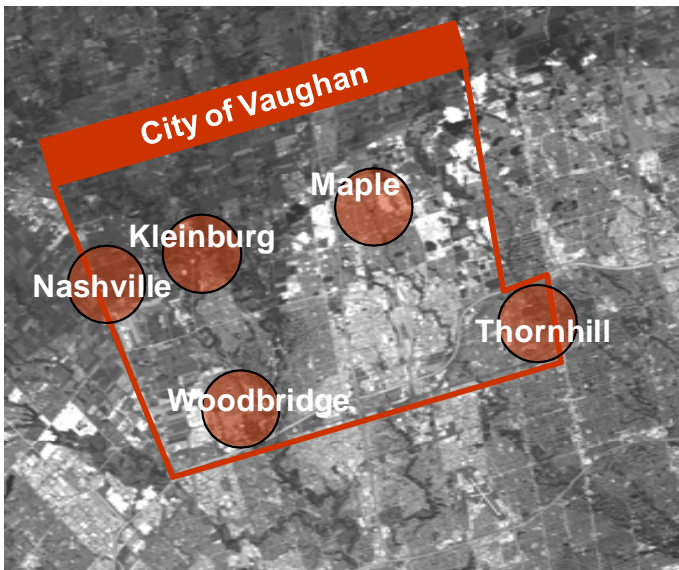


## 2.0 DISTRICT HISTORY

### 2.1 Historic Villages in Vaughan

Woodbridge is one of four historic villages within the City of Vaughan and the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study Area represents one of the highest concentrations of heritage properties in the City. Woodbridge has always been an attractive place to live and do business since its founding, given its location within the valley and table lands associated with the Humber River; and its proximity to other communities. Currently, it is the only historic village without a Heritage Conservation District.

- Maple HCD Plan (2007)
- Kleinburg-Nashville HCD Plan (2003)
- Thornhill HCD Plan (1988)



### 2.2 Development and Built Form

The **Timeline** reflects three key stages of the development of Woodbridge from the early 1800's to today.

#### Early Settlement Pre-1900's

The **First Period** of development relates to the pre-1900 settlement of the area and the construction of the school house (now demolished), the two churches which still remain and the development of the first major transport link in the form of the Toronto Grey and Bruce Railroad and Station. Factories, mills and farmland continued to attract settlers until the late 18th century, their houses include those of the Gothic Revival style.

#### The Settlement of Burwick

The first known inhabitants to the Region of York, were the Mississauga, Huron, Iroquois and the Algonquin Indians, who established settlements, hunting grounds and portage routes

in the area, which provided the beginnings of a rich cultural heritage. The first white man to invade the wilderness (of mainly Huronia) was the french Etienne Brule from Quebec, sent by the Governor of New France, to learn about the Huron Indians. Etienne Brule was the first to see the site of Toronto, but most notable to the history of early settlement of Vaughan, was his route to Huronia, Route No. 3, which passed over what is now Woodbridge. This route was used by the Huron Indians to expedite trade with the English at New Amsterdam (now known as New York). Early settlement began along the trail as the Indians set up encampments at centralized points, usually in the form of small wigwams, and at key points, constructed "Longhouses" as more permanent centres. Evidence of these longhouses have been unearthed in Woodbridge, near the Woodbridge water storage tank.

A different kind of settlement began around the late 1700's, early 1800's by the United Empire Loyalists who opposed the American War of Independence and wanted to remain loyal to the King, travelled northward from the United States to establish a new life in many of the upper Canadian townships, and one of them being the Township of Vaughan. To avoid swampy lands, the early settlers were attracted to the well drained borders of the Humber and the Don Rivers to build mills, establish villages and because these waterways were ready modes of travel.

The first houses and barns built in Vaughan were log houses and several taverns were erected of the same material scattered along the main roads of the settlement as places of rest and repose. The first schoolhouse, which no longer exists, was built for the new settlers in 1830 at the location of #8000 Kipling Avenue today, just north of Burton's Lane. In 1837, Rowland Burr arrives and obtains land and water mill rights. Burr is soon recognized as the "founder of Woodbridge", being the one responsible for undertaking the original layout of the village on a definite plan. His first mill was built at the present location of Woodbridge and Kipling Avenue by the Humber River. The settlement became known as the Village of "Burwick". In that same year, the first post office for Vaughan was established in Woodbridge. In 1845, John Abell arrives and sets up his first factory, and in 1855, he built his home located on Clarence Street, which still remains today as one of the most significant heritage features of Woodbridge. John Abell, as an industrialist, was a key factor in the continued development of Woodbridge until 1886.

#### The First Agricultural Fair and Two New Churches

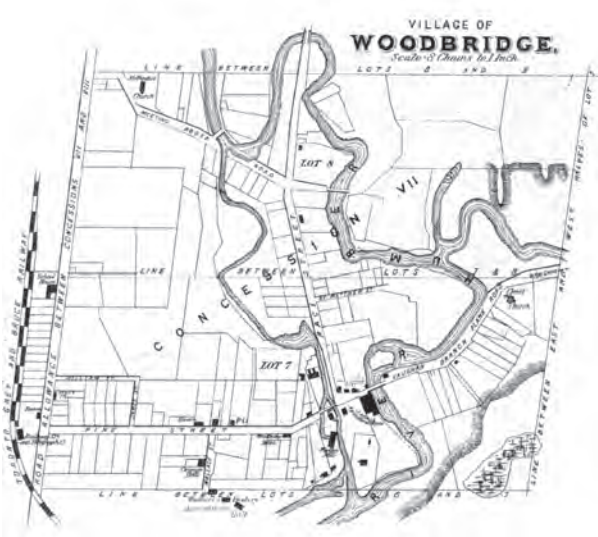
The first fair was held in 1847 on the property of the Stegmann Estate in Pine Grove on the corner of Gamble Street and Islington Avenue. It was not until 1848, that the fair took place in Woodbridge, on lands formerly called Burwick, and was located along the Humber River flats east of Wallace Street on land owned by John Abell.

# Timeline



1875 Additions made to school at present day 8000 Kipling Avenue

1877 Construction of Woodbridge Presbyterian Church at present day 7971 Kipling Avenue

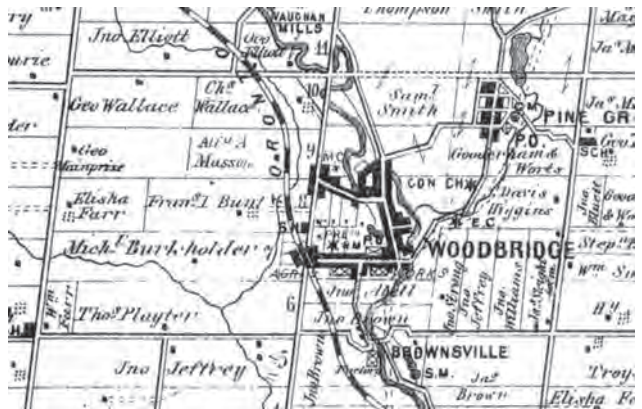


1882 Incorporation of Woodbridge as a Village



1862 John Abell's Agricultural Implement factory opens, bringing prosperity to Woodbridge

1871 Narrow gauge Toronto Grey and Bruce Railway opens - Track runs along west side of present day Kipling Avenue. Station located around present day 325 Woodbridge.



1878 Woodbridge Village Plan and Lot Plan as published in The Historical Atlas of the County of York. Present Day Kipling Ave divides concessions 7 and 8. TGB station shown at present day Kipling and Woodbridge.



1883 Toronto Grey and Bruce Railway acquired by Canadian Pacific. CPR relocate line through village to cross Kipling Ave. at Porter Road and begin construction of New CPR station opposite Porter Road.

1885 Abell fails to secure railway extension to his factory. Relocates to Toronto

1890 Farmers take part in riots protesting against toll roads in Woodbridge

1890's Population of Woodbridge falls following removal of Abell's factory

# DISTRICT HISTORY

Two new churches were also established in Burwick in 1847, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Anglican Church. The first Methodist Church was located on Church Street, today called Meeting House Road. The Church was torn down in 1883 and the bricks and materials were used for the construction of the United Church in 1886, which still exists today at #8090 Kipling Avenue. As well, a stone memorial sits on the original location of the Methodist Church and the Pioneer Burying Ground along Meeting House Road.

## **Great Change for Burwick - Renamed "Woodbridge Village"**

In 1855, the settlement of Burwick was renamed Woodbridge mainly because there was continued confusion between another settlement called "Berwick". The name Woodbridge was deemed appropriate for the area due to the large number of bridges needed to traverse the many streams and tributaries of the Humber River.

By 1862, John Abell had become quite a successful industrialist and established an agricultural implement plant known as the Woodbridge Agricultural Works, which produced the first steam engine to be used in Vaughan and was the main supplier of farm implements for the area. His business encouraged economic prosperity for Woodbridge, providing jobs and encouraging new businesses to flourish. Several taverns sprung up along Kipling Avenue and Woodbridge Avenue to service the plant.

## **Toronto Grey and Bruce Railroad and Station**

The Toronto Grey and Bruce narrow gauge railroad was the first railway to service Woodbridge and was built in 1871 just west of Kipling Avenue with a train station located south of Burton's Lane. The rail line was extensively used, carrying flour from local mills and agricultural tools from the Abell and Patterson factories. The original line and train station were located where the rail line intersected Woodbridge Avenue, in the vicinity of the present location of the fire hall at Kipling Avenue and Woodbridge Avenue. The Dominion House (Hotel) was erected in 1874 at the north west corner of the intersection to service the train station. The intersection became the "ideal meeting place" for farmers especially on "implement delivery day" which usually encouraged the attendance of the Burwick Brass Band. Clusters of development continued to occur eastward, especially along Pine Street and Wallace Street where additional factories and mills were located. Most notably, was John Abell's Woodbridge Agricultural Works, built in 1874. The original location of the Humber River flowed along the east wall of the buildings. The railway was eventually widened in 1882 and became part of C.P. Rail in 1884.

## **New Construction and Increased Development**

In 1875, new additions were made to the original schoolhouse

and soon after, construction of the Woodbridge Presbyterian Church began in 1877, which is still located at present day #7971 Kipling Avenue, south of William Street. By 1878, increased development continued along Pine Street, now Woodbridge Avenue and Wallace Street. Development included Hotels, a bowling alley, factories, mills, the post office and the Orange Hall. In 1882, Woodbridge was incorporated as an official village with John Abell as the first Reeve and Joel Reaman as the first Clerk. In 1883, the Toronto Grey and Bruce Railway was acquired by C.P. Rail.

In 1885, after alternating between two locations of the Village of Weston and the Village of Woodbridge for several years, the Fairgrounds was permanently located at 100 Porter Avenue along Kipling Avenue where it exists today. The same year also saw the development of the Norton's Brick Yard at the location of Church and Clarence Street.

## **Woodbridge's Population Declines**

It was also at this time that John Abell relocated his business out of Woodbridge to Toronto because of a lack of access to the Toronto Grey and Bruce Railway. He continued to supply Vaughan farmers with machinery but the businesses within Woodbridge suffered the loss of the factory presence and many area residents lost their jobs. To worsen the matter, in 1890, area farmers become outraged against the introduction of toll roads in Woodbridge. The effects of these two events caused the population of Woodbridge to decline to around 600. John Abell's Woodbridge Factory was eventually taken over by Sr. W.H. Edwards in 1919 to start a tannery business until it was destroyed by fire in 1926.

## **The Turn of the 19th Century**

The **Second Period** of development dates from the turn of the 19th Century. The new Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) station continued to attract new settlers, although in smaller numbers after the departure of John Abell's factory operations. Turn of the century development includes a number of Victorian and Queen Anne Revival properties.

## **Relocation of the Railway**

In 1907, the railway was moved further east of the original location crossing Kipling Avenue and Porter Avenue where the topography was more conducive to train travel and a new train station was built at the present location of the Woodbridge Foam property. 1914 saw the extension of the Toronto Suburban Railway Company Railway Line to Woodbridge. In 1914 to 1924, the Toronto Electric Railway Company operated a streetcar service that ran from Woodbridge to Keele and Dundas Street in Toronto.

# Timeline

1914 Extension of the Toronto Suburban Railway Company's Weston Line to Woodbridge



1920's Woodbridge fair proclaimed as the largest Agricultural fair in Canada

1950's Woodbridge's population triples after an influx of immigrants (predominantly Italian) following the end of WWII. New homes are built to accommodate new settlers

1954 Woodbridge fair grounds are used to house residents whose homes are affected by Hurricane Hazel



1958 Crowds at the Woodbridge agricultural fair



1971 New regional government of York Region established. The township merged with the Village of Woodbridge to form the Town of Vaughan

1982 Woodbridge celebrates its centennial



1991 Vaughan changes its legal status to the City of Vaughan

2007 Vaughan continues to be the fastest growing City in Canada, with a population of over 245,000. Woodbridge's population is currently estimated at 40,000

# DISTRICT HISTORY

In 1921, the abandoned C.P. Rail buildings and part of the track were leased for 99 years to the Woodbridge Farmer's Cooperative Company. They located their office and hardware store in the old station and warehouse, which was enlarged to stock a variety of merchandise.

## **The Fairgrounds Gets International Recognition**

The growing popularity of the Fairgrounds brought about change and development to the area. In the 20's, the Fair was proclaimed as the largest Agricultural Fair in Canada. The fair, sponsored by the Woodbridge Agricultural Society, continued to support local businesses, culture and community events and was largely recognized as a stage for elite Toronto Society. The existence and success of the six hotels that were established in Woodbridge, are due in large part to the popularity of the Fair which brought local and district visitors as well as visitors from around the world. The Fair was considered the most important social event of the year.

## **New Roads**

The early 1900's saw the disappearance of the toll roads and the development of new paved roads for Woodbridge, especially the newly created Provincial Highway 7, along Pine Street (Woodbridge) and Eighth Avenue (Kipling). In 1926, a new bridge over the Humber River was built on Highway 7. This encouraged a 25 percent increase in population in the 1930's and Woodbridge became known as a suburb of Toronto. Many of the original building structures were demolished to make room for new roads. This time period also saw the availability of hydro power as well as the development of some of the large banks such as the Royal Bank and the Bank of Nova Scotia. The year 1946 saw an increased development of industry such as the Robinson Cotton Mills Factory (now the Woodbridge Foam Corporation), and the Edwards and Edwards furrier and tannery businesses. The 1940's also saw the introduction of sub-division development, whereby subdivision development plans were inspected, regulated and registered by the municipality as a means of guiding future growth for the community.

## **The 1950's Onward**

The **Third Period** of development includes the Edwardian houses of the Inter War Period, and Victory Housing dating from the 1950's, when the area saw a large influx of immigrants from Europe after WWII.

## **Woodbridge Population Continues to Increase**

In the 1950's, the population of Woodbridge triples after an influx of immigrants (predominantly Italian) following the end of WWII. This encouraged a pattern of suburban expansion in housing development to accommodate the new settlers. Between 1951

and 1956, a total of 10 subdivisions were established. All areas of Woodbridge experienced a rapid increase in development and the population jumped to 3000 by the late 1950's. The initial growth started from Islington east and later expanded west to Martin Grove Road and north east of Langstaff Road.

## **Hurricane Hazel**

In 1954, the Woodbridge Fairgrounds were used to house residents whose homes are destroyed by Hurricane Hazel especially those located at the northern end of Eighth Avenue. Portable housing was erected on the Fairgrounds so that people effected by the hurricane had shelter during the winter. Many business buildings were also damaged or destroyed by the hurricane. In 1958, the village library was renovated and later demolished in 1972 and the Abell Parkette is all that remains to identify the original location.

## **Progress - The Town of Vaughan is Formed**

By the early 1960's, the population in Woodbridge had reached 10,000 and in 1971 the new regional government of York Region is established. The Township is merged with the Village to form the Town of Vaughan. For a period between the 1960's to the 1980's, many of the original buildings structures within Woodbridge were demolished in the name of progress. The Woodbridge Dairy, originally located along the lane to the Fairgrounds, off of Pine Street was demolished in 1970 as a larger delivery area was needed to better service the facility. The Dominion Hotel, a solid brick hotel built in 1874 with its front verandah facing Eighth Avenue (now Kipling Avenue), was first renovated into apartments and in 1979 demolished to make way for the development of the Nino D'Aversa Italian Bakery. The Bank of Nova Scotia Building, erected in 1918, was demolished in 1979 and replaced by the Fairground Lane Development Homes. In the same year, the old Woodbridge Farmer's Train Station was also demolished to make room for the extension of Woodbridge Avenue and the new fire hall. Suburban housing development continued to expand north to Langstaff Road and to central Woodbridge, where many of the older stores were converted to multi units. The population by mid 1980's was about 40,000.

## **The City of Vaughan is Established**

In 1991, Vaughan changes its legal status to the City of Vaughan. Housing development continues to expand north and east. As well, industrial areas were established west, south and east of Woodbridge. Around 1996, condominium development began to appear, with the first construction north of Woodbridge Avenue and the Humber River.

## **Woodbridge in the Context of Vaughan Today**

Vaughan continues to be the fastest growing city in Canada, with a population of over 245,000. Woodbridge's population

is currently estimated to be over 100,000 and regardless of its growth, it still maintains a significant representation of its historic past and village character and quality today.

### **Heritage Landscapes and Open Space Amenities**

The history of the Woodbridge Area is largely defined by the predominant natural open spaces of the Humber River Corridor, its tributaries, and the Fairgrounds, which comprises a substantial amount of open space within the study area.

#### **The Humber River Corridor and Rainbow Creek Tributary**

The configuration of the Humber River and its tributaries changed over time, primarily due to Hurricane Hazel. The northern course of the Humber River ran through what is now the Board of Trade Golf Course and along the north side of Meeting House Road to continue northward beyond the boundaries of Woodbridge. One of the main tributaries branched across Meeting House Road south through what is now a recent neighbourhood development in the valley east of the Fairgrounds. The River continued its course parallel to Race Street, now called Clarence Street and split at the intersection of what is now Woodbridge Avenue and Clarence Street. This route no longer exists today. In 1960, the river was re-routed further east to accommodate a new bridge at the junction of Woodbridge Avenue and Islington Avenue.

The forests of the Humber River were quite expansive throughout Woodbridge prior to suburbanization. As well, an extensive amount of damage was done to the forest during the passing of Hurricane Hazel in the 1950's. Today, apart from the forested river valley corridor, there are remnant pockets of mature tree stands throughout the study area, most notably along the residential streets such as William and Wallace Streets, on heritage properties. These mature tree stands should be preserved and enhanced with additional tree planting. The river valley corridor and the remnant forest pockets, in conjunction with the existing built heritage fabric, define a unique village character for the Woodbridge Community.

#### **The Fairgrounds**

Today, the fairgrounds still exists as "the Home of the Woodbridge Fall Fair". It is host to a variety of uses for the community and still remains as a significant open space asset to the Woodbridge Community and the City of Vaughan.

#### **The Memorial Tower**

The Memorial Tower was erected on the hilltop west of Wallace Street after WWI as a war memorial to honour the deceased and was unveiled in 1924 by Colonial Harry Cockshutt, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

#### **The Woodbridge and District Memorial Arena**

Since 1925, the location of the Memorial Area has always been a place for community gathering. The site housed the Elm Park Pavilion which was a popular entertainment centre. On July 5, 1970 an Air Canada DC-8 crashed after aborting a landing at Toronto International Airport, killing all 100 passengers and 9 crew members. To this point in time, it was the second worst aviation accident in Canadian history. The arena served as a morgue for the victims of this crash. Today, the arena stands in memory of those who perished. In 1975, the Woodbridge Vaughan Pool opened on the site.

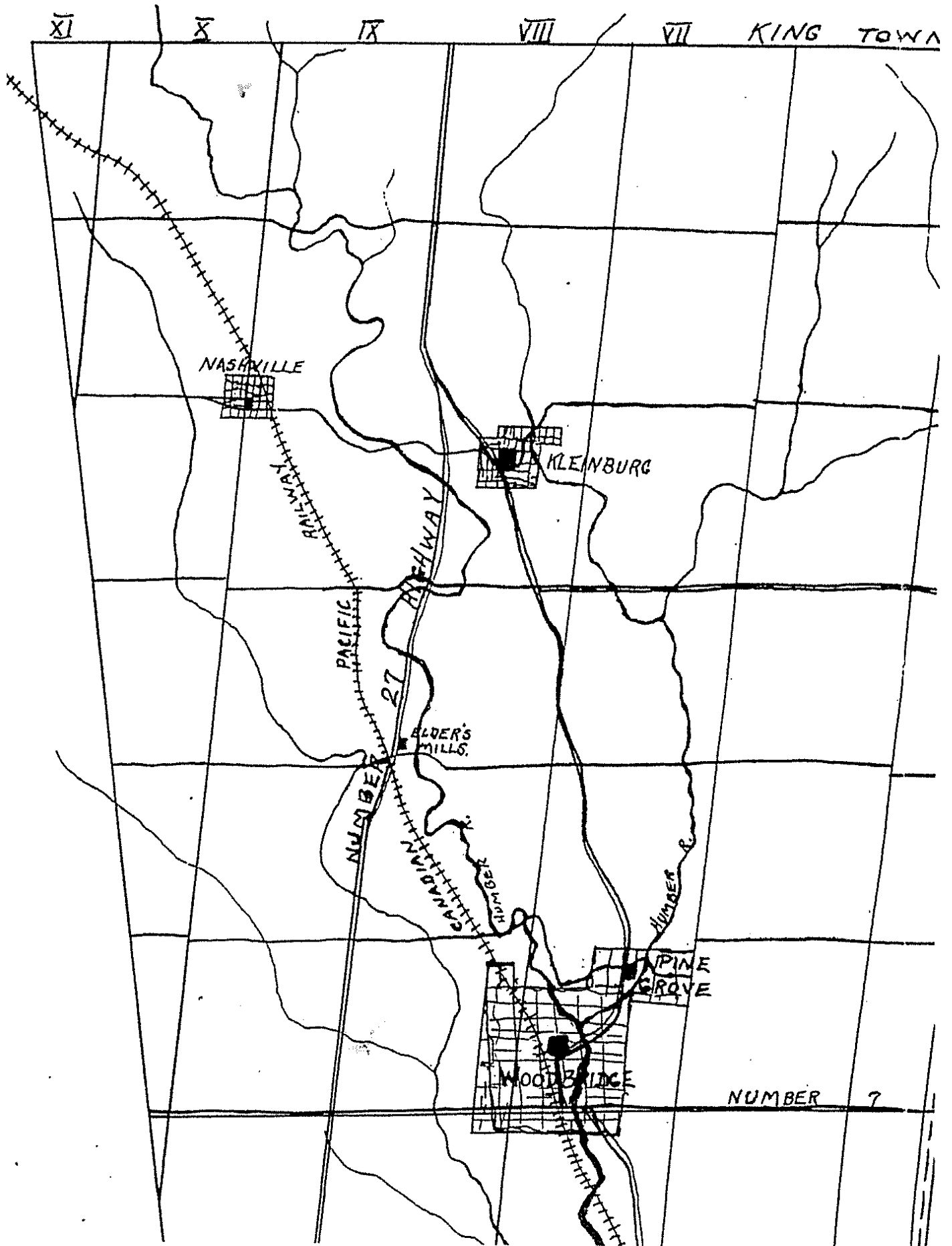
#### **The Bridges**

Seven bridges exist today within the district and are ever-present and visible, often acting as gateways. The bridges still define Woodbridge as the "place of many bridges". (see Schedule 13 of Part 2 - The Heritage Conservation District Plan)

### **Research Materials - Timeline and Historic Mapping References**

- The Woodbridge Story. Herb H. Sandon, 1960
- A History of Vaughan Township, G. Elmore Reaman, 1971
- A Report of Buildings Pre - 1900 in the Township of Vaughan, Barbara Plander, 1975
- Roads, Walks and Streams in the Town of Vaughan, University Women's Club, 1974
- Woodbridge's History, Binder #2, Transportation, Mary Wood, 1963
- Woodbridge, A Heritage in Pictures, Vang W. Publishers Library, 1995
- Pictorial Woodbridge, Mary Wood, 1984
- The City of Vaughan Heritage Inventory
- Ontario Heritage Properties Data Base
- Population by Age and Community - 2001, City of Vaughan web site. Retrieved 2006-04-12.
- Woodbridge Ontario. *Community Demographics*. Industry Canada web site. Retrieved 2006-04-12
- A Brief History of Woodbridge, City of Vaughan Archives
- York Region Official Plan. Section 4.2 Cultural Heritage

# Reference Maps

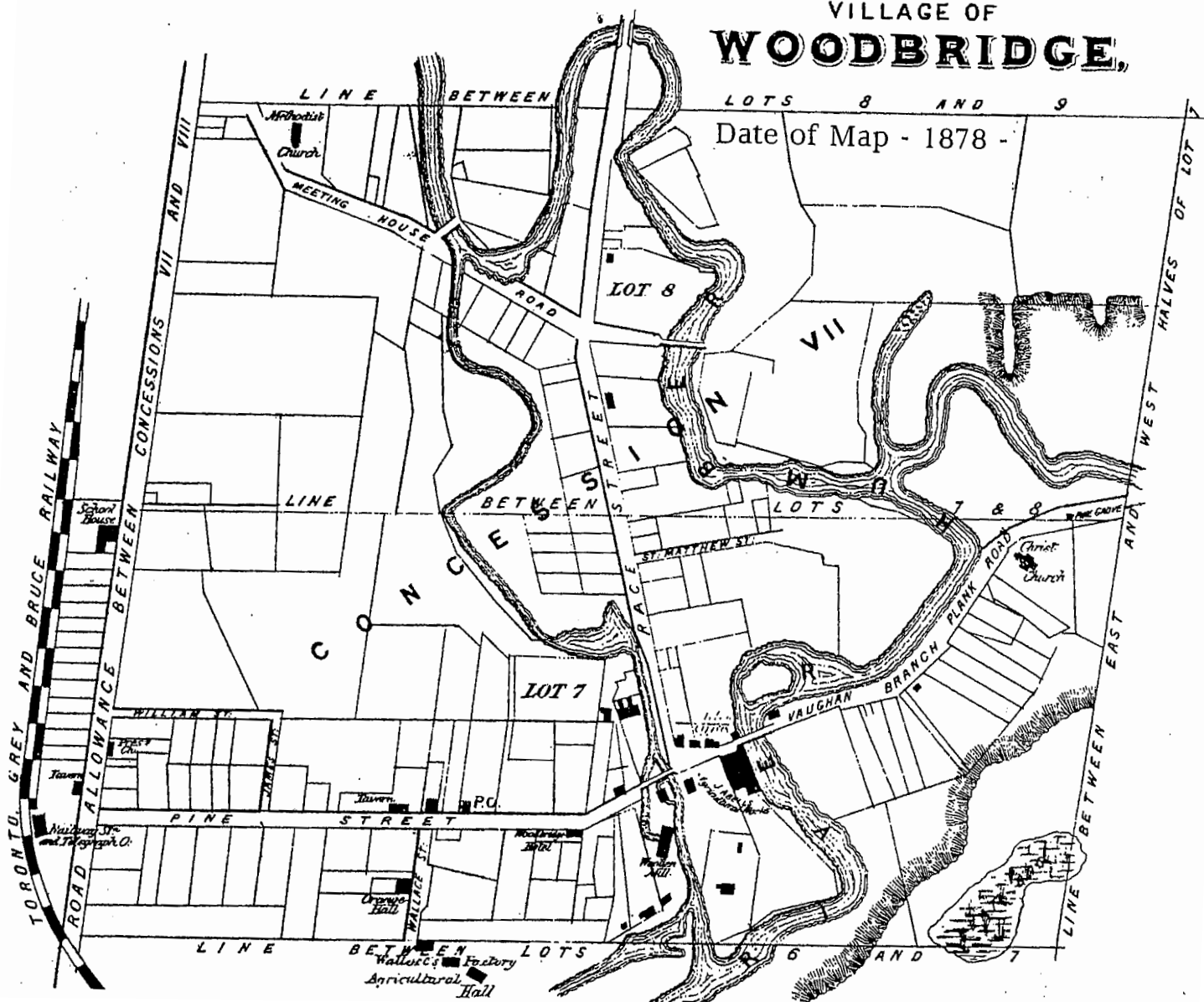


Schedule 2.0: Vaughan 1788 - Villages of Nashville, Kleinburg, Elder's Mills, Pine Grove, Woodbridge

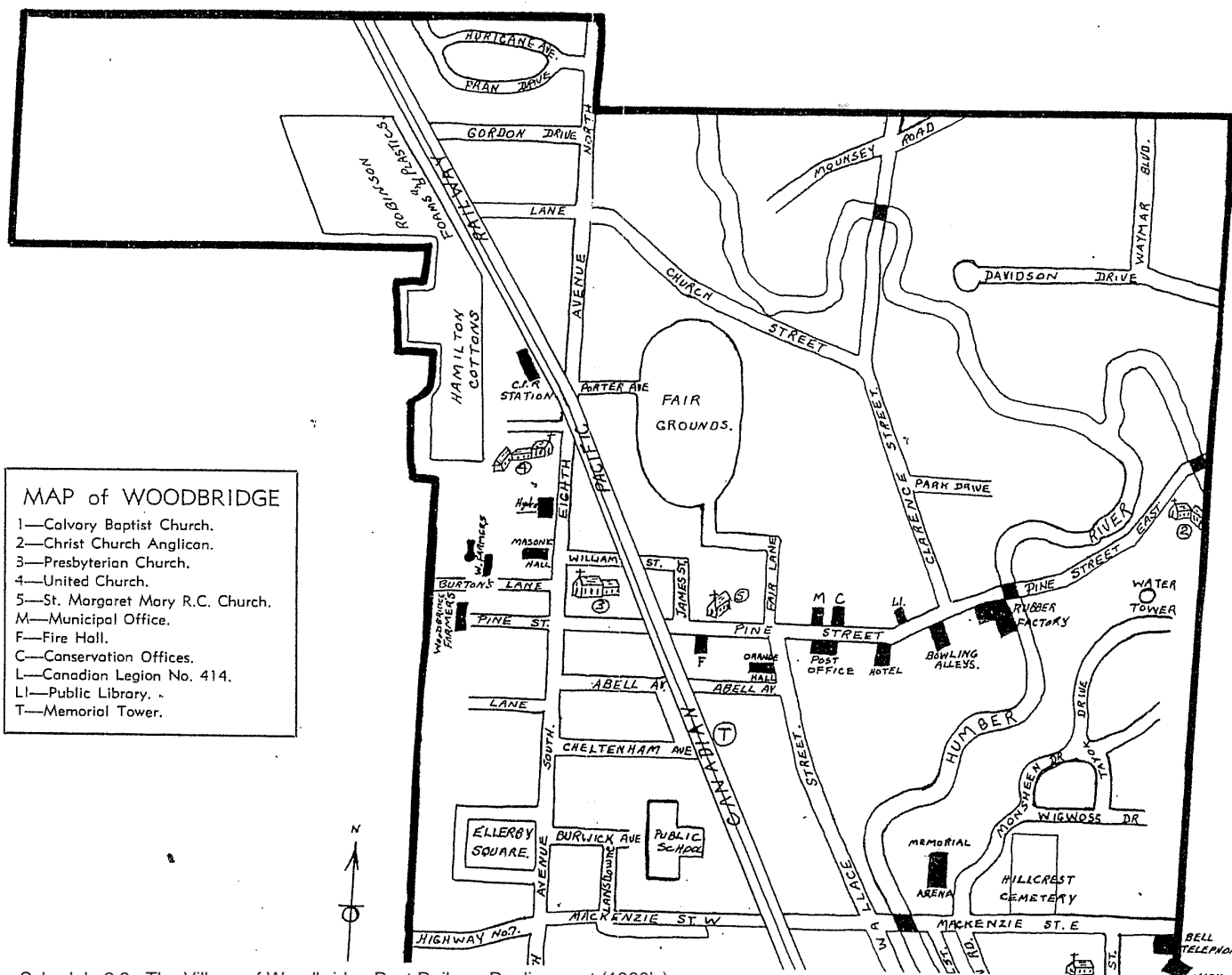




# VILLAGE OF WOODBRIDGE

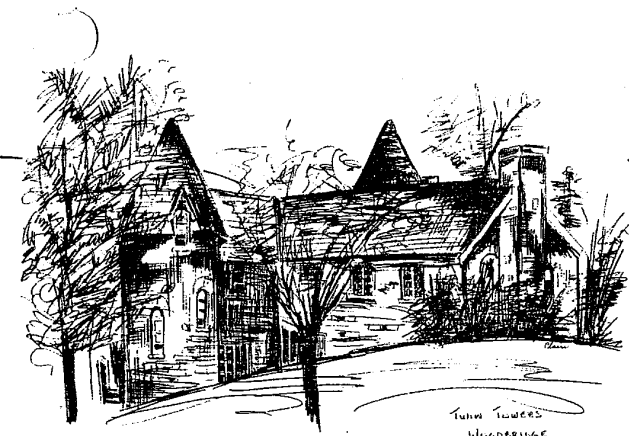


Schedule 2.2: The Village of Woodbridge 1878



Schedule 2.3: The Village of Woodbridge Post Railway Realignment (1960's)

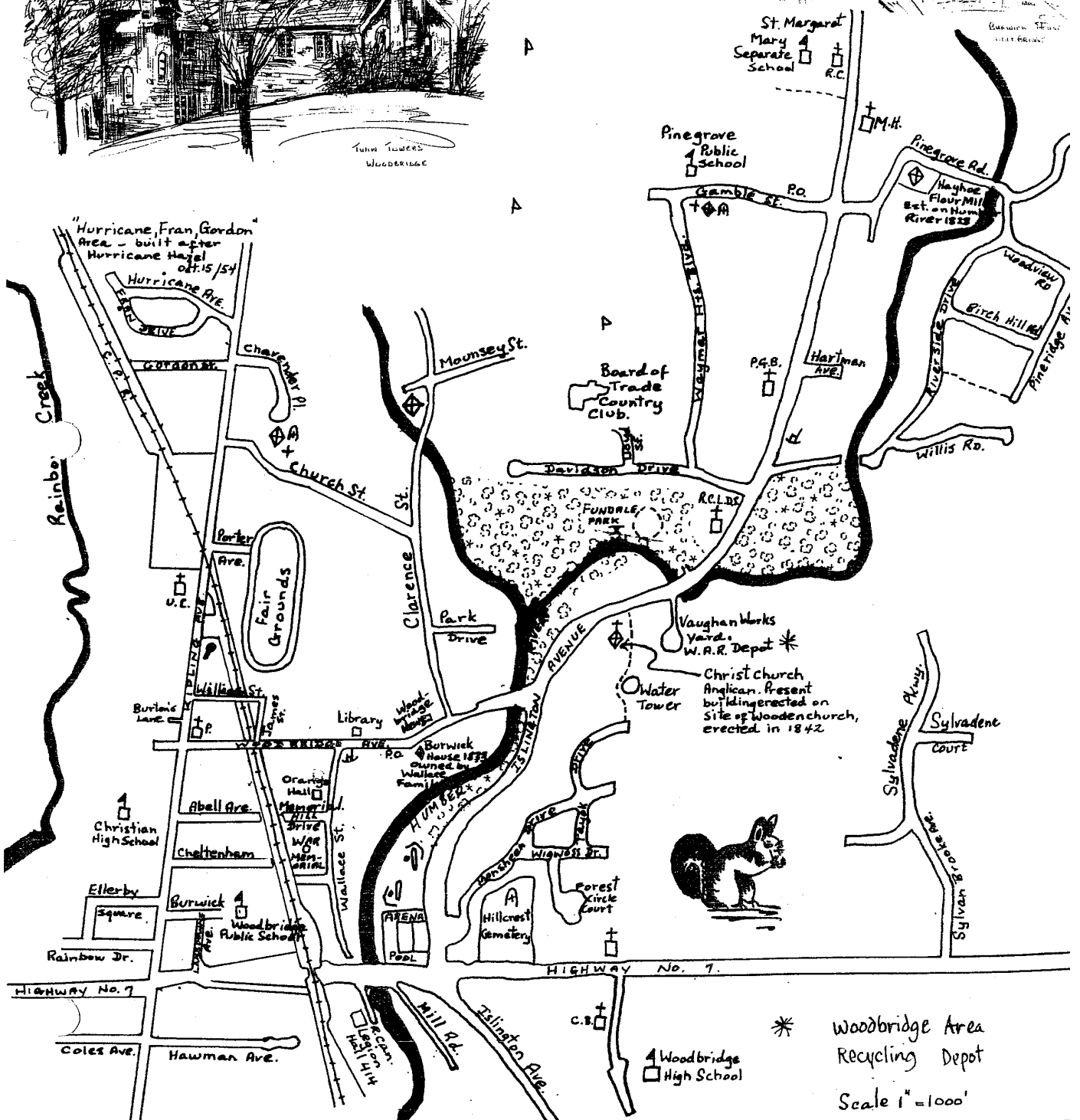
# WOODBIDGE



Town Towers  
Woodbridge

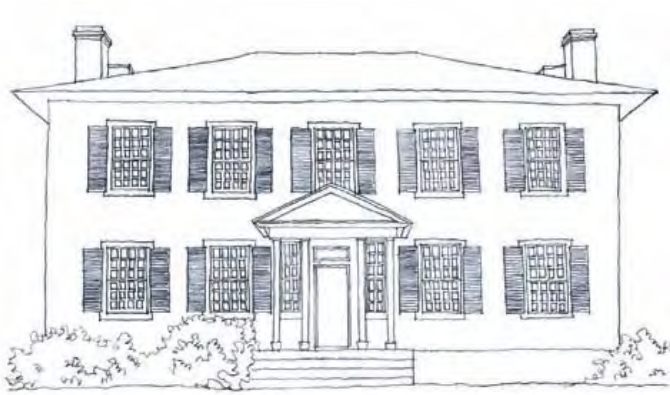


Business House  
1914-1915



Schedule 2.4: The Village of Woodbridge - Realignment of Islington Avenue and the Humber River Corridor (1970's)





### Georgian/ Loyalist (1784-1860)

Image Credit: Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 1813, [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com)  
Sketch by GBCA



Image Credit: Maitland, Ontario, [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com)



### Classic/ Greek Revival (1830-1860)

Image Credit: Chrysler Hall, Upper Canada Village, Ontario,  
[www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com), Sketch by GBCA



Image Credit: Merrickville, Ontario, [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com)



### Gothic Revival (1830-1900)

Image Credit: Simcoe, Ontario, [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com), Sketch by GBCA



Image Credit: Perth, Ontario, [www.ontarioarchitecture.com](http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com)