

# Cabbagetown

**Toronto**





## Pedestrian Shed Analysis

Toronto: Cabbage Town

Footprint of Cabbage Town can be covered by two Pedestrian Sheds converging just north-east of the off-set intersection of Parliament & Gerrard.





## Quadrant of Sheds

Toronto: Cabbage Town

Identifying a square-mile radius around Cabbage Town with a quad-pattern of Pedestrian Sheds is less impressive. It calls to mind the fact that the off-set at Gerrard sets up a village-square condition in the town platting.



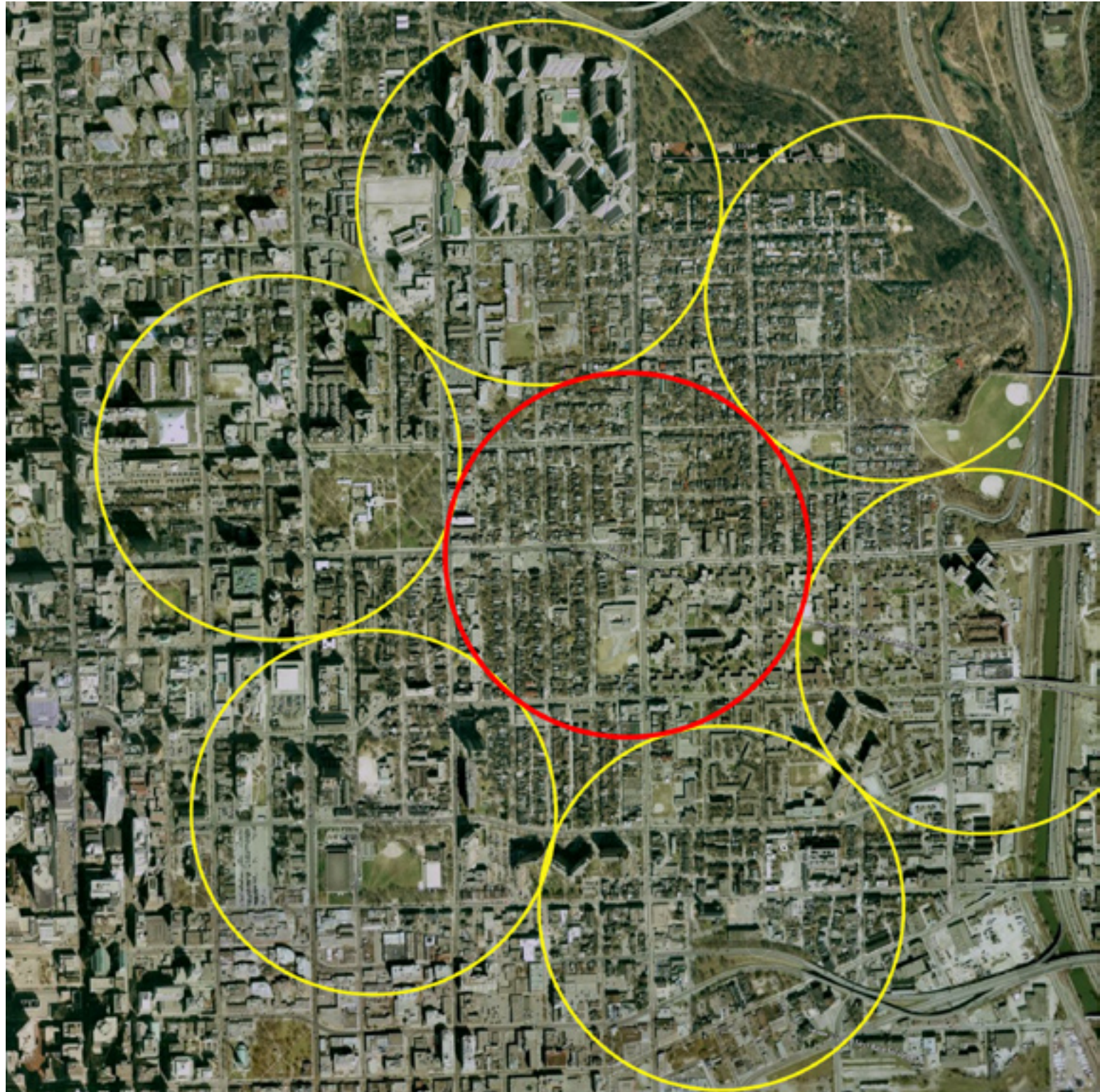
A more agile way of representing neighborhood development beyond the initial 120 acres of one pedestrian shed locates the second phase of intensification as a ring of pedestrian sheds, equal in size and surrounding the first one.

Because this pattern can be used to show historic development in Rome, I've called it the "Seven Hills".

In Cabbage Town, it shows concentric development over time. It also shows the extent to which we can look at Gerrard and Parliament as the "urban room" anchoring this neighborhood.

## "The Seven Hills"

Toronto: Cabbage Town



## Urban Room analysis

Toronto: Cabbage Town





# Notes

## 4. Chronology

[The Chronology is too long. This is just an attempt to get at the pertinent facts in advance of some site work.]

## 7. Footprint

9. The footprint of Cabbage Town conforms to pedestrian shed standards.

It is nothing short of remarkable that all the house lots in Cabbagetown can be pretty much “covered” by two circles with a five-minute-walking-distance. Furthermore, the circles meet where Carlton and Parliament streets intersect.

Parliament and Carlton were the neighborhood spines offering shopping and access to transit. Horse pulled carriages, and later electric cars, provided public transportation to downtown along Queen Street. Today, Bloor performs an analogous function at the opposite, northern boundary of the original townsite platt (i.e. the Park Blocks). However, at a 3/4-mile distance from Carleton, access to transit on Bloor is a 15 minute walk away.

Construction of the Don Valley Expressway may have benefited the area by putting it at the

doorstep of a major transportation spine.

## 8. Block Pattern

1. Subdivision in Cabbagetown began as early as 1816, and proceeded in an unstructured manner.

10. Each of four quarters the converge on the Parliament/Carlton cross-axis exhibits different platting, with the NW sector barely hanging on to qualify as a residential district.

## Street Types

A clear hierarchy of streets is present articulated by changes in both street width and street length. In fact, the three the elements that jump out at first glance in Cabbage Town are:

(a) Short streets (1500’/500m long)

(b) Narrow residential streets (50’/18m wide or less).

(c) The significant contribution made by its majestic street trees acting in combination with large scale plantings on private lots.

This may be the case with many historic neighborhoods, yet it is important to underscore the importance of significant street tree planting, and maintenance, in the public rights of way to enhance human scale, sense of place, and

greening.

## Building Types

Platting, outside of the commercial streets, was for single family, duplex, and row houses.

Some apartments were built in the 1920’s. However, the major departure in form and character came with the clean-slate government housing projects of the 1960’s and 1970’s.

6. The mixing of social groups in Cabbagetown resulted in the creation of a varied and diverse mix of housing types. [Rick: you showed me how] ...that diversity today keeps units that are small enough to be affordable, yet livable enough to be suitable for young families, available as entry level properties. For these units, amenities in the neighborhood compensate for what would otherwise be considered “crammed quarters” in the suburbs.

## Build Out

By 1980’s 80% of the original properties had been renovated. On the one hand, this redevelopment was gentrification—the resident, less affluent population was driven out, and a new population moved in. On the other, this level of retention of existing stock shows the kind of resiliency in building products necessary to

build strong neighborhoods.

7. Cabbage Town is a good example for Canadian cities looking for workable options for the regeneration of long-standing inner city quarters.

8. In addition to the mix and variety of building types that supports overall neighborhood character and delivers diversity of built form, other time-tested elements of Cabbage Town’s can sustain urban analysis.

## Neighborhood park system.

Here, green linking could add a missing element. Strengthening this aspect of the neighborhoods could also address issues in the design of the busiest thoroughfares, including the spines: Parliament and Carleton.

## Urban Rooms

Very little in its past could have delivered to this neighborhood the most urban types of open spaces. Yet, as a mature urban place, the neighborhood today would benefit from such inclusions.

Some of the platting on the most square of blocks (give reference) does make use of urban-room-style approaches to the colonization of the middle of the block.

tion of the middle of the block.

**By 1985 80% of the house lots had been renovated**

# Cabbage Town: a Chronology

1763 Treaty of Paris New France became an English colony.

1793 Toronto settled. Provincial governor: John Graves Simcoe.

## The Townsite [1794?]

A geometric gridiron of ten square blocks was laid out by military surveyors facing the bay at the eastern end of the harbour, centred on today's King and Sherbourne Streets [PM 8].

The little village that his surveyors laid out in precise military fashion and re-christened York was the ten-block rectangle bounded by present-day George, Berkeley, Adelaide, and Front Streets (then the water's edge). Aside from a military garrison built about a mile west of the town proper, substantial construction was slow to begin. [PM 24]

The town proper was small and compact, circumscribed by the area a person could comfortably walk... [PM 9]

West to East streets (Five Blocks): George, Frederick, Shrebourne, Princess, Ontario, Berkeley

North to South streets (Two Blocks): Adelaide, King, and Front.

Affinities to the town plan of Lunenburg [date platted].

Toronto: Cabbage Town

## The Park Lot Scheme

30 senior officials awarded 100 acres each... Set out in [narrow] 1/8 x 1 1/4 mile strips. Bloor Street (originally First Concession Line) was the north boundary, and Queen Street (originally Lot Street) the south [PM 9, 150].

*McHugh is really not telling the story whole, and the information necessary to put the various bits together is missing. An acre is 10 square chains, and a mile 80 chains long. By setting out 30 1/8th mile lots, Toronto would be a bizarre 3.5 miles wide.*

*However, the Governor reserved land for himself, for his trusted secretary, and in a Government Reserve. McHugh neglects to state that Parliament Street was the eastern boundary of the Park Lots concessions. Lying east of Parliament and extending to the Don River, the Government Reserve, and the Governor's own piece extend the footprint of the country estates by about one-half mile. On the opposite side of the Don, 250 acre concession granted to Secretary John Scadding protects their flank.*

*Thus, probably measured from the center of the Don River, Toronto was laid out as a 4-mile platt extension to the west, with an 'extension' consisting of the Secretary's concession on the shore opposite.*

*The Park Lots themselves covered*

*an area of 1,000 square chain, and measured 10 x 100 chain each (this is much simpler to remember than 0.125 x 1.25 miles). Chain measure, and the term 'platting', speak to the first acts of laying out a town. A critical moment when patterns are set in the ground and in Common Law that will continue to affect the way that people will experience the urban site until such time as major re-organizations of territory are undertaken. Something that happens rarely in the long, protracted history of cities.*

*While elements of surveying technique may not be understood by our architectural historian, the more pressing problem is whether or not the Governor, a military man, and any his Queen's Rangers, had any formal training in town design. What they put down in Toronto suggests not. This may be the real legacy of our British Colonial rule.*

*Downstream on the St. Lawrence, colonial settlement came complete with a fully developed science of urban planning. Upstream, their english speaking cousins were less developed in that discipline. That missing knowledge is our inheritance today. A value that recognizes the effects of urban form on human perception has not been recognized, much less understood. In its place we have the spectacle of a society obsessed by a single concern—the almighty coin:*

... mostly these enterprising gentlemen traded the parcels among themselves and then broke them up into streets and residential building lots to be sold for easy profits when the town began to boom in the 1830's and 1840's.

*On the shores of the Don, and on the shores of the Lake, were thus transplanted the English tradition of town planning on private estates. A system that whatever its benefits suffers from the flaw of being at the pleasure of the landlord, whatever his qualifications may be to decide on matters of public importance.*

## The Don

1793 King's Park (Government Reserve)... south of present-day Carlton Street between the town and the river [PM 127]... running north to Bloor Street [became the Simcoe reserve]. ... cabin of 1794 now sited in the CNE grounds, billed as Toronto's oldest building. [PM 127]

250 acres east of the Don between the bay and Bloor Street were granted to aide John Scadding.

## 1794 Yonge Street

At first Young Street was not part of the town at all. Conceived as a military road leading north to Lake Simcoe and the wilderness beyond, it was named by the provincial governor... for Sir George Yonge, the British secretary of war. Simcoe had his military corps, the Queen's



Rangers, start blazing the path soon after they arrived in 1794. The Rangers began in the vicinity of present-day Eglinton Avenue and moved north.

### 1797 Extension

... a new administrator, Peter Russell, extended the town by jumping over the swamp that later would become Yonge Street, and creating new streets to the west, including York, Simcoe, John and finally namesake Peter. In this western sector, there grew up a stylish "New Town" with the architecturally distinguished buildings of Upper Canada's provincial government all coming to be located at its center around John and King Street West by the 1830's... Front Street West, at this time still fronting the lake, became the residential street for Toronto's fledgling aristocracy with large and impressive houses for such... [PM 44]

### 1830 Clarence and Victoria Squares

Beyond Peter Street town limits... in the 1830's... the government released a section of this property for residential development. It was laid out following one of these elaborate urban sequences that were the glory of British colonial planning, with Clarence Square connected to Victoria Square via wide, boulevarded Wellington Place... Building never took off as anticipated,

however, and in the 1850's these visions died with the arrival of that miracle of 19th-century progress, the railroad. [PM 44]

*"The glory of British colonial planning" may in fact owe its inspiration to London's West End where by 1830 John Nash had created for the Prince Regent some of the best urban places in the empire. The fact that this ensemble was quickly sacrificed to give right of way to the railroad foreshadows some of the challenges presented by anglo-Canadian urbanism.*

Clarence Square is a lovely, Londonish 19th-century oasis still holding firm in the midst of a 20th-century manufacturing melee. Its English pedigree is legitimate, engineers in the 1830's as the focus of a posh new residential district, which unfortunately came to little.

12 Clarence Terrace... long Second Empire ensemble was distinguished enough to make it a candidate for one of Toronto's first downtown rehabilitation projects—a program that still looks good, though the grey stucco and solid windows as renovators were in the 1960's. [PM 51]

### 1850 Transportation Infrastructure

[Fifty years late] ... after 1850, St. Lawrence canals and railway lines. [PM 9]

### Measuring Growth by Population

... it grew from a population of 700 in 1815 to 30,000 by 1851. [PM 150]

Between 1834 and 1854 Toronto's population almost quadrupled to over 30,000, and the city prospered as a major trade centre, second only to Montreal in British North America [never mind the city they named twice]. [PM 9]

1900—pop. 200,000

### 1861 Public Transportation

horse-drawn carriages and, in 1861, the street railway made it possible for citizens to live in an area separate from their place of work, marking the beginning of residential and business segregation. [PM 9]

... it ran on King Street between the Don River and Bathurst Street. [PM 45]

[see also Cabbagetown below]

### Boundary Expansions

1834—incorporation as a city, reversion to the name Toronto [PM 24]

1883 —Annexation of the Village of Yorkville [PM 11]

1884—Brockton added

1889—Village of Parkdale

1912—twelve more outlying municipalities annexed, doubling population

Of all Toronto's idealistic City Beautiful schemes... only the wide Beaux-Arts expanse of University Avenue was implemented before the Depression intervened [PM 11]

### Street Type

...by mid century, many Toronto housewrights were making use of American and British pattern books to guide and inspire them... [set along] tree-lined residential streets. [PM 151]

### Building Type

**row housing such as that inhabited by the wealthy in London, New York, and Montreal, was almost unknown here. Even the middle class eschewed the row housing that gave definition to 19th century streets in most cities of this size. [PM 10]**

*[The facts contradict this view. And this raises an important question: Why deny the row house? Is there a local preference being overlaid on the historical development of the place that favors the semi-detached house?]*

1856 O'Donohoe Row 104-110 Shuter Street.

Well-to-do Torontonians, however, came to prefer detached or semi-detached houses, and not many re-

ally grand rows were ever built and even fewer remain. [PM 161]

Victorian Toronto built double houses—dwellings, one beside the other separated by a common patch of garden in front, these symmetrical double houses, their roof lines broken ... imparted a softened, almost suburban look to the city. Yet they were not anti-urban. Built so close together as to resemble a row, these two- and three-storey semi-detached dwellings encouraged a sense of community by providing a harmonious human scale for the street. At the same time, they offered an inviting gentle passage between public and private space—from sidewalk through small garden to front door. [PM 10]

*[Density analysis will tell. By 1908, Unwin & Parker were cultivating a viritable movement under the motto "Twelve to the Acre".]*

### 1890's - 1920's: Breakdown

The area's pre-eminence challenged by the Annex, soon suburbs such as Parkdale and Forest Hill Village beckoned... Some large mansions were sold to institutions; others were torn down and replaced by three- and four-storey apartment buildings... popular in the 1910's and '20s... Apartments were intriguingly new, but ... slow to take hold in Toronto, considered habitats for the "newly wed or nearly dead." By the time of the Depression, many

were rooming houses or worse, and the area had completely lost its tone.

### 1950's Modern Buildings

... in the mid 1950s giant apartment blocks such as City Park began to appear... a potent drawing card for homeowners eager to return to the central city

... the legacy of low-scale and humane Victorian housing will continue to define the fundamental character of this area of Toronto. [PM 152]

*[PM has a more interesting thesis expressed in discussing Younge Street and the changes that came with building the subway. She specifically connects condo towers with the new transportation corridor. Find quote.]*

### Sherbourne, Jarvis and Church Streets: The Noblest Avenues

William Jarvis park lot strip subdivided by Samuel P. Jarvis... had built a brick manor house, "Hazelburn," on the Jarvis grant. When... he resorted to tearing down his house and selling off the land. In

1845 model subdivision

architect John G. Howard conceived a wide tree-lined avenue—Jarvis Street—running through the park lot rimmed with small plots at the south end for workers' cottages, somewhat larger lots in the centre-

for middle-class dwellings, and large tracts at the top near Bloor Street for mansions of the rich. [PM 150]

Thomas Ridout and William Allan's two park lots became the Sherbourne Street corridor.

1853 [son] George William began subdividing with one exception... Set smartly in the middle of his family inheritance, his horticultural gardens became a glamorous centrepiece for residential development... 1860 the touring Prince of Wales formally planted an oak tree. (1861 deeded gardens to Toronto Horticultural Society; 1888 bequest sold to city). [PM 150]

### Platting on the "Noblest of Avenues"

*[It would be interesting to see just how strong this 'model' subdivision really was, and how slavishly it merely followed market trends. The introduction of a "glamorous centerpiece" (above) if it was based on other platting models might qualify.]*

[a] Dressmakers and dairymen with large families rented quarters in the simple gabled cottages and boxy row houses that went up along the southern peripheries.

[b] A growing middle class of clerks, accountants, and "travellers" settled into more commodious single, double, and triple houses in the centre of the

tracts.

[c] And finally, the city's merchant princes and reigning politicians found their way to the upper reaches, vying with one another in the voguishness of their sumptuous houses, manicured grounds, and ornamental fences. [PM 151]

Choice park lot to Capt. John McGill... Church Street [named] after St. Jmaes' Church [date]... subdivided by his estate in 1836; Church Street extended northward. [PM 151]

## Cabbagetown

### 1819 Earliest subdivisions

historically Cabbagetown boundary between the Don Valley and Parliament Street, Queen Street to Gerrard ...

1819 subdivision begun [PM 128]

### 1840's Irish Potato Famine

great waves of immigrant Irish began to find their way to Toronto... Speculative builders jumped in with rentals for the unskilled labourers, who planted cabbages in their front yards, enjoyed free recreation aplenty in swimming and skating on the Don, and never felt it necessary to move. One hundred years later it remained a poor but lively working-class community of small houses and corner sores. [PM 128]



## 1844 The Cemetery donated

... young Scadding and his wife Amelia donated a large tract near Bloor Street for St. James' cemetery... 1850s, the Toronto Necropolis builds nearby, along with the Lamb glue and "blacking" factory, virtually an animal crematory. [PM 128-9]

## 1851 First platting

...some streets had been laid out for residential subdivision... [PM 129]

## 1861 Transportation Systems

Carlton and Parliament Streets—with shopfronts pasted onto former houses—had horse-drawn streetcars

1902, the electric street railway [led] to the Riverdale Zoo end of Winchester Street. [PM 129]

## 1870-1880 Class Mixing in Irish Community

**The area remained in semi-rural tabor until ... another immigration from the British Isles arrived. Some... including the more affluent, began to settle here, making this part of Toronto unusual in not following the late 19th-century pattern of residential segregation by class. Workers' cottages were built side by side with more generous double houses for the middle class. Some large single houses were even put up by well-to-do Torontonians at this time ...on**

Toronto: Cabbage Town

## Carlton Street. [PM 129]

*[For any outsider, the chief spectacle of the British society is its segregation by class, a custom still very much in place today in the motherland as in the colonies.*

*Thus, Cabbagetown build-out in a different social matrix must be seen in some respects as being unique, and capable of producing patterns different from other parts of the city.*

*It remains for us to see whether or not a 'change' in social strategy leads to any noticeable advantages in urban form.*

*The ultimate case we can test in Cabbagetown is one that would cast the British class system as 'regressive' with clear consequences to the development of private property on the one hand, and the public good on the other. Yet, even if that were too mighty a challenge to climb, its continued and continuous existence is proof enough of a kind of fitness that more or less eluded contemporary neighborhoods in this city.*

## 1885 CPR Building Boom

The building boom that overtook Toronto in the late 1880s - early 1890's gobbled up all the empty lots in the Don Vale... [PM 129]

*[The CPR enterprise, formative for western Canada, had its own impacts back in the mother city. Two*

*casualties are Clarence and Victoria Squares, Canada's last—and first?—experiment with Georgian town planning. Is it a case of giving up choice land to enterprise? In the name of one type of progress, are opportunities for another equally important form of advancement—i.e. in town planning—being closed? Did we lack in Canada sufficient expertise in town planning to argue for the benefits of keeping both experiments alive?]*

## 1960-1980's

[in the late 20th-century rehabilitation meant] gentrification, which has brought its own rewards and penalties.

**It is estimated that 80 percent of the houses in Don Vale have been renovated one way or another.**

The area west of Parliament Street was never "on the Don," taking its cues from more fashionable Sherbourne Street. Today, it is very much... Cabbagetown, Toronto's emblem of renewed downtown living.

Chronology from: Patricia McHugh, "Toronto Architecture: A City Guide", Mercury Books, 1985.