

This Week in the Annex:

August 17, 2022

Stages in the Life of Walmer Road Baptist

According to John Ross Robertson's 1904 publication, *Landmarks of Toronto*, Walmer Road Baptist Church was remarkable for two things: "namely that it [was] one of the handsomest churches belonging to any Christian denomination in Canada; another, that it [was] entirely free from debt."

Ups and Downs

There's no denying the majesty of the Gothic Revival architecture of the church and its dominance in the neighbourhood. It was built in several phases beginning in 1888 when the first of the two towers was erected to grace what was later to become the church school. Then in 1892 the exponential growth of the congregation led to the erection of what is used today as the main sanctuary. Further space was added in 1912, so that in its prime the interior of the church could accommodate more than 1500 people.

A building of this size and consequence, however, requires considerable funds to maintain. And by the early years of this century, the congregation was diminished to the point that it could no longer sustain the burden of upkeep. The church remained handsome, but it could not be said to be entirely "free from debt," at least not if the increasingly precarious fabric was to be properly and safely renovated.



This photo from the City of Toronto Archives was taken in 1911. No names are recorded of the worthies standing in front. It is likely, however, that they were the chief contributors of funds to build the latest addition to the church complex.

The Development Proposal

The current sale and development of the church property is sadly necessary if it is to be in any way preserved, barring the sudden miraculous beneficence of a major lottery winner. And so the current congregation has turned to [TAS](#) developers for a solution.

As many residents are aware, TAS has been engaging in community outreach for some time. But the team has just this summer finished its full development proposal. While the official paperwork was filed back on July 18th, as of this writing, City Planning has yet to post the technical nitty gritty on its [Application Information Centre](#) page. All that we can provide for you at this moment are the [images and details](#) supplied by TAS for publication in the August 4th edition of the *Urban Toronto* ezine.



It's hard not to compare this winter scene with the one above from 1911. (Image provided by TAS)

The proposal imagines a 20-storey mixed-use building (200,960 square feet) comprising 162 luxury condominiums that will include an assortment of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units. Added to this is a further 5,800 square feet of POPS -- privately owned public space.

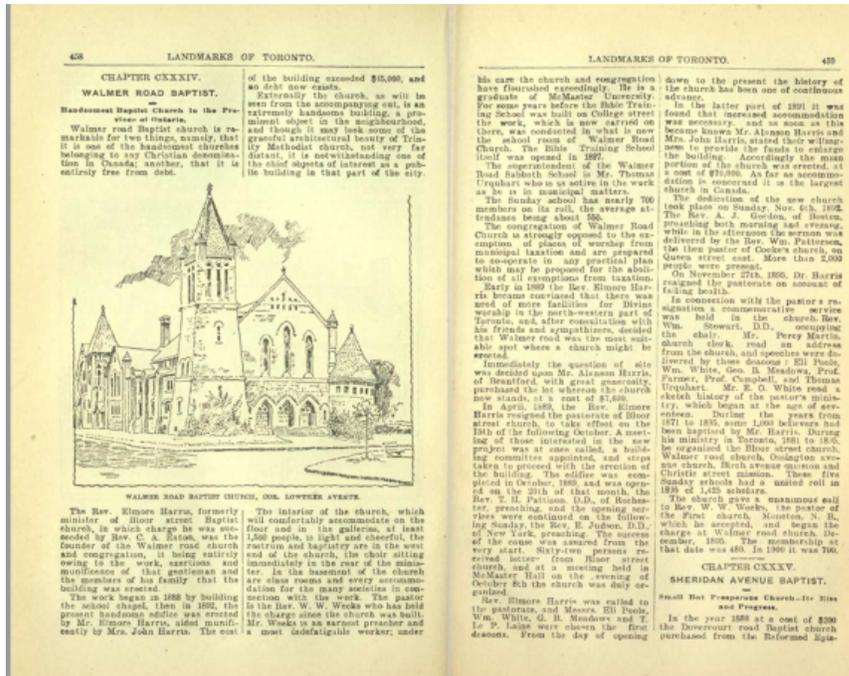
Community Meeting August 24

The ARA has reached out to TAS asking them to hold a meeting where members of the community can gather as a whole to hear the details of the proposal and ask questions. TAS has agreed to host such a meeting via **Zoom** on **August 24** from **6:00 – 7:30 pm**. Note that this is in addition to the statutory community meeting to be hosted by the City.

TAS is managing the meeting and will be making a 30 minute presentation covering the issues identified on the ARA's Planning and Development checklist, and then there will be a 45 minute question and answer session. They have said this will be the first of several meetings.

The Zoom link is not yet available, but we'll certainly include it in next Wednesday's edition of this newsletter. And we'll also post the details on [the](#)

[ARA Events page](#) the moment we learn them. There will be no requirement to pre-register: as long as you get the link in time, you should be able to access the meeting.



John Ross Robertson's book makes for fascinating reading on the landmarks of early Toronto. In fact, its proper title is a revealing mouthful: *Landmarks: A Collection of Historical Sketches of the Old Town of York from 1792 until 1837 and of Toronto from 1834 to 1904*.

The complete text is in the public domain and [available here for downloading](#). Pictured above are the two pages featuring Walmer Road Baptist Church.

St George Street Traffic Alert

Frankly, we weren't going to write even a whisper about the construction scheduled for the Museum subway station. After all, it's not in the 'hood given that it sits south of Bloor. Some of us are also distressed enough by the prospect of years' long construction for the Spadina subway exit at Lowther that there was no need to add to the trauma. And while it's super that the TTC is working to make all its stations accessible, we are painfully aware that the elevator up at Dupont and Spadina – years in the installation – is still closed indefinitely to remedy unstated "deficiencies."

Alas, however, it seems prudent to share with you the news that the powers-that-be have suggested that motorists use St George Street in the face of road closures and slowdowns attributable to the Museum station refit. With a heavy sigh we observe that the projected finish is not until the end of 2024, and even that far-off date is, as usual, **subject to weather, unforeseen events, and impact of COVID-19.*

Pedestrians and cyclists along St George – be prepared. Those folks habituated to careening north on University Avenue are shortly heading your way.



The TTC has provided this image of the newly planned Museum exit to be built right smack dab inside Queen's Park. For timely updates on construction progress, the agency's dedicated [webpage is only a click away](#). Truth be told, if we can survive the construction disruption and the picture doesn't lie, the end result looks pretty impressive.

Notes and Queries

Mystery Solved

Kudos to regular newsletter correspondent Elizabeth Carman who reached out last week to clear up the dilemma as to the origins of COTA or, as the organization now styles itself, CotaHealth. Turns out that it began life as **Community Occupational Therapists and Associates**. In other words, it was an administrative organization of sorts for a group of independent therapists who provided customized services for clients out in the field. Some time ago – just when is not yet clear – the organization made a one-eighty turn. Rather than being an umbrella group for independent associates, it developed in-house programs to service the needs of larger groups in the community. And that's who's serving the residents of 250 Davenport today. So now you know.



Deaf as a Post

We have to forgive our next contributor for the trenchant irony in his recent email. But given how exhausting it has been to get the City's ear on the need to improve Avenue Road, we confess to having erupted in an enormous guffaw at the world-weary caption that accompanied the following image:

In the tireless struggle to improve pedestrian safety and the public realm, a new utility pole is being erected at the corner NW Ave and Dav.

Sometimes you've just gotta' laugh.



Cheers to the Maddy Clean-up Crew

It's quite disgusting the amount of refuse some humans leave strewn about. On the other hand, our urban wildlife doesn't seem to mind. We happened to catch a critter clean-up crew outside the Maddy one early morning last week. You can view the skunk at work by [clicking here](#). Entertaining to watch, but we'd just as soon do without all that litter.



The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

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The Annex Residents' Association