadian literary giant. Although he loved his homeland, after the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, he and his wife ended up in Cabbagetown. Here he wrote and taught. He also published banned Czech and Slovak books. Vaclav Havel awarded him the Order of the White Lion.



The 1974 Central Area Plan also initiated what became a groundbreaking approach to residential planning, namely the planning and construction of the centrally-located St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, in which a partnership of the City with private developers produced a successful development of formerly industrial land into a complex

integration of housing and supporting amenities. This neighbourhood was to become the template for later developments throughout North America⁴¹.

Recentralizing Population

In Toronto and elsewhere, beginning in the 1960s, a new feature of urban growth began to take hold, one that altered (although did not reverse) the general outward migration of the population, whereas previously, almost all expansion had occurred at the periphery. Since the 1940s, aided by the introduction of the *National Housing Act* and the establishment of the Canada (formerly Central) Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the development of new low density suburban housing was in effect federally subsidized⁴². Because these subsidies could only be applied to new single family housing, neither the renovation or restoration of old housing stock, nor the construction of multi-family dwellings was

⁴¹The populist revolt that led to these radical changes had its theoretical roots in the writings and advocacy of Jane Jacobs, who moved to Toronto in the late 1960s.

⁴²The *Veterans’ Land Act* – also administered by CMHC – provided a further impetus to suburbanization.

encouraged until changes to the *National Housing Act* in the 1960s.

Only then did a market for older properties and apartments begin expanding, driven by a relatively young demographic seeking locations close to expanding central area employment in offices, and to the relatively amenity-rich features existing downtown. This process, often termed “Manhattanization”, initially encouraged new apartment developments such as St. James Town and the City Park Apartment complex west of Jarvis Street, which entailed the further demolition of old neighbourhoods. This, in turn, hastened the advent of the anti-development populist movement referred to above.

Perhaps the most striking example of recentralization was, and remains, the gentrification of Don Vale, which gathered impetus in the early 1970s. We refer to this experience in detail above, but it remains important to bear in mind that this process incurred the forced evacuation of many of the existing inhabitants, in this case leading to a halving of the population density⁴³.

Charles Sauriol
1904 – 1995

Canadian naturalist and pioneer ecologist Charles Sauriol was dedicated to the preservation of Toronto’s green spaces. His original love was the Don Valley and in 1949 he co-founded the Don Valley Conservation Association. Known as “Mr. Conservation”, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1989.



Andre Flys

⁴³A recent trend in downtown Toronto is the series of ‘perks’ offered by several businesses to attract Generation Y employees, many of whom choose to live close to work. The office of Google, for instance, offers free transit tokens and shared bicycles. Only 10% of their employees own cars, and more than half walk or bike to work. The downtown offices of Telus, Lavalin, and Coca Cola provide similar perks.



One of Cabbagetown/Don Vale’s jewels: the Wellesley Cottages

Housing Program Initiatives

Until the success of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood south of Cabbagetown, the practice and record of building affordable subsidized housing had been regrettable throughout North America. Based largely on the planning theories of European Modernists such as Le Corbusier, which, in turn, were a reaction against the congestion and overcrowding of the 19th century city, public housing projects were invariably driven by wholesale slum clearance and redevelopment operations. Existing streets were closed to produce 'superblocks' within which multifamily buildings, usually high rises, were scattered, each one usually surrounded by open space. The many faults of such projects will not be detailed here, except to point out that their isolation from the surrounding communities likely stigmatized the inhabitants. The difficulty

of surveilling and policing formless open spaces also led to significant increases in criminal behaviour.

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Project, initiated under the 1974 Central Area Plan, departed entirely from past practice by introducing a mix of new amenities and market-based, cooperative, and rent geared-to-

Peggy Kurtin 1932-2009

Dedicated and active member of the Cabbagetown community. As a heritage "activist", she was once described by the Globe and Mail as the "redoubtable force of Cabbagetown". Her research and advocacy work led to the designation of most of the area as a heritage conservation district.

income housing, all located within a new street grid scaled to, and connected to, the existing street pattern. While St. Lawrence has been rightly criticized for its uninspiring architecture, over thirty years of occupancy clearly demonstrate its success as a community almost devoid of the many symptoms that continue to afflict "old style" public housing "ghettos".

The history of Cabbagetown's Regent Park has been detailed above. To date, the project is working even better than expected.

Heritage Preservation in Cabbagetown

The *Ontario Heritage Act* enables municipalities to designate heritage conservation districts (HCDs) to protect building exteriors and streetscapes of historical and architectural significance against demolition and unsympathetic alteration. To qualify, detailed surveys of the history and appearance of each building in a proposed HCD are to be undertaken. In Cabbage town, which has been called the largest continuous area of Victorian housing in North America, the whole process leading to the designation of, to date, four HCDs has been initiated and originally managed by the Cabbagetown Preservation Association (CPA), founded in 1989 by a small group of Cabbagetown residents.



No longer a hotel, the Winchester Hotel (built in 1888) is one of Cabbagetown's most recognized landmarks.

The City of Toronto 1974 Central Area Plan protected much of Cabbagetown from redevelopment by imposing a 40 feet height limit and a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 1.0. While discouraging widespread rebuilding at higher than existing densities, these measures were insufficient to protect against owners' alterations to the existing external character. Neither zoning nor Site Plan Control bylaws provided adequate protection. The promulgation of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, however, gave Toronto the power to legislate

protection, administered by the Preservation Services of its Planning Department. A Heritage Advisory Committee (independent of the CPA) composed of Cabbagetown residents, reports to the Preservation Services on construction proposals and deals with residents' questions.

The four HCDs are Cabbagetown-Metcalf, Cabbagetown North, Cabbagetown South, and Cabbagetown Northwest (the designation of one more HCD - a non-designated area of Cabbagetown South - is currently being considered).

According to most accounts, the establishment of these HCDs has been welcomed by Cabbagetown's residents. In many instances, the costs of maintaining and altering housing exteriors that are subject to heritage controls has been high due to the expense of maintaining old brickwork and replacing windows, doors and detailing with appropriate material. However, various studies have shown that housing values have been either maintained or increased relative to non-designated markets.

In Conclusion

We use the word "conclusion" with caution. As we have seen, our story about Cabbagetown is one that captures no more than a handful of historical moments in a process that continues to evolve and in a direction that cannot be predicted with any certainty. There is no "end state" in the development of cities, and, as we stated at the beginning, using Mark Kingwell's insight, Toronto has no single narrative that is definitive. We might claim that certain other locations in this volatile metropolis, by virtue of accidents of geography, have been far more stable and predictable — think of Rosedale for instance — but Cabbagetown, however defined, has been radically transformed through the years by immigration, industrialization, de-industrialization, sectarian conflict, land use regulation, slum clearance, urban renewal, gentrification, and heritage preservation. We can only expect that this transformation will continue in the foreseeable future.

Cabbagetown has been the theatre of urban planning failures and successes — the two lives of Regent Park since WW2 are a good example. And yet, in so many respects, large sections of the Victorian urban landscape remain in place. Moreover, despite the increasingly diverse social tapestry of Cabbagetown, there continues to be a shift away from deprivation, and, according to some observers, increasing levels of acceptance and integration.

To some extent, perhaps, this might be attributable to regional, even nation-wide directions in our culture. In our view, this is one reason for celebration.

Glossary

Affordable Rental Units

Affordable housing costs less than 30% of before-tax household income. For renters, shelter costs include rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation)

Census Tract

Area that is small and relatively stable. Census tracts usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000 persons. They are located in census metropolitan areas and in census agglomerations that have a core population of 50,000 or more. (Statistics Canada)

Floor Area Ratio

A Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the ratio of total net floor area of a building to the total lot area. A FAR describes the intensity of the use on a site and not the building height or site coverage; however, building height and site coverage standards are critical in determining the arrangement and form of the building at the intensity permitted by the FAR. FAR includes all habitable structures on a lot but does not include the area within parking lots or parking structures.

Jack Nichols
1921-2009

Renowned painter who lived a very simple life in Cabbagetown. He had been chosen as a "war painter" and is mostly known for his haunting portraits and scenes, especially those painted during the Second World War.



Market Rent

Market rent is the rent paid by a household that is not receiving RGI assistance in a particular building. Many social housing developments have a mix of both market rent units and units that have the rent-geared-to-income. (Housing Connections - definition used by the City of Toronto)

Median Family Income

Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

Rent Geared to Income (RGI)

This means that rent is calculated based on income type and amount. It is 30% of the gross household income. (Housing Connections - definition used by the City of Toronto)

TCHC

Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Appendix: Cabbagetown People

Colonial Period (1788 - ca 1870)

Lieutenant Francis Gwillim Simcoe, first private owner of land in Cabbagetown

Edward Hodder M.D., Ontario's Father of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Charles B. MacKay, Toronto's first Customs Officer

First Development Period (1870 - 1900)

The Venerable Archdeacon Samuel Johnson Boddy, M.A., D.C.L., founding rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church, rendering 42 years of service to Cabbagetown.

Sarah Anne Curzon, a pioneer for women's rights

Oronhyatekha M.D., Mohawk physician, Victorian businessman and philanthropist

Daniel Lamb, industrialist, politician, and a founder of Toronto's first zoo

Reverend Samuel Rose D.D., one of the pioneers of methodism in Ontario

Ernest Thompson Seton, biologist, scientific illustrator, naturalist

Benjamin Brick, builder and specialist in elaborate plaster decoration

James Grand and Samuel Toy, founders of the city's oldest office supply company

Eden Smith, prolific early Toronto designer and architect

Walter Seymour Allward, renowned Canadian sculptor; his masterpiece is the Canadian National Vimy Ridge Monument

Consolidation Period (1900 - 1930)

Larry Gains, heavyweight boxing champion of the Dominion of Canada and the British Empire

Janet Neilson, beloved public health nurse

Sir Ernest MacMillan, renowned musician, conductor, composer, and educator

Arthur Goss, Toronto first official photographer with a legacy of over 35,000 photographic images of Toronto

C. W. Jefferys, historical painter and illustrator

Walter Huston, Academy Award-winning actor

Gordon Sinclair, a giant in Canadian broadcast journalism

Flos Jewell Williams, a writer with a passion for western Canada

Frederick Hagan, one of Canada's greatest artists and teachers

Luigi von Kunits, first conductor, Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Arthur Schawlow Ph.D., Nobel Laureate in Physics who co-developed the laser

The Adaskin Family, one of Canada's greatest musical families of the 20th century

Hugh Garner, author and witness to depression era Cabbagetown

Albert (Frenchy) Bélanger, 1927 Flyweight boxing world champion

Morley Callaghan, writer, broadcaster and Canada's first urban novelist

J. Norman Emerson, pioneer of intuitive archaeology (use of psychics)

Charles Sauriol, pioneer ecologist

Period of Decline and Urban Renewal (1930 - 1970)

Al Purdy, "the most Canadian poet"

Rowena Hume M.D., a founder of Women's College Hospital

Jack Nichols, Canada's pre-eminent World War II artis

Preservation and Gentrification (1970 - Present)

Doug Henning, world-famous magician

Betty Oliphant, world-renowned innovator of ballet education

J. L. (Allan) Yen Ph.D., a leading figure in Canadian radio astronomy

Mary O'Riordan D.V.M., pioneering veterinarian

Fredelle Bruser Maynard, author and TV host

Ben Wicks, political cartoonist and global literacy advocate

Darrell Kent, realtor and benefactor, gentrification pioneer

Tony Brady, children's entertainer, founder of the Forsythia Festival

Bill Stapleton, artist, activist, and art teacher

Richard Bradshaw, Canadian Opera Company conductor and visionary

Margaret Hyndman, pioneer lawyer

Fraser Mustard, medical pioneer and champion of early learning

Peggy Kurtin, heritage advocate and activist

Josef Škvorecký, Czech-Canadian literary giant

Pat Cole, inspiring community leader and advocate

Corporal Ainsworth Dyer, Canadian soldier, died in Afghanistan

NOTE: For more detailed biographical information go to cabbagetownpeople.ca.

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The Cabbagetown Preservation Association is on Facebook

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Back Cover:

Upper left: The Esplanade in 1894 looking east to the Don River. It shows an already congested waterfront.

Toronto Public Library , TRL. 971-12

Upper right: Veronica Foster known as “Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl” became an icon representing nearly one million Canadian women participating in the war effort.

Library and Archives Canada PA-119766

Bottom: Riverdale Park West in 1914, from the flats, looking south. We can see in the background an illustration of the heavy industrialisation of Toronto and the Cabbagetown area at the time: the Sheet Metal Products of Canada building (now long gone!) at what would be today River and Gerrard streets.

Toronto Archives Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 52, Item 379

