

Dr. George D. Morton House

c. 1870

123 John Street West

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

October 2026

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury Municipal Heritage Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, or CHER, is to determine if the subject property merits designation under Part IV, section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). A Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report provides an overview of the property based on primary and secondary research and visual inspection of the property. Please note that all visual inspections of the property were taken from the public right of way and no site visits were made. It also includes an evaluation against the prescribed criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06, including design/physical value, historical/associative value, and contextual value. This CHER also includes a draft Statement of Significance and identification of heritage attributes.

The designation of heritage properties is legislated by the OHA and is supported at a provincial level by the Provincial Policy Statement (2024). The conservation of cultural heritage resources is also supported by the County of Simcoe Official Plan, and the 2023 Official Plan for the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

Based on the contents of this report, the property located at 123 John Street West meets the criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Property Name	Dr. George D. Morton House
Municipal Address	123 John Street West
Legal Description	Part of Lots 16 and 17 on Plan 56
Property Size	0.090 hectares
Date of Construction	1870
Heritage Recognition	Listed on Municipal List of Heritage Properties
Lead Researcher	Thomas Dysart, MCIP, RPP, CAHP Senior Planner, Town of BWG

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SUBJECT PROPERTY

The subject property is located on the north side of John Street West, east of Essa Street and north of Holland Street. It has a municipal address of 123 John Street West.

The legal description of the property is Part of Lots16 and 17 on Plan 56.



Figure 1: Simcoe County GIS (2025)

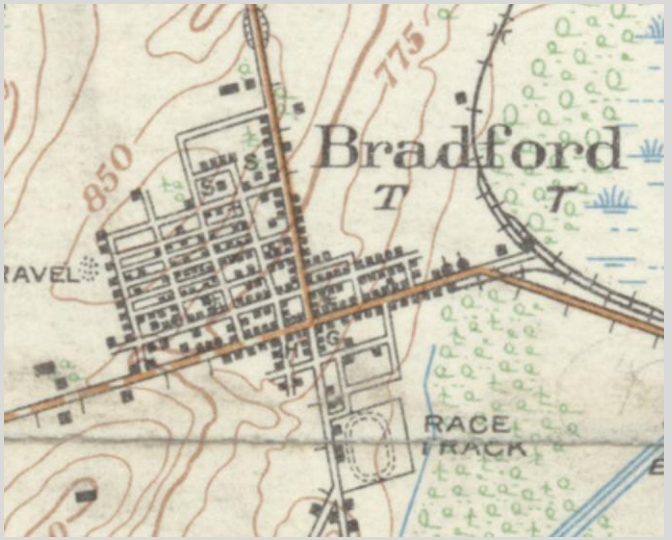


Figure 2: Topographic Map of Bradford (1928)

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Design and Physical Value

Neoclassical architecture is typically proportioned style and buildings are typically rectangular with low pitched gable roofs. Houses are typically two or two and a half storey with balanced facades. Neoclassical homes feature centered entrances with decorate elements to emphasize the main door. Neoclassical architecture gained in popularity following the War of 1812. Influenced largely by Georgian architecture, neoclassical architecture was more refined, delicate in style and overall a more elegant approach to home-building.

Construction materials may vary, but it has been noted, and can feature either stone or wood construction. Based on the Fire Insurance Map of 1924, it is identified that the primary construction material of the subject property is brick.

The subject property at 123 John Street is of brick construction, built in the neoclassical architecture style. The overall appearance is that of symmetrical three-bay facade with a medium slope hip roof. There are large window opening on the front and sides of the building. Inside end chimneys can be seen on either side of the building.



Figure 3: Subject Property



Figure 4: Georgian architecture has a large influence over neoclassical architecture

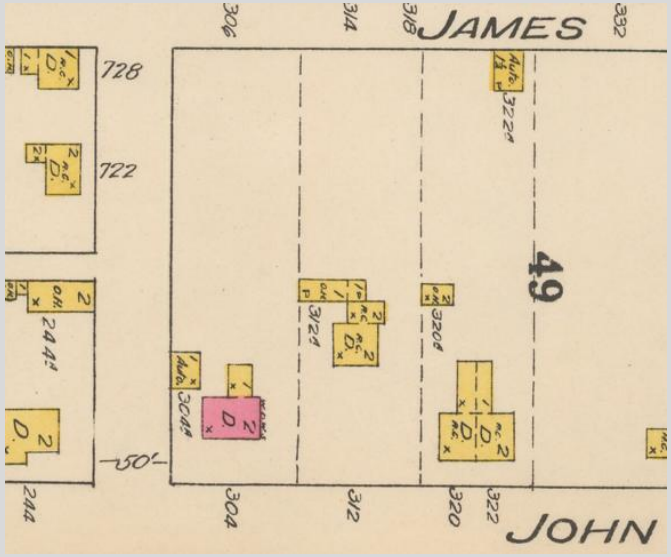


Figure 5: Fire Insurance Plan, 1928

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Associative Value

Pre Contact History

The subject property is in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek Nation, which includes Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nation, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy and that the Huron-Wendat, Chippewa and Haudenosaunee Nations have also been associated with lands. The subject lands were part of the Lake Simcoe-Nottawasgaa Treaty No.18 of 1818, where in exchange for 1,592,000 acres, the Chippewas were paid a yearly sum of 1200 pounds.

Land Ownership

The original patent in which the subject property was located was once owned by a Robert Ross of Whitchurch; Ross purchased all 200 acres in Mach 1830; Ross then sold the lands to Letitia Magee, a spinster, for $100 a month later in April 1830. Magee then went on to sell off the lands at varying sizes (1/2 acres, 1/4 acre etc.) to various new settlers to Bradford.

William Hawkins acquired the land sometime around 1864 and the Lot 82 and 83 transferred between several early residents of BWG:

Nature of Instrument	Instrument Date	Grantor	Grantee	Notes
B&S	1864	William Hawkins (of Toronto)	George D. Morton (of Bradford)	$750
B&S	1880	George D. Morton	Henrietta Taylor (Wife of William Taylor)	$1500
B&S	1895	John ????	Emily Reieve	$1200
Grant	1950	James ???	Presbyterian Church of Bradford	$6000

Notable names on Land Registry documents for the property in question include George D. Morton, Reive (noted on the 1900s map of the Village of Bradford) and the Presbyterian Church of Bradford. Given the estimated year of the construction of the building, around 1880, the home was mostly like built by George D. Morton.



Figure 6: Plan 56

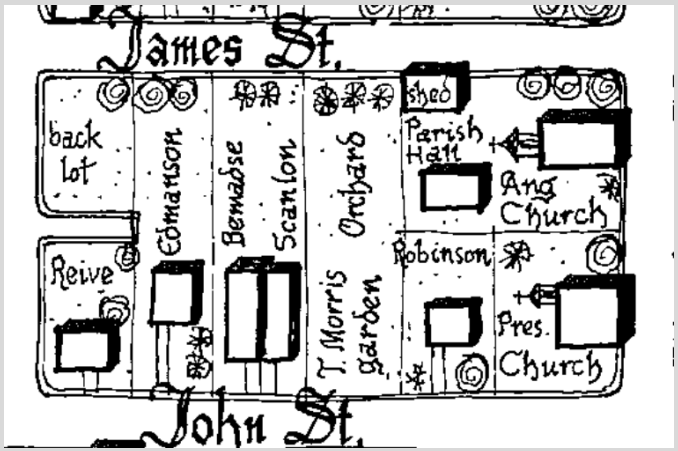


Figure 7: Village of Bradford, c.1900

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Associative Value

George D. Morton

George Dean Morton was born in 1822 in Tinahely, County Wicklow, Ireland. Not much of Morton's life in Ireland is known, however when he moved to Canada in 1848 he was a medical practitioner. He settled in Holland Landing and it was here he met Cornelia Laughton, the daughter of local businessman and Magistrate, William Laughton. Cornelia and George married in 1854. George and Cornelia moved to Bradford in 1856. In BWG Library Archives, 18 John Street East, is listed as the home of George Morton, however, title records for the property (Part of Lot 2, S/S of John Street on Plan 14) do not list George or Cornelia Morton as an owner of the property, however, this may be a nephew.

George D. Morton acquired the subject property in 1864 from William Hawkins and sold the property in 1880, around the estimated time of construction of the home. George's obituary, notes that that George lived in a substantial residence.

George D. Morton was a medical practitioner while living in Bradford. In the 1866 Gazetteer for the County of Simcoe, Dr. George D. Morton, is also a member of the medical Council, a Reeve of the Village of Bradford and coroner, operating Morton and McCarthy, a physicians and surgeons office on Holland Street, by 1872, Dr. George D. Morton is still listed as a Medical Doctor, but appears to longer be operating a business. In addition to his medical practice, Morton served as Reeve (1877-1878), served as a Trustee of the Bradford High School and served on County Council. While in Bradford, George's practice grew substantially, as did his wealth, purchasing properties in Bradford, West Gwillimbury and Holland Landing. In 1881, George retired at 59 and moved to his wife's family farm, "Woodmount" in Holland Landing.

In addition to the success in his career, George also found success in horseracing. In 1864, Dr. Morton won the Queens Plate in Guelph, Ontario with his horse *Brunette* taking the win. It should be noted that Dr. George D. Morton, owned lands south of Holland Street, as noted on Lot 16, Concession 6. In the same location, by 1900, a race track appears on the same lands, along with a grandstand for the audience:

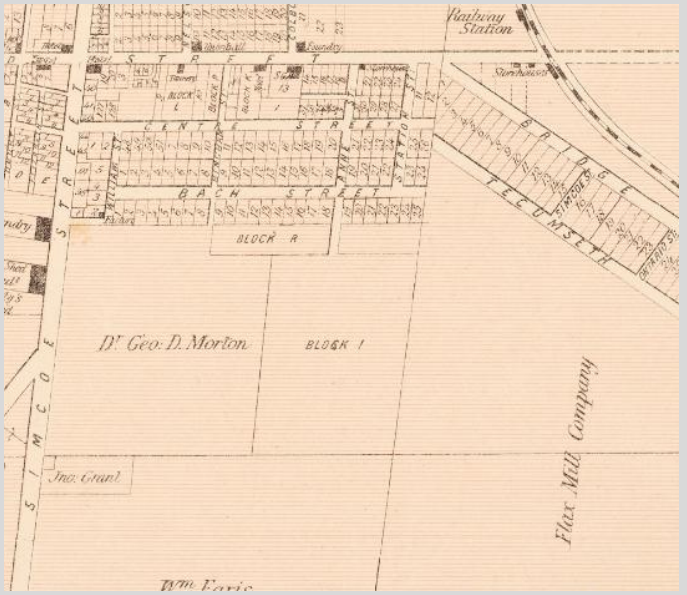


Figure 8: Lands Owned by G. Morton

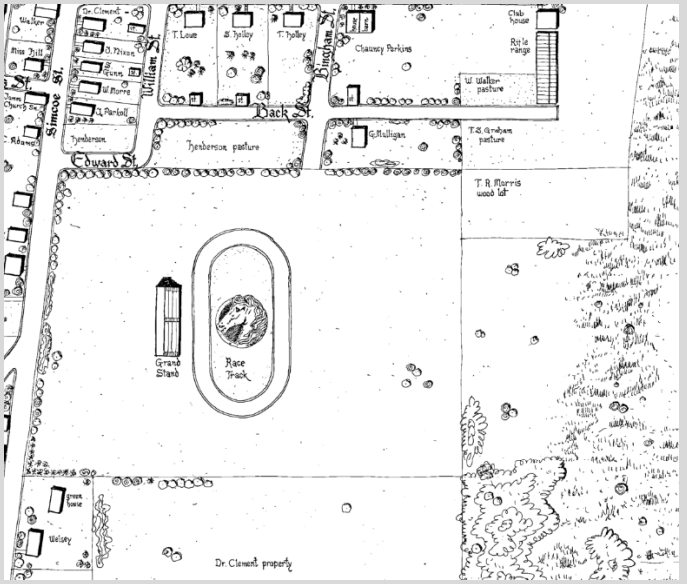


Figure 8: Village of Bradford c. 1900 show horse track on lands owned by George Morton

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Associative Value

While there is no confirmation linking, George D. Morton with the racetrack, he was a passionate and wellknown horse breeder at the time. George's passion for hoses led to his involvement with the Ontario Jockey Club in 1883.

It should be noted that according to the 1900s map of Bradford, a property on Holland, in front of the subject property is noted as Dr. Mortons property and he is the owner of the racetrack.

In 1881, following retirement, George and Cornelia moved to Toronto, to a property they owned on Church Street. While they had no children, it is documented that from time to time they did have a nephew living with them. In 1893, Cornelia died of marasmus, with George dying two years later in 1895. His Obituary, published March 14, 1895 tells the story of prominent and successful businessman.

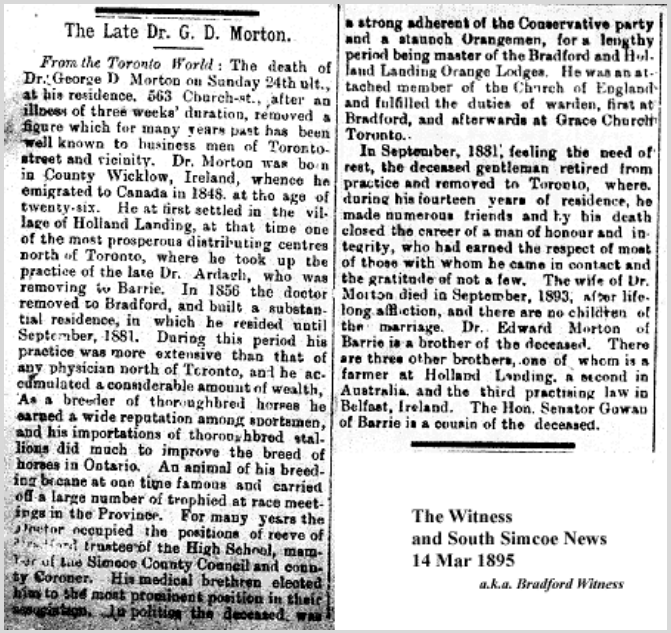
MORTON—At his late residence, 563 Church street, on Sunday, February 17, Dr. George D. Morton, in his 73rd year.

Funeral will leave above address at 11 o'clock on Wednesday, February 20, via Union Station, for place of interment at Holland Landing.

Figure 10: Obituary for George Morton



Figure 9: Property owned by George Morton on Church Street in Toronto, where he died.



The Late Dr. G. D. Morton.

From the Toronto World: The death of Dr. George D Morton on Sunday 24th ult., at his residence, 563 Church-st., after an illness of three weeks' duration, removed a figure which for many years past has been well known to business men of Toronto-street and vicinity. Dr. Morton was born in County Wicklow, Ireland, whence he emigrated to Canada in 1848, at the age of twenty-six. He at first settled in the village of Holland Landing, at that time one of the most prosperous distributing centres north of Toronto, where he took up the practice of the late Dr. Ardagh, who was removing to Barrie. In 1856 the doctor removed to Bradford, and built a substantial residence, in which he resided until September, 1881. During this period his practice was more extensive than that of any physician north of Toronto, and he accumulated a considerable amount of wealth. As a breeder of thoroughbred horses he earned a wide reputation among sportsmen, and his importations of thoroughbred stallions did much to improve the breed of horses in Ontario. An animal of his breeding became at one time famous and carried off a large number of trophied at race meetings in the Province. For many years the doctor occupied the positions of reeve of Bradford, trustee of the High School, member of the Simcoe County Council and county Coroner. His medical brethren elected him to the most prominent position in their association. In politics the deceased was a strong adherent of the Conservative party and a staunch Orangemen, for a lengthy period being master of the Bradford and Holland Landing Orange Lodges. He was an attached member of the Church of England and fulfilled the duties of warden, first at Bradford, and afterwards at Grace Church Toronto.

In September, 1881, feeling the need of rest, the deceased gentleman retired from practice and removed to Toronto, where, during his fourteen years of residence, he made numerous friends and by his death closed the career of a man of honour and integrity, who had earned the respect of most of those with whom he came in contact and the gratitude of not a few. The wife of Dr. Morton died in September, 1893, after life-long affliction, and there are no children of the marriage. Dr. Edward Morton of Barrie is a brother of the deceased. There are three other brothers, one of whom is a farmer at Holland Landing, a second in Australia, and the third practising law in Belfast, Ireland. The Hon. Senator Gowan of Barrie is a cousin of the deceased.

The Witness
and South Simcoe News
14 Mar 1895
a.k.a. Bradford Witness

Figure 11: Obituary for George Morton

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Contextual Value

The subject property is located along John Street West and Essa Street, which is one of the streets that form the original Village of Bradford. The property is an excellent example of an early 19th century residential building set in a growing community. The property is surrounded by architecturally similar properties and contributes to the historic identify of the Downtown Bradford neighborhood.

EVALUATION UNDER ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06

	Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Evaluation	Criteria met (Y/N)
i	is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method;	The property is an example of an early 19th century residential building designed in the Neoclassical architectural style.	Y
ii	displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit;		N
Iii	demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.		N
iv	has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community;	The property has direct associations with the James Barry and Wilson Scott. Barry & Scott was a business owners on Holland Street and contributed to the development of the Town.	Y
v	yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture;		N
vi	demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.		N
vii	is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area;	The property is historically linked to its surrounding area, being on one of the oldest streets in Bradford, adjacent to other similarly aged properties.	Y
viii	is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings;		N
ix	is a landmark.		N

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Dr. George D. Morton House c. 1870

The subject property has been researched and evaluated to determine its cultural heritage significance according to Ontario Regulation 9/06. This Regulation, defined in the *Ontario Heritage Act*, outlines several criteria for determining whether a property is of cultural heritage value or interest. For a property to be designated under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act,* it must meet two or more of these criteria, which are outlined below. By using these criteria, staff can determine if the property's cultural heritage value or interest merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Description of Property

The property at 123 John Street West is located on the north side of John Street. The property contains a Eclectic Neoclassism, c.1880 residential building. Due to its association with an early settler family of West Gwillimbury, it is known as the Morton House and due to its associated with George D. Morton and due its connections with the Presbyterian Church, also known as Former Presbyterian Manse. Its legal address is:

123 John Street West; Part of Lot 16 and 17, North Side of John Street, Plan 56

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Design/ Physical Value

The George D. Morton House has design and physical value as representative example of Neoclassism, c.1880 property. The house was built around 1880 and has the following characteristics: two storey all brick residential dwelling with a symmetric three bay façade.

Historical/ Associative Value

The George D. Morton House has historic/associative value for its direct association with the George D. Morton, Reeve and Physician. George Morton was an early family in the Bradford community. George Morton was both a physician and a Reeve which contributed to the growth and development of the Town.

Contextual Value

The George D. Morton House has contextual value because it defines and supports and maintains the historic identify of the Village of Bradford.

Description of Heritage Attributes

Key heritage attributes of the George D. Morton House that exemplify its heritage value as a Neoclassisc, c.1870 house as it relates to the property include:

- Two story rectangular house
- Symmetrical three bay façade
- Shallow pilasters with steeped brick and stylized basis
- Hipped roof with wide overhangs
- Dichromatic brickwork in the Flemish bond patter
- Large rectangular door and window openings

SOURCES

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We Grew Up In or Live in Bradford West Gwillimbury Facebook Group. Facebook.com

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