



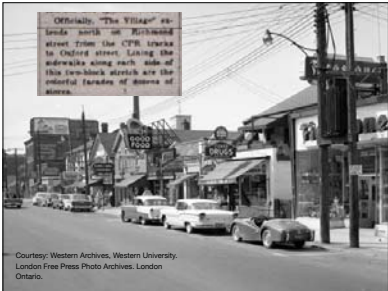
Good evening. My name is Mark Tovey. I am at the Department of History at Western University, working in partnership with the Culture Office. I have been conducting an oral history project in the neighborhoods that surround Oxford and Richmond Streets. I'm here tonight to tell you about a prospective Heritage Interpretive Sign for "The Village", sometimes called "The Richmond Village", the two-block shopping street on Richmond Street between Oxford and the CPR Tracks.



Two years ago I did the research for the Richmond Row Heritage Interpretive Sign. As you can see, heritage interpretive signs include both images and text.



Before it was incorporated into Richmond Row, the shopping area north of the CPR tracks on Richmond Street was known to locals as "The Village". You can see the distinctive Murray-Selby shoe building in the background, and just to the left of it, the perennial Campus Hi-Fi, which in 1959, when this photograph was taken, was called the Campus Food Bar. Many fondly recall The Richmond Bakery



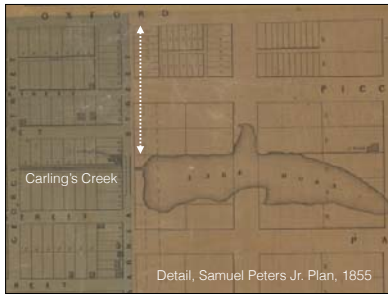
Fisher Drugs, and Stan C. Reade Photo. On Sept 26, 1957, the London Free Press described the location of "The Village" as follows: "Officially, "The Village" extends north on Richmond Street from the CPR tracks to Oxford Street. Lining the sidewalks along each side of this two-block stretch are the colorful facades of dozens of stores."



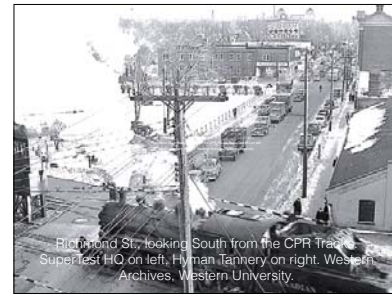
Starting in 1949, a group of retailers in The Village met regularly, calling their group the North London Merchants Association. It was designed to provide "better services and facilities, in more pleasant surroundings, for the shopping public." Topics discussed over coffee included "traffic problems, store hours, Christmas decoration, and district-wide sales."



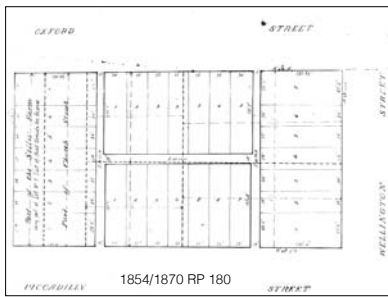
It is easy to see from this photograph from 1948 what might have prompted the moniker, "The Village". The stretch appears self-contained, like the cross-roads of a small town. This is a view looking south along Richmond Street approaching Oxford Street.



The Village has always been an area apart. Initially it was separated from lands to the south by Carling's Creek and Lake Horn.



Later, it would be separated from parts south by the CPR railroad and the industrial lands that built up around the rail line and around Carling's Creek.



The Village is sometimes also known as The Richmond Village because its stores run along Richmond Street. What we now know as Richmond Street was an amalgamation of several streets. The part of Richmond Street where The Village is today was related to a former street that ran just between Oxford and Lake Horn. That street was called Church Street. Church Street was slightly to the east of current-day Richmond Street, as you can see from Registered Plan 180.



Richmond Street was named after the Governor in chief of British North America, the Earl of Richmond, Charles Lennox. Appointed in 1818, Richmond's term was cut short in 1919 by his premature demise. While touring Upper and Lower Canada, Richmond was bitten by a tame (but rabid) fox, and died of the resulting hydrophobia.



The area's commercial history begins in the 1850s, when it was subdivided into long, narrow commercial lots. Although the buildings gradually changed, the plan of subdivision north of Piccadilly Street did not. The narrow shops we see today (and the "dozens of stores" mentioned by the Free Press article), owe their footprint to the plans of subdivision from the 1850s.

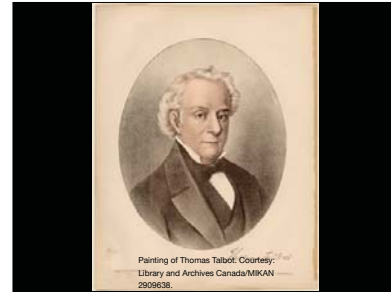


These plans helped establish not just the rhythm of the street but the mom-and-pop character of the area. Small, narrow lots make it easier for local entrepreneurs to start new businesses. Here we can see the interior of Norfolk Lingerie.



Courtesy: Western Archives, Western University, London
Free Press Photo Archives, 12 April 1967.

And here is Cindy Kydd in her store 'La Jolie Jupe' in 1967, when it was located at 711 Richmond Street. The Murray-Selby Building (left) and the train station (right) can be seen out the window in the background.



Painting of Thomas Talbot. Courtesy: Library and Archives Canada/MIKAN 2909638.

The first event of historical note that happened in The Village was the groundbreaking ceremony for the Great Western Railway, conducted by Col. Thomas Talbot in 1847. The groundbreaking happened in the area just west and north of the corner of Piccadilly and Richmond Street.



However, in spite of having already broken ground on the project, Great Western Railway was persuaded by the City of London to situate their rail line closer to the business district downtown. North London would wait another 40 years for its first passenger train (pictured), run by the Canadian Pacific Railway on May 30th, 1887.



Courtesy: Western Archives, Western University, London
Free Press Photo Archives, Water Sprinkler Burst at Murray-Selby Shoes London Ontario, 15 August 1954.

The Murray-Selby shoe building, built c. 1908 on the south-east corner of Piccadilly and Richmond, has been re-developed as an office building sporting a glass atrium.



Courtesy: Western Archives, Western University, London
Free Press Photo Archives, Water Sprinkler Burst at Murray-Selby Shoes London Ontario, 15 August 1954.

The news story associated on this photo on August 15th, 1945 said: "Spectators and fire trucks blocked Richmond Street at the CPR tracks yesterday afternoon when a defective water sprinkler at Murray-Selby Shoes Ltd. burst and sent hundreds of gallons of water out third story windows and down the wall to the street below. Parts of the lower floors also were flooded. Damage was not immediately known".



London Free Press, November 25, 1925. Courtesy: Cindy Hartman

The Davis Taxi Service building opened on the 23rd of November, 1925. It cost \$20,000 to build, and the architect was W.H. Hawkins. The date of construction, 1925, can still be seen at the top of the building. The main floor was used to store cars and to house the Davis Taxi Service; the top floor was used for apartments.



Esso (Supertest) Gas Station c. 1920

SuperTest (a London-based firm) is noted for having developed the full-service model of gas station: one of London, Ontario's gifts to the world. Pictured here is one of SuperTest's distinctive "Tudor-style" stations on the north-east corner of Piccadilly and Richmond (picture left). By the time of this photograph, it was run by Imperial Oil. The old gas station still exists inside the current structure. Rather than being torn down, the space inside was expanded. The two gables of the gas station can still be seen at the top of the building.



The Black Walnut Cafe currently on the site incorporates some of the original windows (pictured right) SuperTest days.



Courtesy: Western Archives, Western University; London Free Press Image Archives, September 24, 1957.

By 1957, The Village was thriving. Shoppers came "from many points in the city" to "enjoy the friendly greetings" that were "so much part of life in The Village."



Courtesy: Western Archives, Western University; London Free Press Photo Archives; London Ontario, 28 July 1959.

Most of the buildings from the early part of the 20th Century remain, however the kinds of stores in The Village have changed. Gas stations, drug stores, and diners have given way to boutiques, cafés, and hair salons.



The Richmond Village Heritage Interpretive Sign

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In partnership with the Culture Office at the City of London

London Advisory Committee on Heritage
July 11th, 2018

The Richmond Village Heritage Interpretive Sign is being developed by the Culture Office at the City of London. Our hope in bringing this Heritage Interpretive Sign project to your attention is that the Education sub-committee of LACH would be willing to look at the draft text for the sign when it is ready. Thank you for your attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions.