

Report to London Advisory Committee on Heritage

To: Chair and Members
London Advisory Committee on Heritage
From: Gregg Barrett
Director, City Planning and City Planner
Subject: Request for Designation of 75 Langarth Street East under
Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*
Meeting on: Wednesday November 11, 2020

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Planning & City Planner, with the advice of the Heritage Planner, with respect to the request for designation of the heritage listed property at 75 Langarth Street East, that the following actions **BE TAKEN**:

- a) Notice **BE GIVEN** under the provisions of Section 29(3) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O. 18, of Municipal Council's intention to designate the property to be of cultural heritage value or interest for the reasons outlined in Appendix D of this report; and,
- b) Should no appeals be received to Municipal Council's notice of intention to designate, a by-law to designate the property at 75 Langarth Street East to be of cultural heritage value or interest for the reasons outlined in Appendix D of this report **BE INTRODUCED** at a future meeting of Municipal Council immediately following the end of the appeal period.

IT BEING NOTED that should an appeal to Municipal Council's notice of intention to designate be received, the City Clerk will refer the appeal to the Conservation Review Board.

Executive Summary

The City received a request to evaluate the property at 75 Langarth Street East for designation pursuant to the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The property at 75 Langarth Street East was the childhood home and first artistic studio of Greg Curnoe (1936-1992), important London artist. The home was built in 1936 by his grandfather, William Porter, and occupied by his family until the passing of his mother, Nellie (Porter) Curnoe in 1999. The house was built in the Tudor Revival style, popular at the time but underrepresented in London's heritage designated properties

Working with the Public History Program of Western University, Lorraine Tinsley, a graduate student, completed an evaluation of the property using the criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06. Staff continued to work with the graduate student, the family of Greg Curnoe, and the current property owner on the research and evaluation of the property. The property at 75 Langarth Street is a significant cultural heritage resource that merits designation pursuant to Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Analysis

1.0 Site at a Glance

1.1 Location

The property at 75 Langarth Street East is located on the south side of Langarth Street East, just east of Edward Street (Appendix A). The property is located in Old South, but outside of the Wortley Village-Old South Heritage Conservation District.

1.2 Cultural Heritage Status

The property at 75 Langarth Street East is not presented listed or designated pursuant to the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Including a property on the *Register of Cultural Heritage Resources* is not a prerequisite to designation pursuant to Part IV or V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. However, all heritage designated properties are included on the *Register of Cultural Heritage Resources*.

1.3 Property History and Description

Gordon Charles Curnoe and Nellie (Porter) Curnoe purchased the property at 75 Langarth Street on June 9, 1936. The property was purchased from William and Rose King. No previous building or structure has been identified on the subject property prior to 1936. The property would be come home to the Curnoe family, including children Greg (1936-1992), Glen, and Lynda.

The property at 75 Langarth Street East includes a detached one-and-a-half house, with a driveway along the easterly side of the structure (Appendix B). It was built in 1936, starting on June 15, 1936, by William Porter, the father of Nellie (Porter) Curnoe.

The house is primarily clad in stucco, with some applied vinyl siding, and brick veneer cladding. The house demonstrates the Tudor Revival style, which was popular in the 1920s through the early 1940s, including: half-timbering in the stucco of the front gable, pointed bargeboard with prominent gable ends, brick buttresses at the base of the red brick projecting porch, multi-paned leaded glass windows at the front and side of the house, and oriel window at the side, and a red brick chimney.

Elements of the home's construction were specified by Nellie (Porter) Curnoe. Lorraine Tinsley describes the origins of the property's physical aspects as,

Nellie had a "romantic" vision for 75 Langarth Street, inspired, in part, by some of her father's earlier homes in the Tudor Revival style. Emulating the English cottage style and medieval influences she so admired, Nellie, with her father's help, designed the interior layout of the Langarth Street house, including her "beloved" centre hall which connected the dining room, master bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and the boys' small back bedroom. Period Revival-style fenestration included a decorative leaded quarry, an oriel window in the dining room, a pair of leaded glass windows flanking the fireplace, and Nellie's "pride and joy" – three leaded glass windows at the front of the house.

Nellie also helped design several of the home's exterior features, including half-timbering set in stucco with a decorative leaded quarry under the front gable, pointed wood bargeboard with prominent gable ends, and a projecting red-brick porch under a steeply pitched gable, with brick buttresses at the base. Lynda [Curnoe] recalls that her mother "was fond of describing it as the prettiest house on Langarth Street when people asked for directions. It stood, queen-like, on a small elevation that ran around the house making it slightly higher than surrounding houses (Tinsley, Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report 75 Langarth Street East 2020, pp.25-26; see Appendix C).

Of particular note are the fine carpentry skills and craftsmanship demonstrated in the interior of the house as well. These elements include the chestnut baseboards, fireplace mantle and built-in bookcases, bevelled glass and mirrored interior doors. As the family grew, an upstairs with two dormered bedrooms were constructed in 1949.

Importantly, Greg Curnoe's first artistic studio was established in the home at 75 Langarth Street East. A "proper art studio" was constructed in the basement in 1956. It became known as "Curnoe's Inferno." Greg Curnoe used the studio from his last year at Beal Tech to the end of his formal education at the Ontario College of Art (OCA) in 1960.

However, his childhood home continued influence Greg Curnoe's work.

Greg's strong sense of neighbourhood and family, and his love of home were often reflected in his art. As Lynda explains, "Like my father, Greg was firmly attached to his home and family, content to be immersed in humble everyday details. He seemed never to want to leave." In two 1962 paintings titled List of Names of Boys I Grew Up With, Greg prints the letters of their names on the canvas in rubber stamps: "Beside each name, he wrote in the streets where each of them lived: Emery Street, Briscoe Street, Edward Street, Wharncliffe Road, all surrounding Langarth Street." Another work, the 1961 collage, Going Home Coming Back, "reflects on Greg's continuing links with Langarth Street, consisting of bus transfers used going back and forth for supper and a warm bed" (in Tinsley 2020, p.34).

The property remained in the Curnoe family until following the death of Nellie Curnoe in 1999 (Gordon Curnoe predeceased his wife in 1985). In 2000, the property was sold to the current owners. Objects from "Curnoe's Inferno" were donated to Museum London including the studio wall panels and door, as well as an easel, desk, light fixture, coat hook, lamp, and paint box.

1.4 Related Cultural Heritage Resources

Greg Curnoe's adult home and art studio, from 1968 until his death in 1992, at 38 Weston Street was designated pursuant to Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 1993 by By-law No. L.S.P.-3197-284.

Greg Curnoe's studio from 1960-1963 was located in the building at 432 Richmond Street, which is designated pursuant to Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* as part of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District. The designation of this property as part of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District does not acknowledge this historical association.

Greg Curnoe's studio from 1960-1968 was located in the building at 202 King Street, which has since been demolished.

2.0 Request for Designation

On January 30, 2019, the City received a request to consider the designation of the property at 75 Langarth Street East. This request was included on the Agenda of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage for its meeting on February 13, 2019 when it was referred to its Stewardship Sub-Committee. The Heritage Planner initially reached out to the current property owner to provide more information on the heritage designation process.

The City of London partners with the Public History Program of Western University where graduate students complete cultural heritage evaluations of properties and present their findings to the Stewardship Sub-Committee of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage. One graduate student, Lorraine Tinsley, selected the property at 75 Langarth Street East as her research assignment. The Heritage Planner and Lorraine Tinsley completed a site visit to the property at 75 Langarth Street East on November 11, 2019 at the invitation of the property owners.

Lorraine Tinsley presented her research and evaluation to the Stewardship Sub-Committee at its meeting on November 11, 2019. Lorraine Tinsley agreed to continue her research to further support the designation of the property. The revised Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report is attached as Appendix C.

With the Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, the Heritage Planner and Lorraine Tinsley continued to consult with the property owner and continued to receive valuable input from the siblings of Greg Curnoe. Following further discussion with the property owner and refinement of the heritage attributes identified in the Statement of Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, the property owner agreed to pursue designation on October 23, 2020.

3.0 Legislative and Policy Framework

Cultural heritage resources are recognized for the value and contributions that they make to our quality of life, sense of place, and tangible link to our shared past. Cultural heritage resources are to be conserved as per the fundamental policies in the *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)*, the *Ontario Heritage Act*, *The London Plan* and the *1989 Official Plan*. It is important to recognize, protect, and celebrate our cultural heritage resources for future generations.

3.1 Provincial Policy Statement

Heritage conservation is a matter of provincial interest (Section 2.d, *Planning Act*). The *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)* promotes the wise use and management of cultural heritage resources and directs that “significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved” (Policy 2.6.1).

“Significant” is defined in the *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)* as, “resources that have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest.” Further, “processes and criteria for determine cultural heritage value or interest are established by the Province under the authority of the Ontario Heritage Act.”

Additionally, “conserved” means, “the identification, protection, management and use of built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources in a manner that ensures their cultural heritage value or interest is retained.”

3.2 Ontario Heritage Act

Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* enables municipalities to designate properties to be of cultural heritage value or interest. Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* also establishes consultation, notification, and process requirements, as well as a process to appeal the designation of a property. Appeals to the Notice of Intent to Designate a property pursuant to Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* are referred to the Conservation Review Board (CRB).^a

To determine eligibility for designation under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, properties are evaluated using the mandated criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06.

3.2.1 Ontario Regulation 9/06

The criteria of *Ontario Heritage Act* Regulation 9/06 establishes criteria for determining the cultural heritage value or interest of individual properties. These criteria are reinforced by Policy 573_ of *The London Plan*. These criteria are:

1. Physical or design value:
 - i. Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method;
 - ii. Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit; or,
 - iii. Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.
2. Historical or associative value:
 - i. Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community;
 - ii. Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture; or,
 - iii. Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.
3. Contextual value:
 - i. Is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area;
 - ii. Is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings; or,
 - iii. Is a landmark.

^a The amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* in Bill 108, which will eliminate the role of the Conservation Review Board among other changes, is anticipated to be proclaimed in the Legislature on January 1, 2021. Until that time, the current provisions of the *Ontario Heritage Act* remain in force and effect.

A property is required to meet one or more of the abovementioned criteria to merit protection under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

3.3 The London Plan

The *London Plan* is the new Official Plan for the City of London (Council adopted, approved by the Ministry with modifications, and the majority of which is in force and effect). The *London Plan* policies under appeal to the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (Appeal PL170100) and not in force and effect are indicated with an asterisk throughout this report. The *London Plan* policies under appeal are included in this report for informative purposes indicating the intent of City Council, but are not determinative for the purposes of this planning application.

The Cultural Heritage chapter of *The London Plan* recognizes that our cultural heritage resources define our City's unique identity and contribute to its continuing prosperity. It notes, "The quality and diversity of these resources are important in distinguishing London from other cities and make London a place that is more attractive for people to visit, live or invest in." Policies 572_ and 573_ of *The London Plan* enable the designation of individual properties under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, as well as the criteria by which individual properties will be evaluated.

4.0 Cultural Heritage Evaluation

4.1 Evaluation

A summary of the evaluation of the property at 75 Langarth Street East was completed using the criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06 (see Section 3.2.1, above, and Section 6 Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report in Appendix C) is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation of property at 75 Langarth Street East using the criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Cultural Heritage Value	Criteria	Evaluation
The property has design value or physical value because it,	Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method	Yes
	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	Yes
	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	No
The property has historical value or associative value because it,	Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	Yes
	Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	Yes
	Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	Yes
The property has contextual value because it,	Is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	Yes
	Is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	Yes
	Is a landmark	No

The Heritage Planner had the opportunity to review the draft Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and provide comments that have been reflected in the final Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, and Heritage Attributes identified for the property at 75 Langarth Street East. The Heritage Planner concurs with the evaluation of the property at 75 Langarth Street East as being a significant cultural heritage resource. The Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or

Interest for 75 Langarth Street East, and the identification of heritage attributes, has been included as Appendix D.

4.2 Consultation

As noted in Section 2.0, the current property owner and siblings of Greg Curnoe were instrumental in completing the research and evaluation of the property at 75 Langarth Street East. The property owner was provided a draft copy of the Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, prepared by Lorraine Tinsley, and their comments incorporated into the final Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (Appendix C) and Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and heritage attributes (Appendix D).

The Stewardship Sub-Committee was consulted at its meeting on October 28, 2020 and supported the designation of the property at 75 Langarth Street East based on the research and evaluation presented in the Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, and the prepared Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and identified heritage attributes.

In compliance with the requirements of Section 29(2), the London Advisory Committee on Heritage will be consulted at its meeting on November 11, 2020.

5.0 Conclusion

The property at 75 Langarth Street East has been evaluated using the criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06. The property has direct associations with Greg Curnoe, yields information that contributes to an understanding of the community of artists in Curnoe's circle, demonstrates and reflects the work of builder William Porter, represents the Tudor Revival architectural style popular in South London homes, demonstrates a high degree of craftsmanship of the builder, is important in defining and maintaining the historic and architectural character of the streetscape and neighbourhood, and is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings. The property at 75 Langarth Street East is a significant cultural heritage resource that merits designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Acknowledgments

This report could not have been prepared without the continued efforts of Lorraine Tinsley, graduate student of the Western University Public History Program, and Professor Michelle Hamilton for her supervision of the project.

The research and evaluation of this significant property could not have been completed without the assistance and input from Glen Curnoe and Lynda Curnoe.

And special thanks to the property owners, Mark and Barb Hamon, for their careful stewardship of this property since 2000.

Prepared and Submitted by:	Kyle Gonyou, CAHP Heritage Planner
Recommended by:	Gregg Barrett, AICP Director, City Planning and City Planner
Note: The opinions contained herein are offered by a person or persons qualified to provide expert opinion. Further detail with respect to qualifications can be obtained from City Planning and Development Services.	

November 3, 2020
KG/

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- Appendix A Property Location
- Appendix B Images
- Appendix C Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (attached separately)
- Appendix D Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest
- Appendix E Heritage Attributes

Sources

- Corporation of the City of London. n.d. Property files: (75 Langarth Street East)
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- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2020). *Provincial policy statement, 2020*. Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. (June 3, 2014). *Heritage Identification & Evaluation Process*.
- Tinsley, Lorraine. (October 24, 2020). *Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report – Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Art Studio, 75 Langarth Street East, London, Ontario, Canada*.

Appendix A – Property Location

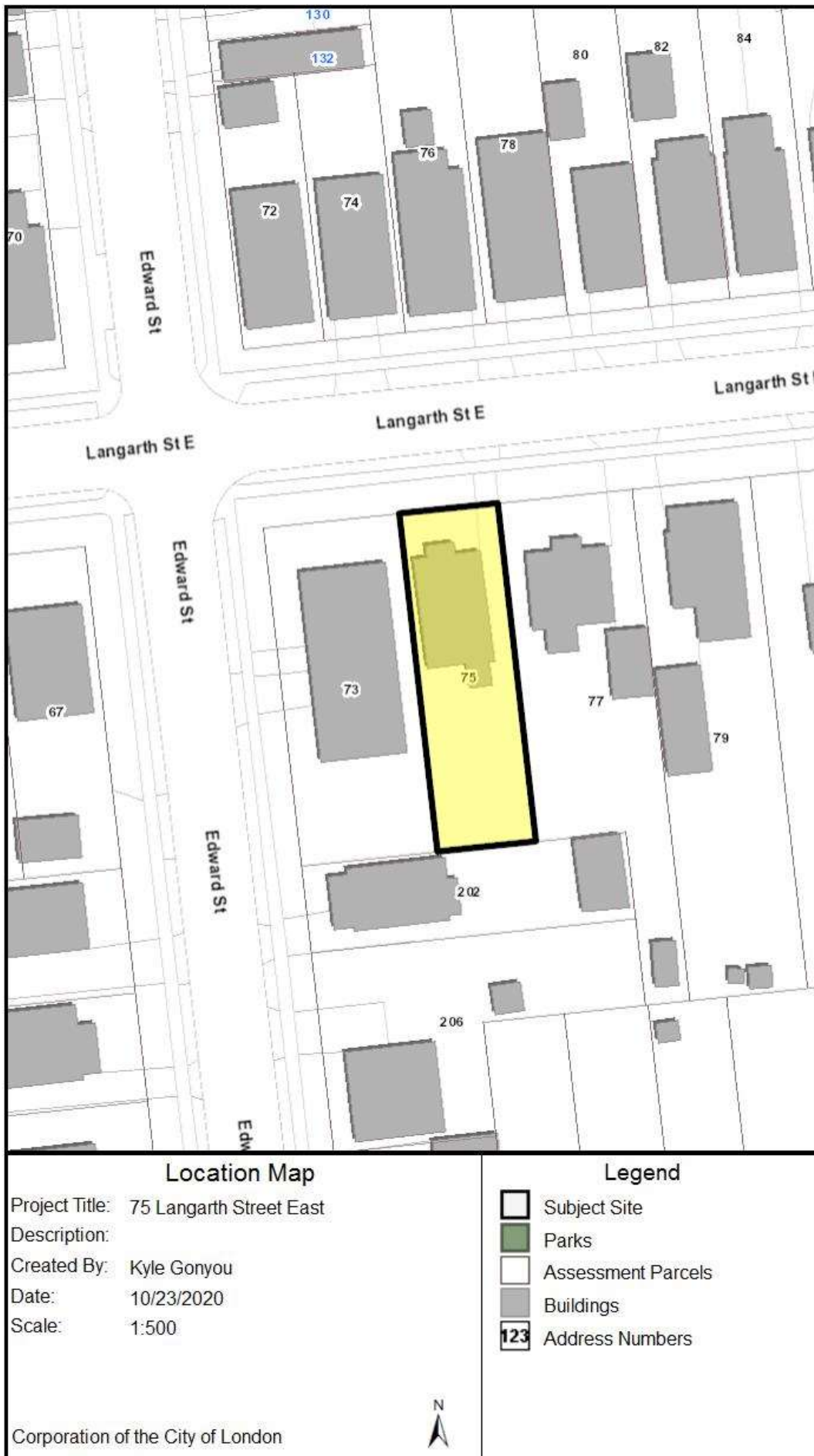


Figure 1: Location of the subject property at 75 Langarth Street East.

Appendix B – Images



Image 1: Photograph of the property at 75 Langarth Street East on October 26, 2020.



Image 2: View of the property at 75 Langarth Street East, including the front (north) and west facades.



Image 3: View of the property at 75 Langarth Street East showing the front (north) and east facades.



Image 4: Detail of the front entryway of the building at 75 Langarth Street East. Also note the leaded windows.

Appendix C – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (revised October 24, 2020) by Lorraine Tinsley, graduate student of the Western University Public History Program, attached separately

Appendix C

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Art Studio

75 Langarth Street East
London, Ontario, Canada



Lorraine Tinsley, MPA
MA Public History Candidate 2020
October 24, 2020

Cover credits:

Photo of 75 Langarth Street East by Author, December 2019;

Photo of Greg Curnoe: Don Vincent, Courtesy of McIntosh Gallery—*Greg Curnoe in his first studio in the basement of his childhood home with self-portrait Selfchildfool, 1959*. Don Vincent Photo Archive, McIntosh Gallery, Western University, London.

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Lynda Curnoe for her generous support, and for permission to reproduce photographs and images in her family's collection. I am also grateful to Glen Curnoe for permission to quote from family records and to cite unpublished research on the London homes built by William Porter and Son, and for photographs and images from his collection. Thanks are due to the current owners for their gracious welcome to 75 Langarth Street East and permission to photograph the interior and exterior of their home. I also extend my gratitude to Museum London and McIntosh Gallery for permission to use photographs and documents in their collections, and to the staff of Western Archives and the London Room for providing access to primary sources related to the history of the property, and to publications in their collections on Greg Curnoe and on London's early history. I am indebted to Kyle Gonyou and Mark Tovey for their expert guidance and for images used in this report. And I thank the members of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage for their interest in the designation of the Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Studio.

Photographs in the report are the author's own unless otherwise attributed, and were taken between November 2019 and August 2020. Photographs provided by Kyle Gonyou were taken between October 10 and November 15, 2020.

Executive Summary

This Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) provides an evaluation of the cultural heritage value and interest of the Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Art Studio at 75 Langarth Street East, in accordance with Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* – Ontario Regulation 9/06, and City of London guidelines for evaluating cultural heritage resources.

A CHER examines a property as a whole, its relationship to its surroundings, as well as its individual elements. The recommendations of the CHER are based on an understanding of the physical values of the property in comparison with similar properties, as well as documentation of its history through research, and analysis of its social context and historical associations.

This report elaborates the early development history of the property and the surrounding area; the design and construction of the Curnoe family home by builder William Porter and Son; its social context within the fabric of the neighbourhood; and its significance in Greg Curnoe's early life and artistic development. As well, the property's Historical/Associative Value, Physical/Design Values and Contextual Value, and its Heritage Attributes are described in accordance with Section 29 (1) (a) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and the passing of O. Reg 9/06, which provides for the minimum prescribed criteria to be used in such evaluations.

A property may be designated under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* if it meets one or more of the above prescribed criteria. This evaluation concludes that the property demonstrates sufficient cultural heritage value or interest to warrant protection under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, by virtue of its Historical/Associative Value as Greg Curnoe's childhood home and first art studio, and as a representative example of the residential London homes built by Curnoe's grandfather William Porter. In addition, the property's Physical/Design Values are reflected in its architecture and craftsmanship in the Tudor Revival style popular in London in the 1920s and 30s, and it holds Contextual Value in maintaining and supporting the character of the Old South London neighbourhood in which it stands today.



Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Art Studio¹
75 Langarth Street East
London, Ontario

Legal Description

Part Lot 13, Block G, Plan 392(4th), Part Lot 14, Block G, Plan 392 (4th) as in 410248, London

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060420070000000

¹ Image courtesy of Kyle Gonyou, City Planning

Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Art Studio

75 Langarth Street East, London, Ontario

1. Introduction

The property is a one-and-a-half storey, gable-roofed residential house built for Gordon and Nellie (Porter) Curnoe in 1936 by William Porter and Son, builder of London homes. It is situated on the south side of Langarth Street East between Edward Street and Cathcart Street, in the neighbourhood now known as Old South London². The property, which stands today largely unaltered but under new ownership since 2000, holds unique historical significance as the childhood home and first art studio of renowned London artist Greg Curnoe (1936-1992). Constructed between June 15 and September 1, 1936³ by Greg's grandfather William Porter, both the interior, as well as many exterior details were designed by Greg's mother Nellie in the Tudor Revival style popular in South London at the time. It is a representative example of the substantial corps of residential homes designed and built by William Porter between 1917 and 1953.

The story of the Curnoe family home, and of its importance in Greg Curnoe's early life and artistic development, is told in detail in the 2001 memoir *My Brother Greg: A Memoir* by Lynda Curnoe, Greg's younger sister. Lynda also records her memories of growing up on Langarth Street in the 1950s and 60s with brothers Greg and Glen, in a close-knit extended family, many of whom lived in the same neighbourhood, some on the same street. In particular, Lynda describes her English-born grandfather William Porter, a cabinet maker by trade, who not only built the Curnoe family home, but whose construction firm William Porter and Son also built at least 33 houses in London, including several for family members in the neighbourhood surrounding 75 Langarth Street East.

This report incorporates observations and reflections on the history and significance of the Curnoe family home from Lynda's memoir, as well as photographs and images that she has generously shared of her brother Greg, and of some of his paintings and sketches. The author also refers to Judith Rodger's authoritative study of Curnoe's art, *Greg Curnoe: Life and Work* (2016). The report also draws upon Glen Curnoe's unpublished research on the homes built by William Porter and Son, which he has generously shared with the author, along with excerpts from his father's house diary. The diary is an invaluable first-hand account of the transformation of an empty lot on Langarth Street, purchased for \$205 in 1936 by Greg's parents Gordon and Nellie, into the family home that stands today. In her memoir, Lynda elaborates:

The total cost of the house had been \$3,500.00, which included a garage at the rear. It was modelled on the cozy English style, popular in South London at that time, featuring a half-

² Old South London is the area south of the Thames River bound by Horton Street East, Wharncliffe Road South, Wellington Road, and Commissioners Road East.

³ Thanks to Glen Curnoe for providing an entry in his father Gordon Curnoe's house diary that reads: "House Started June 15, 1936" "Finished September 1, 1936." Email correspondence dated November 17, 2019.

timbered look on the front. My parents would have liked a brick house but they could not afford it. Instead they built a stucco bungalow enhanced by an elegant, red brick entrance whose sides swooped down and out, from a steeply pitched roof. Mother's pride and joy were the three leaded glass front windows, which meant more to her than bricks. The stucco was painted shades of blue and then green throughout the years. Mother was fond of describing it as the prettiest house on Langarth Street when people asked for directions.⁴

The sections that follow outline the early development history of Langarth Street and the surrounding area, the London homes built by William Porter and Son, the design and construction of Curnoe family home, and its significance in the early life and artistic development of artist Greg Curnoe.

2. Early Development History of Langarth Street: 1880–1936

One of the most important sources on the pre-European settlement history of Westminster Township, now South London, comes from Greg Curnoe himself. At the time of his death in 1992, Greg had been researching the history of his house at 38 Weston Street, a former printing plant and factory. His exploration of the stories of European working-class settler families who had cleared and farmed land in the area led him to question how it had become possible in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to 'own' land that had for thousands of years been First Nations corn fields and hunting grounds? Greg's extensive and authoritative research into the histories and biographies of the First Nations people who populated the Great Lakes area between 1700–1850, and the story of his Weston Street home in South London, were published posthumously as *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot*.⁵ Editor Frank Davey writes:

In *Deeds/Abstracts* one of his main goals had been to challenge the Canadian sense of history that sees important Canadian events beginning with white settlement, and which traces land ownership only back to European possession. He felt strongly that as a white individual he had benefited directly from the injustices First Nations people had suffered ... His own good fortune in being able to become a painter, writer, and landowner in London had been partly founded, he believed, on earlier exploitation and repression of First Nations voices and records.

... Another of his goals had been to counter what he saw as London's dismissing of its working-class history. The historic buildings that the city sought to preserve or remember, he would often complain, were almost always the elaborate houses of the wealthy and the churches and public buildings of official life. The small unpretentious buildings on a street like Weston, built by farmers, small tradesmen, and workers, were rarely awarded the city's blue historic plaque. Ironically, less than a year after his death, the City of London designated 38 Weston Street as a building that had been made 'historic' both by its industrial history and Curnoe's own work there, and in a formal ceremony attended by about a hundred people placed a blue plaque there.⁶

In the course of his research on European settlement in the vicinity of Weston Street, Greg had not focused specifically on his childhood neighbourhood around Langarth Street, lying west of Weston Street in what is now known as Old South London. Archival records and studies held in Western Archives and the London Room reveal a lively picture of the 19th-century European-Canadian

⁴ Lynda Curnoe, *My Brother Greg: A Memoir* (London: Ergo Productions, 2001), 21.

⁵ Greg Curnoe, Editor's Note, *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot* (London: Brick Books, 1995), 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16-17. See also Section 6.1—Designation of 38 Weston Street in this report.

settlement of this area, then known variously as London South, Askin Village or New Brighton, illustrating how highly-valued properties south of the Thames were conveyed among the elite of London society from the mid to late-1800s. Langarth Street was part of one such estate, known as Woodside, laid out in a land survey by prominent lawyer Charles Hutchinson in 1880.

The portion of Langarth Street running between Wharncliffe Road and Wortley Road (now called Langarth Street East) lies three blocks south of, and parallel to Duchess Avenue—which forms the southern boundary of the Wortley Village Heritage Conservation District. As the *Wortley Village Heritage Conservation District Study* (2011) relates:

... Park lots were laid out in the vicinities of Wharncliffe and Wortley Roads as early as 1824. In that year Mahlon Burwell was directed by acting land commissioner Thomas Talbot to survey the “Wharncliffe Highway” through the northern part of Westminster Township, as a means of linking the anticipated District Town of London and already settled lands north of the Thames with the Commissioners Road to the south. The fertile land just south of London soon became the property of members of a privileged class; many of these property owners were government officials who were given land grants for moving from the former District Town of Vittoria. As a result, by the 1850s a number of grand country estates dotted what is now the South London landscape. By and large the owners of these estates were also entrepreneurs, so that even before 1850 some of the larger tracts of land had been subdivided into smaller lots. A “Bird’s Eye View” of London drawn in 1872 shows a definable suburban community stretched out along parts of Wortley Road and some adjoining streets. When a post office was established there in 1876, the postmaster christened the new community “Askin” after the Clerk of the Peace for the London District, [John B. Askin] who owned a large estate west of Wortley Road.⁷

One large estate in Westminster Township belonged to Justice John Wilson, a leading London citizen and prominent legal mind. Known as “Honest John Wilson” (1809-1869), he originally hailed from Scotland, and was called to the bar in 1835. He and his wife Elizabeth raised eight children in London where Wilson held a succession of offices and was elected to the Legislative Assembly, first as a Conservative and later as a Reformer. Known as a “large-hearted” able lawyer, Wilson was made a Queen’s Counsel in 1856 and a judge in 1863. Although he moved to Toronto he kept his home in Westminster Township and died there on June 3, 1869.⁸

As recounted in the *Wortley Village Heritage Conservation District Study*, Wilson acquired 15 ½ acres of Lot 5 (formerly held by Burwell) between Wharncliffe Road South and Wortley Road in 1838, a holding that he expanded during subsequent years to the

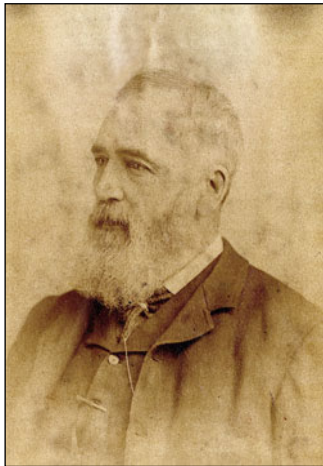


Justice John Wilson 1854⁸

⁷ City of London, *Wortley Village Heritage Conservation District: Final Draft Study Report | November 2011* (London: City of London, 2011), 12. See also Daniel J. Brock, “Wortley Cottage: The Biography of a South London Residence” (1973) which records that both Askin’s and Wilson’s estates were acquired from the sale of Burwell’s holdings of Lots 5 and 6 in the late 1830s.

⁸ “John Wilson (1809-1869),” in *100 Fascinating Londoners*, ed. Michael Baker and Hilary Bates Neary (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2005). Photograph of Justice John Wilson by John Cooper, London Room Photograph Archives - PG E115, Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library, London, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from <http://images.ourontario.ca/london/75120/data>.

north, east and south. Following Wilson's death, his estate was acquired by William Bayley who subdivided the western section into 34 lots along both sides of a new road he named Victor Street. This began a pattern of subdivision of such large wealthy estates into smaller lots to attract aspiring homeowners wishing to move south of the Thames River to what the *London Free Press* on 3 June 1872 was touting as "delightfully situated" and "a highly respectable neighbourhood."⁹



Charles Hutchinson¹⁰

One such entrepreneurial landowner was London lawyer Charles Hutchinson, born in 1826 in Newcastle, England, who is perhaps best remembered for his activity as Crown Attorney in the trials of the "Black Donnellys."¹⁰ Hutchinson holds a place in *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self Made Men* (1880), which along with a glowing account of his legal career following his arrival in London in 1846, describes him as "a member of the Church of England, and a man whose integrity and general uprightness of character are unquestioned."¹¹ An entry in *Pioneer Days in London* portrays Hutchinson as a would-be farmer whose short-lived agricultural experience in London "showed that farming would be neither as pleasant nor as profitable as he expected; so he turned to the law; studied with Mr. Becher; was called to the bar in 1852. In 1858, on the creation of the office of Crown Attorney, he was appointed to the position for Middlesex, and performed his duties thereafter for many year [sic] to the satisfaction of those who had dealings with the Court – except possibly the criminal classes."¹²

A contemporary of Justice John Wilson, Hutchinson acquired part of Wilson's estate in 1880 with the express purpose of development, as announced in the *London Free Press* on March 5, 1880:

LAND PURCHASE – Mr Charles Hutchinson has purchased one hundred acres of the old Judge Wilson estate in Westminster, from Mr T Hayden for \$10,000. He intends dividing it into lots.¹³

It is in Hutchinson's 1880 land survey of his new estate, entitled: *Plan of Woodside Survey, London South, Property of Charles Hutchinson Esq^e* that Langarth Street is first laid out. Harriet Priddis notes in *The Naming of London Streets* (1909) that Langarth Street, along with Briscoe

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Charles Hutchinson (Crown Attorney), Unknown, Western Archives, Western University, RC50. Retrieved from <https://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/donnellys/characters/justiceofficials/3027en.html>.

¹¹ "Charles Hutchinson," in *The Canadian Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self Made Men, Ontario, Volume 1. Ontario 1880* (Toronto: Toronto American Biographical Pub. Co., 1880), 410. The entry also notes that in 1869, on the death of Clerk of the Peace John B. Askin, Hutchinson was appointed to that office. Askin, one of the early settlers in London had held the office for half a century. Wortley Village was sometimes referred to as Askin Village. Hutchinson was married twice, first for three years to Mary Street who died in 1861; their two children died shortly afterwards. Hutchinson remarried in 1866 and had five more children with his second wife Annie Johnson. It is most likely Annie who is listed as Mrs. C. Hutchinson in the 1885 Assessment Roll (Fig. 4.)

¹² Cl. T. Campbell, M.D., *Pioneer Days in London* (London: Advertiser Job Printing Company, 1921), 79-80.

¹³ *London Free Press*, March 5, 1880, p. 4, col. 4. In today's currency \$10,000 is the equivalent of approximately \$343,000 (<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1880?amount=10000>). Image source: Charles Hutchinson (Crown Attorney), Unknown, Western Archives, Western University, RC50. Retrieved from <https://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/donnellys/characters/justiceofficials/3027en.html>.

Street and Wreay Street, “were named by ... Charles Hutchinson, County Crown Attorney, after estates occupied by the Hutchinson family in Cumberland County, England.”¹⁴

The 1880 plan (Fig. 1) of Hutchinson’s new estate shows Langarth Street running east-west between “Wharncliff [sic] Highway” and Wortley Road. Two additional plans for the Hutchinson estate in 1880 and 1881 (Figs. 2 & 3) extend the survey all the way east to Wortley Road. Most of the street names shown in the plans have not been altered since that time, although “Wharncliff Highway” is now known as Wharncliffe Road South. The exception is Wreay Street, one block south of Langarth, which by 1922 was known as Emery Street, and formed the southern boundary between the City of London and Westminster Township. Today Langarth Street West extends west of Wharncliffe Road South, while Langarth Street East extends from Wharncliffe Road South to Wortley Road as in the original 1880/81 plans.

The 1881 plan (Fig. 3) is signed on May 18 by both the surveyor and proprietor, and Hutchinson writes in the margin:

The undersigned being the proprietor of the lands surveyed into lots according to this plan, hereby reserves to himself the right to keep the following portions of Edward and Wreay Streets unopened and as strictly private property, notwithstanding the registration of this plan, namely all Edward Street south of Langarth Street, and all Wreay Street west of Cathcart Street + lot A[?].

London Ont May 18' 1881

Charles Hutchinson Proprietor

¹⁴ Harriet Priddis, *The Naming of London Streets* (London: Harriet Priddis, Book Farm, 1909).

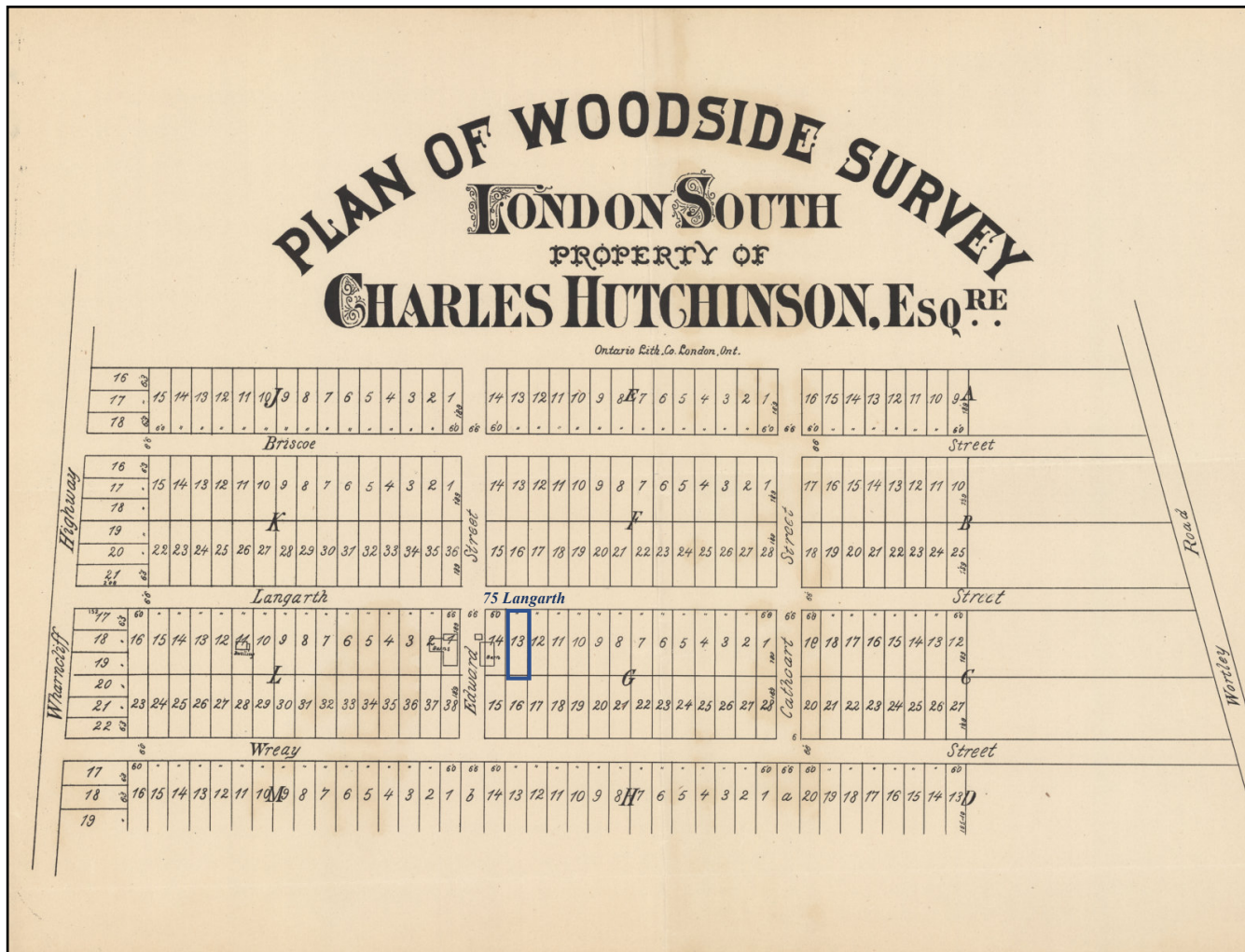


Fig. 1—Plan of Woodside Survey, London South, 1880¹⁵
(Site of future 75 Langarth Street shown in blue)

¹⁵ Western Archives, Western University, *Plan of Woodside Survey, London South, Property of Charles Hutchinson, Esq're.*, bounded by Wharncliffe Highway and Wortley Road. Ontario Lithography Company, 1880. Retrieved from <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/mdc-London-maps/24/>. Interestingly the area is already being referred to in the document as 'London South', although it was at the time part of Westminster Township, and would not be annexed to the City of London until 1890. Future site of 75 Langarth Street in blue.

R.P. 385 (4TH)

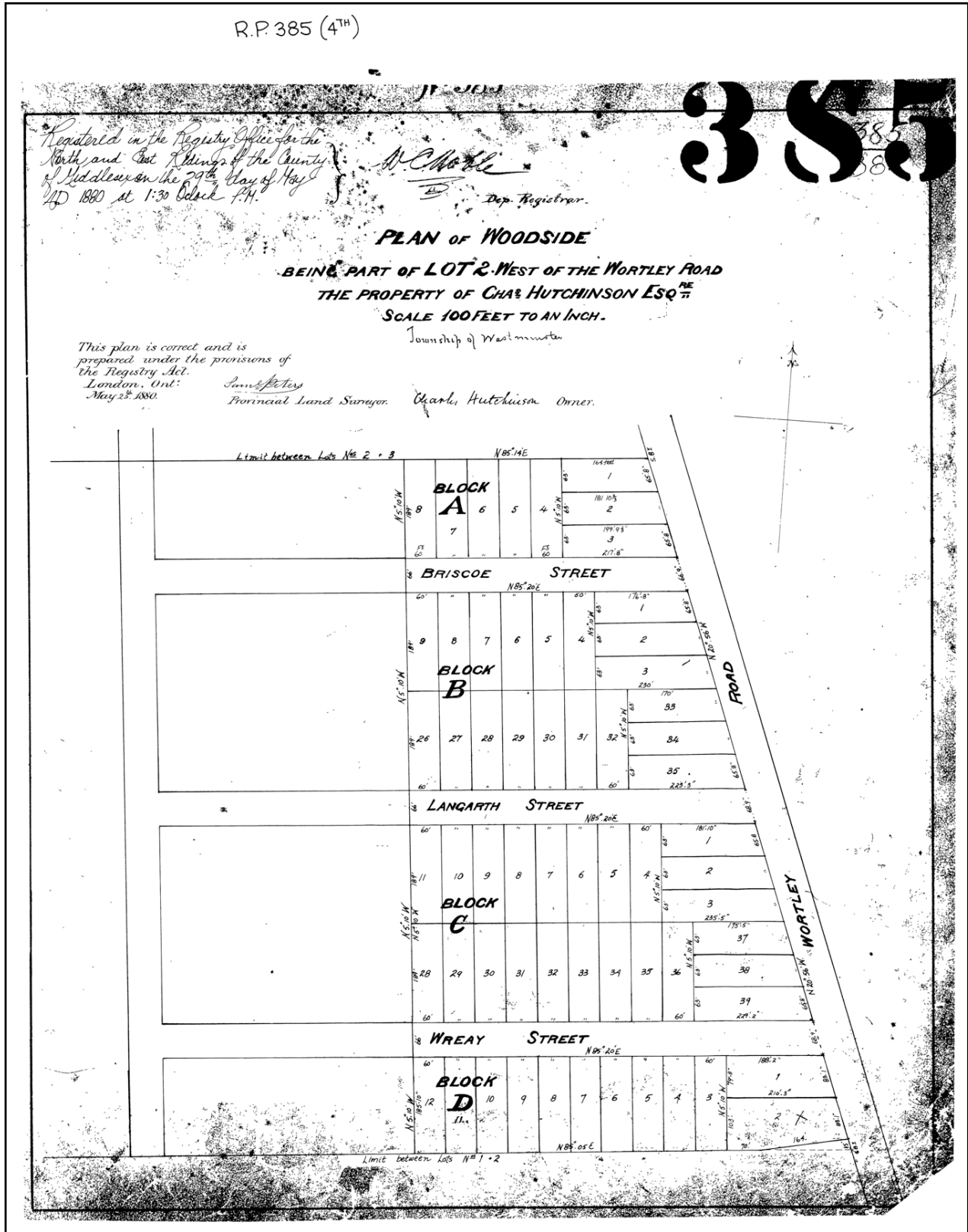


Fig. 2—1880 Plan of Woodside¹⁶

¹⁶ Land Registry Office, RP 385 (4th), *Plan of Woodside Being Part of Lot 2 West of the Wortley Road The Property of Chas. Hutchinson Esq^{re}*, dated May 29, 1880.

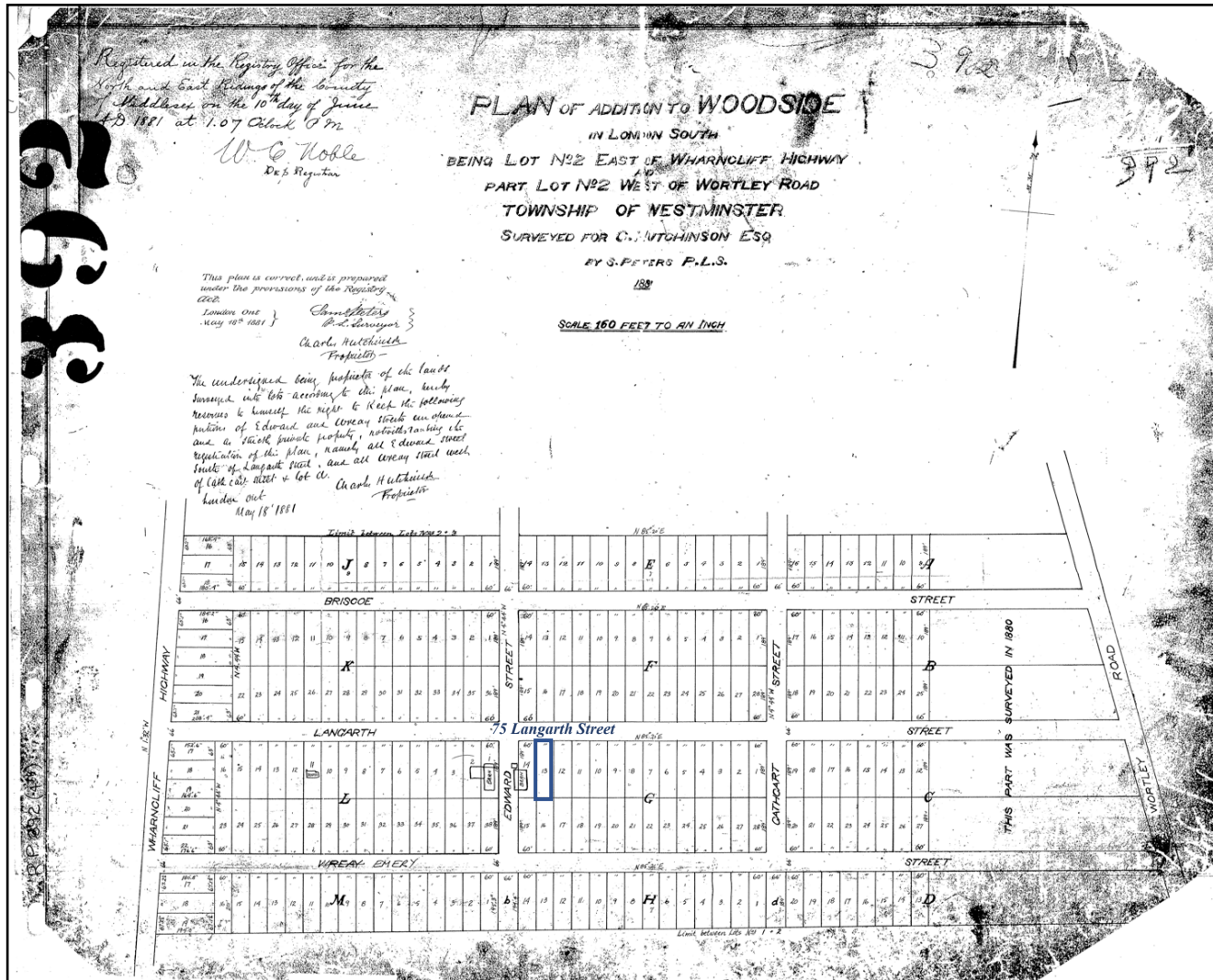


Fig. 3—1881 Plan of Addition to Woodside¹⁷
(Future site of 75 Langarth Street shown in blue)

¹⁷ Land Registry Office, RP 392 (4th), *Plan of Addition to Woodside in London South Being Lot No 2 East of Wharncliffe Highway Part Lot No 2 West of Wortley Road Township of Westminster*, dated May 18, 1881. Future site of 75 Langarth Street in blue.

The 1885 Assessment Roll for the Township of Westminster delineates the properties owned by Charles Hutchinson and indicates certain of the lots under the ownership of his wife Mrs. C. Hutchinson.

Names and Descriptions of Persons Assessed											Description and Value of Real Property											Personal Property											Statistics										
No.	Name of Occupant or Other Taxable Party	P.O. Address	Occupation	Age of Person	Owner and Address	Lot Number	Acres	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property	Value of Real Property	Value of Personal Property														
1135	David Patrick				Hutchinson by	2	1/2	15-16			200																																
1139	Wm. L. Sharp				"	"	"	1-2			400																																
1140	Arthur Loman				"	"	"	1-2			200																																
1142	H. F. Justice				"	"	"	11-12-13-14			400																																
1143	Elizabeth Darby				"	"	"	24-25			200																																
1144	M. L. Justice				"	"	"	1-2-3			300																																
1145	Charles Loman				"	"	"	1-2			100																																
1146	Wm. Patrick				"	"	"	1-2			100																																
1141	Wm. Loman				"	"	"	3-4			300																																
1147	Mrs. C. Hutchinson				"	"	"	5-9-10-11-12-13			500																																
1145	Charles Hutchinson				"	"	"	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10			3500																																
1149	Wm. Hildebrand von Buschhoff				"	"	"	1-2			300																																
1150	Wm. L. Justice				"	"	"	1-2-3			400																																
1151	John Ferguson				"	"	"	31			200																																
1153	Wm. L. Justice				"	"	"	1-2			500																																
1154	Wm. L. Justice				"	"	"	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12			7500																																
1155	Wm. L. Justice				"	"	"	31-32-33-34-35			300																																
1156	Wm. L. Justice				"	"	"	1-2-3			400																																
					"	"	"	1-2			200																																

Fig. 4—1885 Assessment Roll for Township of Westminster¹⁸

1147	Mrs. C. Hutchinson				"	"	"	5-9-10-11-12-13			500																				
1145	Charles Hutchinson				"	"	"	1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10			3500																				

Fig. 4—Close-up of Hutchinson entry in 1885 Assessment Roll.
(Note entry for Mrs. C. Hutchinson preceding that of Charles Hutchinson.)

¹⁸ Western Archives, Western University, Assessment Roll for Township of Westminster 1885, ASSESSMENT ROLLS 1885 FOR London [microform].

In the years after 1880, the new suburban neighbourhood around Briscoe, Langarth and Wreay Streets, running east-west between Edward and Cathcart Streets and Wortley Road, grew slowly and, in a pattern similar to nearby Wortley Village, featured the construction of many single-storey houses in the traditional symmetrical form of the Ontario Cottage.¹⁹ On Langarth Street East, five properties, dating from c. 1883 to 1914, are listed on the City of London Register of Cultural Heritage Resources, three of which are described as Ontario Cottages. See Figures 7 and 8.

The residential development of Langarth Street and the surrounding blocks to the south gathered pace only after WWI, although building in the area would not reach its current level of intensification until after WWII. The Fire Insurance Plan for 1912 Rev. 1915, for example, shows the stretch of Langarth Street both east and west of Edward Street still largely undeveloped, with the exception of two houses: one at 73 Langarth Street East²⁰ (c. 1886 Ontario Cottage listed on the Register of Cultural Heritage Resources) and the other on the northwest corner of Langarth and Edward Streets, as shown in Figure 5.

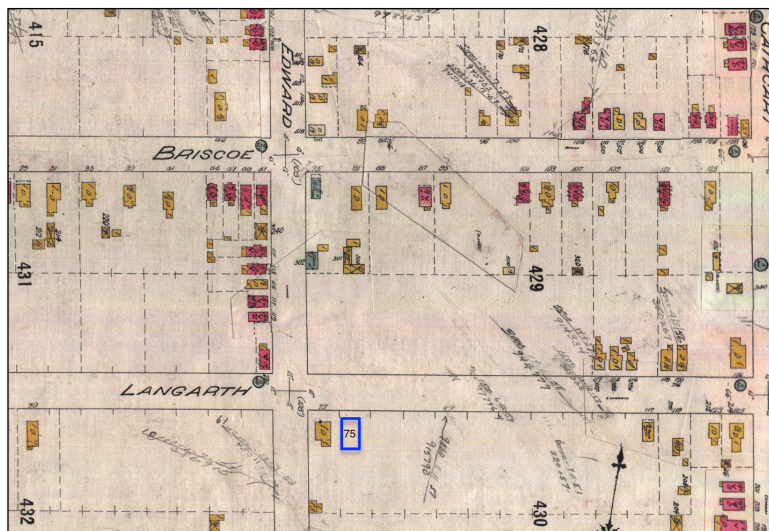


Fig. 5—1912 Rev. 1915 Fire Insurance Plan of the City of London²¹
(Future site of 75 Langarth Street in blue)

¹⁹ The style known as Ontario Cottage consists of "one to one-and-a-half storey buildings with a cottage or hip roof. The cottage roof is an equal hip roof where each hip extends to a point in the centre of the roof. The hip roof has a long hip in the centre. The Ontario Cottage is the vernacular design of the Regency Cottage which generally has a more ornate doorway and a partial or full verandah surrounding it. The roof can have a dormer, a belvedere and generally two chimneys." Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof: Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada* (1964) at <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/cottage.htm#ontariocottage>. In London, an Ontario Cottage is characterized by a centre doorway with a peak. See Museum London's catalogue for the 2000 exhibit *The Ontario Cottage: Perfect of Its Kind* which adds that Ontario Cottages are typified by a door placed squarely in the centre and a window placed on either side of the doorway for a three-bay cottage. Five and seven-bay cottages are less common variations. LRAHM, *The Ontario Cottage: Perfect of Its Kind* (London: LRAHM, 2000).

²⁰ Glen Curnoe's research suggests that the house at 73 Langarth, which stands directly west of the Curnoe family home, was built after 1870. It was originally frame with a centre plan, covered in insulbrick, with cedar roof shingles. (Email correspondence dated Nov 17, 2019.) MPAC records indicate a building date of 1892; further research is needed to accurately determine the date of construction. He adds that several houses existed on Langarth Street prior to 1890: Nos. 13, 126, 127, 173, 174, 183, 187, 191 and 199. Email correspondence dated November 19, 2019.

²¹ Western Archives, Western University, Ontario Fire Insurance Plan Collection, London Fire Insurance Plan 1912 Rev. 1915, Sheet 45. Retrieved from https://www.lib.uwo.ca/madgic/projects/fips/london_fip_1915/index.html.

Fig. 6—Langarth Street East Properties Listed on City of London Register of Cultural Heritage Resources
Force and Effect Date of Register: 26 March 2007²²

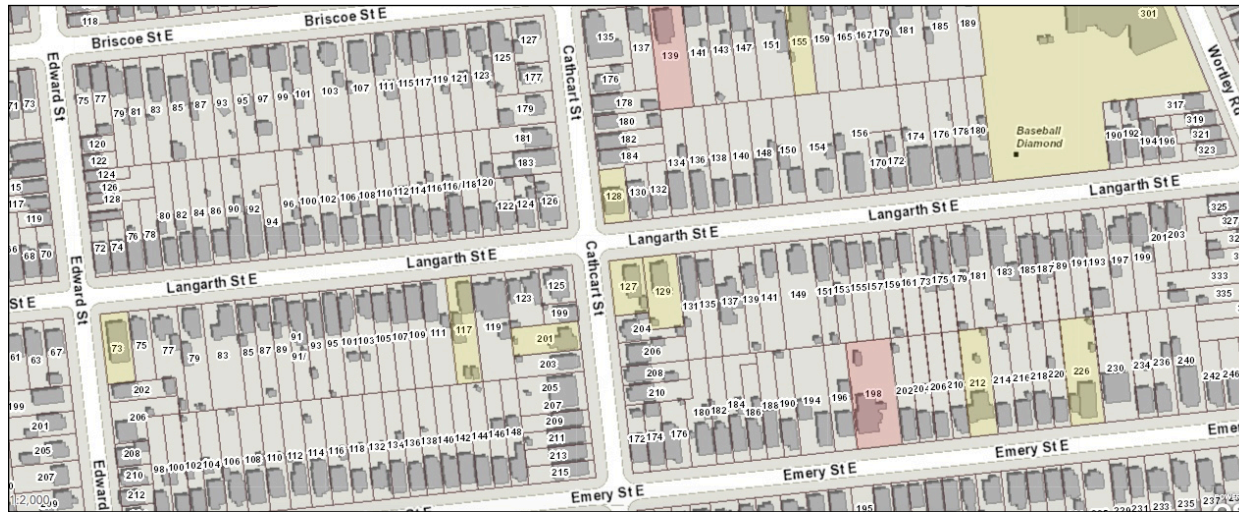


Fig. 7—City of London Register of Heritage Resources—Map of Heritage Sites¹⁹

²² City of London, *Register of Cultural Heritage Resources*, Last updated: Jul 2, 2019 at <https://www.london.ca/About-London/heritage/Documents/Register/Register-2019-AODA.pdf>. Citymap excerpt from <https://london.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5d2e70c3d82c427ebd44b75169f6c91d>. Images by author except 117 Langarth Street East ©2020 Google.



Current view of 75 (left) and 73 Langarth Street East (right)

The following year's Assessment Roll for 1916 shows a number of vacant lots on Langarth Street (including what would become 75 Langarth Street) having changed hands and now under the ownership of James B. McKillop, another prominent London lawyer and one-time Deputy Crown Attorney for Middlesex. The next Assessment Roll (1927) to which we have access shows the future site of 75 Langarth Street as a vacant lot (V.L.) under the ownership of William King, who resided with his wife Rose at 202 Edward Street around the corner from 75 Langarth Street. Gordon Curnoe would purchase the lot from William King on June 9, 1936 for \$205.²³

SOUTH LANGARTH STREET			
WHARNCLEIFE ROAD—			
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. Miss Van Brockdorf.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. John Wilson.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. John Wilson.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. John Wilson.....	120'x189'	5	600 200
35 John Wilson.....	80'x189'	5	400 350
39 Edward Miles.....	40'x189'	5	200
V.L. Cora H. Young.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. Harrietta L. Wilson.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. William McDonald.....	60'x189'	5	300
V.L. William McDonald.....	60'x189'	7	420
EDWARD STREET—			
73 James B. McKillop.....	120'x189'	7	840 110
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	3	180
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	4	240
V.L. James B. McKillop.....	60'x189'	5	300 1100
117 Stanley M. Fenwick.....	60'x189'	5	300 400

Fig. 8—Assessment Roll of the City of London for 1916²⁴

²³ This information courtesy of Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence: November 17, 2019.

²⁴ Western Archives, Western University, Assessment Roll of the City of London for 1916, ASSESSMENT ROLLS 1916 FOR London [microform].

36	L. Hesch.....	30'x189'	8	480	.....
V.L.	J. Wilson.....	60'x189'	8	480	820
35	J. Wilson.....	60'x189'	8	480	2720
37	Annie E. Purdy.....	60'x189'	8	480	1060
39	D. Collister.....	80'x189'	8	640	2180
43	Louisa and A. J. Beadle.....	40'x189'	8	320	.....
V.L.	J. T. Reeves.....	30'x189'	8	240	.....
47	Chas. E. Perkins.....	30'x189'	8	240	1460
V.L.	S. E. Wood.....	60'x189'	8	480	.....
53	Thelma and C. L. Palmer...	27'x189'	8	215	2285
P.L.	Thelma and C. L. Palmer...	3'x189'	8	25	.....
P.L.	J. A. Liberty.....	3'x189'	8	25	.....
55	J. A. Liberty.....	27'x189'	8	215	2035
V.L.	Wm. McDonald.....	60'x119'	7	420	.....
V.L.	Wm. McDonald.....	60'x119'	7	420	.....
V.L.	Wm. McDonald.....	60'x119'	9	540	.....
W. EDWARD ST.—					
E. EDWARD ST.—					
73	Mary A. and N. Beaumont	50'x125'	10	500	1500
V.L.	Wm. King.....	70'x125'	8	560	.....
V.L.	C. L. Vincent.....	60'x189'	10	600	.....
83	J. Leonard.....	60'x189'	10	600	2600
85	Lila and R. E. Dewar.....	30'x189'	10	300	1700
87	London Housing Comm.....	30'x189'	10	300	2500
89	Sarah A. and E. J. Castle...	30'x189'	10	300	2700
91	R. Hale.....	30'x189'	10	300	2800
93	I. Astles.....	30'x189'	10	300	1950

Fig. 9—Assessment Roll of the City of London for 1927²⁵

A gradual intensification of the neighbourhood took place during the post-WWI building boom. The Fire Insurance Plan for 1912 Rev. 1922 shows a number of new houses along the south side of Langarth Street, east towards Cathcart Street and west of Edward Street towards Wharncliffe Road South, as well as on Edward Street south towards Wreay Street (by this point known as Emery Street.)

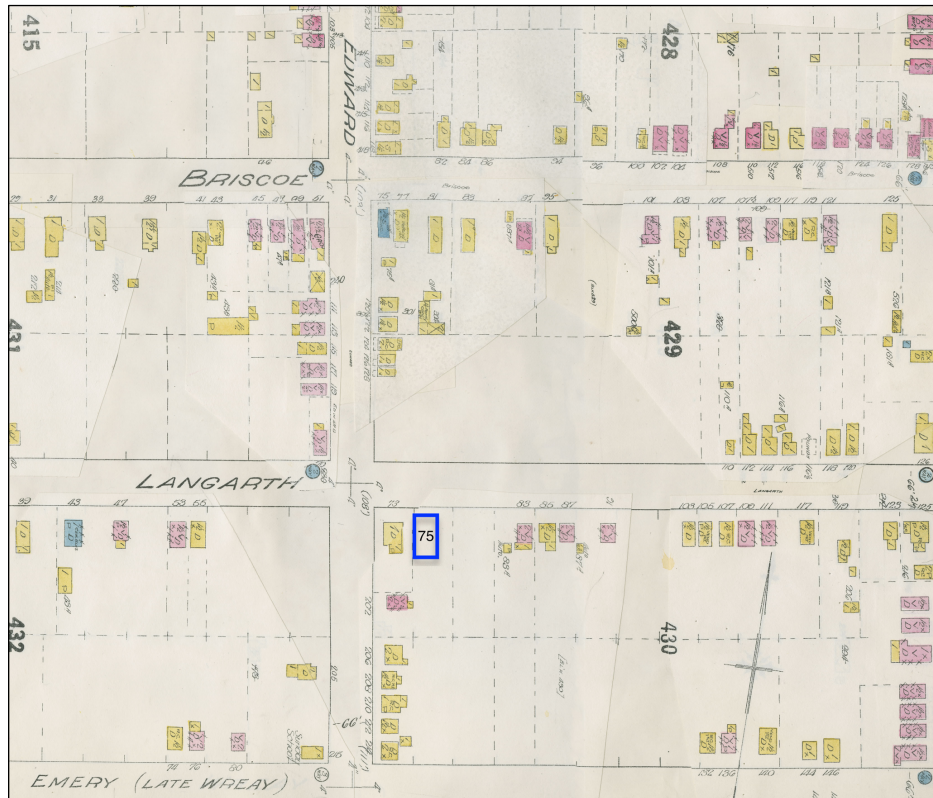


Fig. 10—1912 Rev. 1922 Fire Insurance Plan of the City of London²⁶
(Future site of 75 Langarth Street in blue)

²⁵ Western Archives, Western University, Assessment Roll of the City of London for 1927, ASSESSMENT ROLLS 1927 FOR London [microform].

²⁶ Western Archives, Western University, Ontario Fire Insurance Plan Collection, London Fire Insurance Plan 1912 Rev. 1922, Sheet 45. Retrieved from https://www.lib.uwo.ca/madgc/projects/fips/london_fip_1922/index.html.

In 1922, a series of aerial photographs was taken of London as part of an experimental new approach to topographical surveying in Canada. This 1922 aerial photograph of the neighbourhood can be compared with the Fire Insurance Plan of the same year, above:



Fig. 11—Aerial Survey, London 1922²⁷

²⁷ Western Archives, Western University, Aerial Photography Collection, Dept. of Lands and Forests, Aerial Photograph, London 1922, Line Number: R4, Photo Number: 73, Date: Spring-Summer, 1922. Retrieved from https://www.lib.uwo.ca/madgic/google_index_1922.

By 1929, six brick bungalows had been built on the north side of the street, directly facing the future site of 75 Langarth Street, along with several new houses on both the north and south sides of Langarth Street west of Edward Street. When the Curnoe family began construction of their home, the view of their neighbours' houses across the street would have looked very much like that shown in the photograph below.

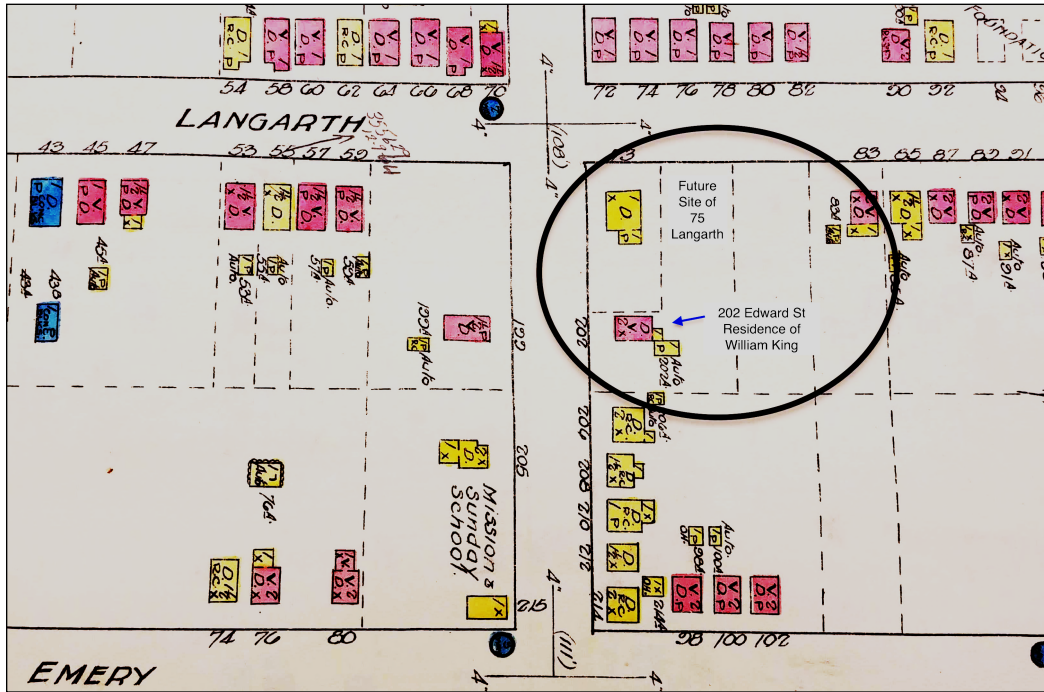


Fig. 12—1915 Rev. 1929 Fire Insurance Plan of the City of London²⁸
(Future site of 75 Langarth Street in ellipse)



View north across from 75 Langarth Street East
(l.r., 72, 74, 76 and 78 Langarth Street East built in 1925)

²⁸ Western Archives, Western University, Ontario Fire Insurance Plan Collection, London Fire Insurance Plan 1912 Rev. 1929, Sheet 43.

3. William Porter and Son—Builder of London Homes

The Curnoe family home was built by Greg Curnoe’s grandfather William Porter, a carpenter and joiner by trade, whose construction company, William Porter and Son, was responsible for building at least 33 residential homes, as well as several shopfronts in North and South London.²⁹

Born in London, England, William G. Porter (1877–1956) married Grace Peak in 1898, and they emigrated to Canada in 1907 with their two children, Grace and Reginald, settling in London, Ontario. Two more children were born in London: Stanley, at 39 Langarth Street and Nellie, Greg Curnoe’s mother, in Westminster Township. Grace Peak’s entire family also emigrated from England at the same time as the Porters, settling together in the neighbourhood near Wharncliffe Road South and Manor Park. Lynda recalls that the Porter family spent their first night in London in 1907 at the little house at 128 Langarth Street East, now listed on the Register of Cultural Heritage Resources. (See Fig. 6.)³⁰



Grace Peak and William Porter with children (l to r) Stanley, Reginald and Grace—1908
Photo taken at 39 Langarth Street facing south toward empty lots on Emery Street³¹

²⁹ Information on William Porter and Son homes, and on William Porter and his family from W. Glen Curnoe, “Houses and Buildings Attributed to William G. Porter and William Porter and Son,” Unpublished Research Study, June 2008, courtesy of Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated November 19, 20, December 3, 2019, August 17-28, 2020. Further study of the Porter and Curnoe families from Lynda Curnoe’s *Memoir*, as noted. See also Appendix I: William Porter and Son—London Houses: 1917–1953.

³⁰ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 32.

³¹ Photo courtesy of Glen Curnoe from his collection. Glen notes that 39 Langarth Street was one of several houses that the Porters rented in Glendale and London prior to building their family home. Email correspondence dated August 17, 2020.

William had trained in England as a carpenter and joiner, working on house construction and in fine carpentry and cabinet-making— finishing wood-lined cabins on passenger ships in the docklands of East London.³² After settling in London, Ontario he is listed as a carpenter in the London City Directories from 1907–1927, and then as a builder in the 1928 Directory. The following year, 1929, William and his son Reginald’s construction company, William Porter and Son, appears for the first time in the Directory. It is last listed in the 1942 Directory shortly before going out of business.³³

In her memoir *They were such Happy Days*, William’s daughter Grace Porter described her father as she remembered him in England:



My dad was a carpenter. I remember so well his well-made straw bag. It was a big circle folded in half with a handle on each half. He carried it full of tools to and from his various places of work. He attached it in some way to his bike and away he went. Although he was a young man, I remember that he came home very tired at night. I am sure it must have been a hard, tiring way to make a living because everything was done by hand, like making the windows and doors for the houses and making the trim for them as well. He might have had to ride his bike some miles back and forth from home and I can understand now his discontent at the way of life there and his reasons for wanting to make a change.³⁴

William Porter on right with two workers c. 1940s-50s³⁴



William & Grace Porter c.1940s–50s³⁴



Porter brothers Albert & William c.1940s–50s³⁴

³² Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 34.

³³ W. Glen Curnoe, “Houses and Buildings Attributed to William G. Porter and William Porter and Son,” Unpublished Research Study, June 2008, Email correspondence dated December 4, 2019 and August 19, 20, 2020.

³⁴ Grace Porter, *They Were Such Happy Days: A Memoir*, Edited and with an Introduction by Lynda Curnoe (Toronto: Typhoon Press, 1990), quoted in Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 34-5. Family photos and images courtesy of Lynda Curnoe.

Over the course of his career, Lynda recounts that her grandfather built several “large, expensive houses in North London,” as well as on Wharncliffe Road, Langarth Street, Emery Street, Cathcart Street, Franklin Avenue, Baker Street, MacKay Avenue and Wyatt Street, along with some storefronts in London and in small towns in the area.³⁵ Glen Curnoe has extensively researched and documented the houses built by William Porter between 1917 and 1953. Thirty of these are illustrated in Appendix I, all of which stand today with the exception of only three, which have been demolished.

A number of these were for family members in South London, including the Porter family home at 362 Wharncliffe Road South (at the corner of Langarth Street East) constructed in 1919, in which Nellie grew up from the age of 10. Lynda remembers her grandparents as “creative, gentle, industrious, well-mannered and well-liked” and she recalls the closeness of the Porter and Curnoe families: “The Porters’ presence defined the neighbourhood for us, so that it seemed to belong to us. We were always walking up to Grandma’s house and it was like our second home. As teenagers, Greg and Glen took turns mowing the lawn every week. Greg ... spent hours sitting on their front porch listing the makes and models of cars that whizzed by on Wharncliffe Road, Highway 2, ...”³⁶



William & Grace Porter Family Home—362 Wharncliffe Road South c. 1919
Photo on left by Reg Porter, c. 1919³⁷; photo on right by author, 2019

Grace Porter recounted in her memoir that “My dad heard of lots that were to be sold further to the north of Mom and Dad’s home. These lots were so much down and so much a month. Each had a thirty foot frontage and a depth of two hundred feet. We bought five lots, three on Wharncliffe and two on Emery Street.”³⁷ On two of these lots, William built houses that would serve as the family homes for Grace and her husband Earl Rhame—the first at 390 Wharncliffe Road South in 1918, and the second, built by William Porter and Son, around the corner at 16 Emery Street in 1922.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁶ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 33.

³⁷ From Grace Porter, *Memoir*, 32, courtesy Lynda Curnoe, Email correspondence dated August 8, 2020.



Grace & Earl Rhame First Family Home
390 Wharncliffe Road South, c. 1918
Photo left by Reg Porter, 1918³⁷; photo
right courtesy Glen Curnoe—2008



After William's death in 1956, his wife Grace moved in with her daughter and son-in-law on Emery Street and their house was extensively modified. The Porter family home at 362 Wharncliffe Road South was sold around 1959.³⁸ Lynda remembers her grandparents William and Grace Porter as "creative, gentle, industrious, well-mannered and well-liked." Lynda remembers her Aunt Grace's warmth and Uncle Earl's friendliness, and how visits by the Curnoe children to their home were "always filled with giggling and fun."³⁹



Grace & Earl Rhame Second Family Home
16 Emery Street—1922



Three Porter houses side by side: left to right 362, 364 and 368 Wharncliffe Road South (See Appendix 1)

³⁸ Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated August 17, 2020.

³⁹ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 39.

Glen Curnoe relates that William's son Reg was an estimator for William Porter and Son, while his grandfather did the contracting and supervision. Glen recalls that William "ran a tight ship when he was on the job," but that "the financial management of the business left something to be desired."⁴⁰ Lynda also records that William Porter and Son experienced great financial difficulties in the early 1930s: "Large amounts of money were owed my grandfather from London contractors he had worked for, but had declared bankruptcy during the Depression. These had to be written off as bad debts. Later, "William Porter and Son" went bankrupt as well ... At times, there was no work for Grandfather, Reg or Stan."⁴¹ The business eventually failed in 1942, leading to the loss of the family home that Reg and his father had built in 1929 for Reg's wife Myrtle Murray, and children Jack and Joan, at 368 Wharncliffe Road South.⁴² From 1943 until 1951, William Porter continued to work as a carpenter for Central Aircraft, Putherbough Construction, and Hyatt Bros., and in 1953 built what was perhaps his last house at 97 Wharncliffe Road North.⁴³ A heavy smoker, he died of a heart attack in 1956.

The corps of houses built by William Porter, and William Porter and Son, in London between 1917 and 1953 constitute a substantial residential legacy. Porter's houses consisted mostly of modest one to two-storey dwellings in a distinct vernacular style, custom-built for the budgets and design preferences of family members and clients. The earlier houses, Lynda notes, are "solid, rather undistinguished Edwardian style dwellings,"⁴⁴ while later houses display elements of the popular Craftsman/Bungalow style, common after WWI, such as low-pitched gable roofs with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, and partial or full-width porches supported by tapered square columns.⁴⁵ Many include Tudor Revival references such as gable roofs, half-timbering with stucco and decorative brickwork designs, offset gabled front vestibules with round arch doorways, and fenestration with leaded glass panes and decorative quarries. That is not to say his houses were all the same. Porter's houses embody different expressions of a particular design sensibility—a distinct and important vernacular style in the London context. It may be in the homes built for his family that he expresses his purest intent as a builder.⁴⁶

In the 1930s Porter excelled in the construction of Tudor Revival brick houses—two of which, 251 St James Street (1932) and 99 Baseline Road East (c. 1934), are recognized as Tudor Revival dwellings on the City of London Register of Cultural Heritage Resources. The property at 251 St

⁴⁰ Glen Curnoe, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 35, 38.

⁴² Glen Curnoe, *op. cit.* Glen adds that following the loss of their house, Reg Porter moved his family to a rented house at 100 Emery Street, while working with his father as a carpenter for Central Aircraft. By 1945 Reg had become a superintendent for National Housing, and in 1947 an inspector for Canada Mortgage and Housing, and he continued working for CMHC after the family moved to Windsor in 1948. Reg supervised the building of a new family home in Windsor in 1950, and did the carpentry and cabinet-making himself, while continuing as a CMHC inspector and manager of Price Lumber Yards. He died of cancer in 1957 at the age of 56, a year after his father's death, and is buried in Windsor.

⁴³ W. Glen Curnoe, "Houses and Buildings Attributed to William G. Porter and William Porter and Son," Unpublished Research Study, June 2008, Email correspondence dated August 19, 20, 2020.

⁴⁴ Lynda Curnoe, Email correspondence dated August 8, 2020.

⁴⁵ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Understanding America's Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

⁴⁶ Thanks to Mark Tovey for these observations.

James Street is designated under Part V in the Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District, but it was also considered to display sufficient physical/design values to be designated in its own right under Part IV.⁴⁷

A third smaller house built by Porter at 12 Franklin Avenue (c. 1932) also displays such Period Revival features as a small projecting red brick porch with steeply pitched gable roof, and a decorative leaded quarry under the front gable. It is this house which most closely anticipates the home Porter designed with his daughter Nellie and built for the Curnoe family at 75 Langarth Street in 1936.

Fig. 13—William Porter and Son 1930s Tudor Revival Houses



The Tudor Revival style was very popular in residential construction in London from the 1920s through the 1940s. William Porter may have been inspired by other such houses in this era, such as those by prominent London builder, Roy James (see Fig. 14); or, he may well have been the builder himself of properties that have not yet been documented as William Porter and Son houses. The property at 253 St James Street, for example, directly east of the Porter house at 251 St James Street, was built one year earlier in 1931. It is comparable in style and scale, and is also designated as a Tudor Revival dwelling within the Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District. The two houses are pictured below, standing somewhat in isolation from the neighbouring properties. It is not known whether 253 St James Street was also built by William Porter and Son.

⁴⁷ This property was being considered for Part IV designation at a time when double-designation was not permitted; consequently its Part V designation under the Bishop Hellmuth Conservation District took precedence. The Architectural Reasons for Designation included: "This two and a half storey red brick English cottage was built in 1932. Like many houses built in North London at this time it has many Tudor and medieval allusions. The house was designed with asymmetry and a sense of incremental development in mind. These include the sweeping/flared rooflines, several colours of brick as well as stone randomly set in the wall. The main entrance is noteworthy. The solid wood door has wrought iron bars over a small window and a substantial ring-shaped door knocker just below. A drop finial is placed over the entrance. The doorway is defined by several semi-circular arches. Mismatched cut stone buttress caps are on either side of the entrance, reinforcing the medieval aspect of the facade. The windows are original and are grouped to achieve diverse treatments. The windows on the front facade have a wrought iron balconette underneath. The foundation is concrete though the corners are addressed in several treatments including field- and rubblestone. Original roof material was wood shingle. Decorative purlins enhance the eaves. A prominent chimney can be seen on the west elevation." City of London, "Reasons for Designation - 251 St James St.", Undated Planning Division document, courtesy of Kyle Gonyou.



253 St James Street (left) and 251 St James Street (right)
Part V Designation: Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District

Other comparable properties include a Tudor Revival-style cottage at 1 Franklin Avenue that shows similarities in scale, design and materials to the Porter house at 12 Franklin Avenue. Nearby properties at 498 Baker Street and 203 Tecumseh Avenue East in South London also bear the hallmarks of Porter’s Tudor Revival houses. They are pictured below for comparison purposes.

Fig. 14—Comparable Tudor Revival Properties



4. Greg Curnoe Childhood Home and First Studio—75 Langarth Street East

4.1 Curnoe Family Home

William and Grace Porter’s youngest daughter Nellie married Gordon Charles Curnoe in 1935. On June 9, 1936, expecting their first child (Greg), the Curnoe couple purchased a lot at 75 Langarth Street for \$205 from William and Rose King, who lived around the corner at 202 Edward Street.⁴⁸ It was an ideal location for this close-knit family—one block east of the Porter family home at the corner of Langarth Street and Wharncliffe Road South where Nellie had grown up. As Lynda relates, her grandfather William and mother Nellie designed the Curnoe family home in the “cozy English style popular in South London at that time,”⁴⁹ and construction began a week later on June 15, 1936. The foundation was dug by hand in hard clay.⁵⁰

It was the first house to be built on the site, and the City Directory of 1937 lists G. C. Curnoe as the first resident. Only two nearby homes (73 Langarth Street to the west and 83 Langarth Street to the east) existed on this south section of Langarth Street at the time the Curnoe family home was built. The neighbouring houses to the east at 77 and 79 Langarth Street were not built until after WWII, in 1949 and 1947 respectively.

Nellie had a “romantic” vision for 75 Langarth Street, inspired, in part, by some of her father’s earlier homes in the Tudor Revival style. Emulating the English cottage style and medieval influences she so admired, Nellie, with her father’s help, designed the interior layout of the Langarth Street house, including her “beloved” central hall which connected the dining room, master bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and the boys’ small back bedroom. Period Revival-style fenestration included a decorative leaded quarry, an oriel window in the dining room, a pair of leaded glass windows flanking the fireplace and a leaded glass window from the master bedroom, and Nellie’s “pride and joy”—three leaded glass windows at the front.⁵¹



75 Langarth Street East—Photo: Kyle Gonyou

⁴⁸ This information courtesy of Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated August 17, 2020. William King also resided at 73 Langarth Street in 1915, adjacent to the lot at 75 Langarth Street.

⁴⁹ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 21.

⁵⁰ This information courtesy of Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated November 17, 2019 and August 17, 2020.

⁵¹ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 21. Tudor Revival style is a “period” style popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “Early examples of the style are identified as “English Cottage Style.” The style is inspired by the rural English cottages and manor houses constructed during the Tudor period (1485-1603). Tudor Revival buildings are characterised by steeply pitched gable roofs, intersecting gables and dormers. The front entranceway is frequently dominated by an arched doorway; either the four-centred Tudor arch or a simple rounded arch is used. Windows with

Nellie also helped design several of the home's exterior features, including half-timbering set in stucco with a decorative leaded quarry under the front gable, pointed wood bargeboard with prominent gable ends, and a projecting red-brick porch under a steeply pitched gable, with brick buttresses at the base. Lynda recalls that her mother "was fond of describing it as the prettiest house on Langarth Street when people asked for directions. It stood, queen-like, on a small elevation that ran around the house making it slightly higher than surrounding houses."⁵²



Nellie (Porter) Curnoe with Greg seated on wooden steps at 75 Langarth Street, February 1938
Photo: Courtesy of Glen Curnoe⁵³

Beginning on February 15, 1949, William Porter (at the age of 71), assisted by his friend Adam Burns, a retired carpenter, opened a second storey to provide two dormered bedrooms for the Curnoe children.⁵⁴ These led off a hallway directly above the main central hallway, with a connecting staircase from the main floor back bedroom. The cost of the addition was \$3,000. The original cabinetry, wallpaper and flooring on the second storey remain today.⁵⁵ Lynda writes:

Again, my grandfather did the carpentry, with his son Stan, and my father helping. There was a huge hole cut in the ceiling of the boys' bedroom and the entrance to the kitchen was moved ... Here the new stairs were installed. The upstairs cost \$3,000.00, almost the original price of the house ... Interior upstairs walls were gyprock, the floors wide, sliver-inducing, varnished pine boards. My brothers' bedroom was plainly decorated to stick to the family budget. Two brown metal beds had half circle heads and feet.... Dad and Glen built a long desk with a work area for homework. Mum and Dad's old bedroom dresser was incorporated into this unit which was then painted. Greg rarely did homework in his bedroom, but Glen used the desk when he was in university.... We had an attic in the front of the house, above the living room, that could be entered by two small doorways through the boys' closet and mine. It was always fun to sneak in there, even though threatened with dire consequences if we stepped off the rafters and directly onto the living room ceiling. I thought we could fall right through, but it never happened.⁵⁶

leaded mullions are commonly used, often in a diamond pattern. Cladding materials and decorative elements are designed to mimic that of the original Tudor buildings with modern materials. Brick, stone and false half-timbering are used in a variety of combinations." John Blumenson, *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to Present* (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1990), 156-8.

⁵² Lynda Curnoe, *op. cit.* and Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated November 18, 2019.

⁵³ Photograph courtesy of Glen Curnoe, Email correspondence dated October 9, 2020.

⁵⁴ This information courtesy of Glen Curnoe from his father's house diary.

⁵⁵ Lynda Curnoe, *Memoir*, 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-30.