

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT



1044 ARGYLE DRIVE, OAKVILLE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Megan Hobson consulting was retained by the owner of 1044 Argyle Drive in the Town of Oakville to prepare a *Heritage Impact Assessment*, as a requirement for an application to demolish a dwelling that is listed on the Municipal Heritage Register. The owner has recently acquired the lakefront property and plans to build a new dwelling in the same location as the existing dwelling.

The existing dwelling does not meet the current owners' space requirements and they plan to demolish the existing 1-storey dwelling and construct a larger 2-3-storey dwelling that will better meet their needs and afford better views to Lake Ontario. The owner has retained the architectural firm Gren Weis Architect & Associates of Oakville to design the new residence.

The subject dwelling is Listed on the Municipal Heritage Register because:

- it has architectural interest because it is a Modern style residence designed in 1957 by Grant Whatmough, a local architect who was heavily influenced by the residential designs of Frank Lloyd Wright
- it was the home of James C. Floyd, a person who has historic significance as the lead engineer at A.V. Roe (Canada) in Malton.

The *Impact Assessment* finds that:

- the architectural value is limited due to the fact that the exterior has been subject to a number of unsympathetic alterations
- the historical association with James C. Floyd is limited to 1957-59, because he returned to England after cancellation of the Avro Arrow project in 1959

Furthermore, the *Impact Assessment* finds that the existing dwelling has limited potential for compatible alterations to be made to enlarge the existing dwelling due to:

- structural constraints
- site constraints
- the experimental nature of its design and materials

Therefore, given the limited architectural and historical value it has been determined that if demolition occurs, the loss of cultural heritage value can be adequately mitigated through documentation and salvage. Documentation included in this report is sufficient and no further documentation is required. The following interior elements have been identified as potential salvage items:

- wood ceiling beams

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This *Heritage Impact Assessment* meets requirements of the Town of Oakville. Preparation of this report included site investigation, a review of relevant heritage policies and applicable legislation, a review of existing historical information about the subject property and its cultural context, and consultation with heritage planning staff.

2.0 LOCATION & SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is a lakefront lot located at 1044 Argyle Drive. Argyle Drive is a secluded residential street that follows the shoreline and contains large 2 to 3-storey dwellings. Properties on the south side of Argyle Drive have irregular frontages due to the shoreline.



1044 ARGYLE DRIVE, OAKVILLE – a waterfront property on a short residential street that follows the shoreline

The subject dwelling is 1-storey in height with a flat roof. The lot slopes down at the back and the house is built into the slope with a lower level that walks out to the back yard. It is constructed with modern materials including concrete block walls, engineered wood beams and large expanses of glass. It is set in the landscape and has a flat roof with a wide overhang. The U-shaped plan is responsive to the natural topography of the site. The interior has an open plan and features large expanses of glass to the outdoors on the rear elevation. The design of the interior and the landscaping including the inground pool reflect the strict geometry of the house plan. The exterior is unornamented except for the expression of construction details such as the horizontal banding, distinctive corner details, and the concrete wing walls.



1044 ARGYLE DRIVE, OAKVILLE – a 1-storey Modern residence built in 1957 for A.V. Roe (Canada) executive James C. Floyd – from left to right: front elevation, concrete wing wall, concrete planter

The flat roof is supported by engineered wood beams that are exposed on the interior and the ceilings are clad in wood. The exterior masonry walls are exposed on the interior and interior

partition walls are built with plywood and gyprock panels. The flooring includes wood parquet and wall-to-wall carpet. The fireplace in the living room is freestanding and unadorned, constructed from the same materials as the exterior walls and echoing the abstract geometry of the house and pool. The in-ground pool is a custom design that was built as part of the house. The landscaping of the back yard includes concrete planters and retaining walls that extend out into the landscape and are part of the original architectural design.



1044 ARGYLE DRIVE, OAKVILLE – open plan interior, large expanses of glazing on the rear elevation, an inground swimming pool – from left to right: the living room was originally designed as a formal dining room, the glass partition was originally a geometric composition in wood, the angular swimming pool is an extension of the architecture of the house

3.0 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

The subject property is Listed on the *Municipal Heritage Register* as a property of interest because it contains a Modern style dwelling designed by architect Grant Whatmough for James C. Floyd who was an executive of the Avro Aircraft company. It is one of three Modern residences in Oakville designed by Grant Whatmough in the 1950s, including the Gerald McCabe Residence. The subject dwelling is the only example that has been added to the Municipal Heritage Register.

4.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

The subject dwelling was built in 1957 for James C. Floyd who purchased a lakefront lot in Trafalgar Township and commissioned Grant Whatmough to design a modern house tailored to the specific needs of his family and responsive to the natural qualities of the site.

James C. Floyd (b. 1914)

James C. "Jim" Floyd played a major role in the design and development of three ground-breaking Canadian aircraft while working with A.V. Roe (Canada) at the Avro Aircraft Limited (Canada) facility at Malton, Ontario.

Born in Manchester, England in 1914, he began his career and the aviation industry in 1930 as an apprentice with A.V. Roe Company in the United Kingdom. He graduated from the Manchester University College of Technology in 1945. He moved to Canada to work for Sir Roy Dobson, who had recently purchased Victoria Aircraft in Malton, Ontario.

Floyd was Chief Design Engineer and later Vice President of Engineering at A.V. Roe (Canada). He was involved in the creation of the Avro Jetliner and the development of the CF-100 Canuck jet fighter. Most importantly, and famously, he was Director of Engineering for the CF-105 Avro Arrow jet fighter, during a period considered by many as the 'Golden Age of Canadian Aviation'.

After the cancellation of the Avro Arrow project in 1959 and the collapse of A.V. Roe (Canada) that followed, he returned to England and continued his work in state-of-the-art aeronautical and space projects. After his retirement, he and his family returned to Canada.

In 1988, he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. In 1993, he was inducted as a Member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.



James C. "Jim" Floyd



Avro Jetliner & Avro Arrow, Malton, Ontario

Grant Whatmough (1921-1999)

Grant Whatmough was an architect, artist and writer. His father Arthur Edwin Whatmough (1884-1971) was an architect and builder in Toronto who built several private houses in the Wychwood Park neighbourhood in 1919-25.

In 1945, Grant moved to England and attended the University of London and Southern College of Art. From 1946-1948 he served as Senior Designer at Vospers Ltd., a British ship building company in Portsmouth. Returning to Canada in 1948, Whatmough worked for several firms as a draftsman and design associate, most notably at Mathers and Haldenby in Toronto, before going into private practice in 1953.

From 1953 onwards he practiced as an architect in Ontario, although he was not formally recognized as an architect by the Ontario Association of Architects until 1963 because he had not received formal training as an architect. He was also an accomplished sculptor and he was a member of the Ontario Society of Artists and Sculptors Society of Canada. His works were sometimes featured in the homes he designed.

In addition to his residential commissions, he completed a number of commercial projects including small industrial plants in Oakville, Port Credit and Islington, studios for an Oakville radio station, and alterations to retail stores.

His residential commissions were mainly in Oakville, Burlington and Milton. He planned a community for employees of Avro.¹ In 1957, the CBC produced a short documentary about his residential work that featured interviews with the architect and three of his clients, including James C. Floyd and Gerald McCabe of Oakville.² The McCabe House (1956) was built for Gerald McCabe, managing editor of *Canadian Homes & Gardens*. The Floyd House (1957) was built for James C. (Jim) Floyd, lead designer of the Avro Arrow.



Grant Whatmough



Floyd House



McCabe House (1956)

Grant Whatmough's architectural work has not been fully documented and a comprehensive study of his work has not been undertaken, so a full understanding of his architectural significance is not known.

Colour slides of drawings and models detailing the construction of the subject dwelling were provided to Michael Seaman, former heritage planner at the Town of Oakville, by the widow of Grant Whatmough. This material and transcripts of interviews with Whatmough's widow and daughter are kept in the property file maintained by heritage planning staff.

The design of the Floyd house is described by Grant's widow Kathleen Whatmough in her unpublished manuscript on her husband's architectural work;

The floor plan of the house was "U" shaped with the "U" open to the lake. This provided a protected area if the wind was from the east or from the west, and it was so seldom from the south it would produce a protected area scooping up the sun and producing a microclimate between the protective wings of the house.

The east wing contained a study with floor to ceiling glass overlooking the lake. Behind it but separated only by an interior glass wall was the long formal living room with its large fireplace.

A half flight of steps led down to the entry hall, a dining area that opened off the kitchen, and in this hub, the hall to the family bedroom wing that formed the other half of the "U". From the entry hall another half flight of stair reached the children's play areas and utility rooms, situated below the living room wing.

¹ Obituary, *Globe & Mail* (Sep 16, 1999). The obituary states that he designed "the first offshore oil drill-rig, and a boat of his design (Bluebird II) still holds the world's speed record." His work included "singular private houses all over southern Ontario."

² A copy of the 1958 CBC documentary was provided to Michael Seaman, former heritage planner at the Town of Oakville, by Sarah Whatmough Thompson, daughter of the late Grant Whatmough. It is said to be the only surviving copy.

The material for the exterior of the house was schell-lite block, produced by Schell Industries in Woodstock, Ontario. Jim Floyd stated that squares bothered him and the elongated blocks were found and made a strong design feature of the house.

The roof line was relatively flat and Jim was concerned that the supports might buckle under a snow load. Someone he trusted from Avro came down and thought about it and finally Grant had a water test done to prove their strength. They flooded the roof with a measured amount of water and it is known to weigh 7 lbs per cubic foot. Floyd was reassured that the slim looking supports would indeed hold up the massive beams and the deck above under heavy load.

Whatmough has been described by architectural historian Robert Hill as “a devotee and follower of Frank Lloyd Wright”. The subject dwelling shows the influence of Wright’s Usonian architecture of the 1930s, in terms of its ground hugging horizontal forms and flat roofs, its attention to the natural landscape, setting the house within the landscape with a U-shaped plan that responds to the natural terrain, and its open space planning with interiors that flow through large expanses of glass to the outdoors. In its construction, it employs Wright’s Usonian principles for a modern architecture made from readily available mass-produced materials developed during the Wars such as concrete block, engineered wood beams and standardized sheets of plywood and gyprock. Like Wright, the fireplace is a prominent feature and exposed brick and wood are used throughout the interior. Every aspect of the design, -exterior, interior and landscape, contributes to the whole design, an approach that evolved out of the Arts & Crafts Movement.



GRANT WHATMHOUGH, Floyd Residence (1957)



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, Zimmerman Residence (1950)



Within a Canadian context, Whatmough’s work has closer affinities with the West Coast Modernism of Ron Thom and Arthur Erickson in the Vancouver area, rather than with the International Style that was more influential in the Toronto area in the 1950s.

5.0 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

5.1 EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ONTARIO REGULATION 09/06

According to Subsection 1 (2) of *Ontario Regulation 9/06, Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*, a property may be designated under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT (YES/NO)	RATIONALE
1. Design of physical value:		
i) Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	YES (limited)	It is an early example in Oakville of a Modern residential design. Its architectural value as a representative example of Modern residential design in Oakville has been diminished due to exterior alterations.
ii) Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	NO	It displays a moderate degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit in its open plan layout, geometric form, and responsiveness to the natural landscape.
iii) Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	NO	It displays a moderate degree of technical achievement in the use of modern materials for residential construction, including concrete block, engineered wood beams, plywood, and large expanses of glazing.
2. Historical or associative value		
i) Has direct associations with a theme, event, believe, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	YES (limited)	It is associated with aeronautical engineer James C. Floyd who commissioned Grant Whatmough to design the house in 1957. Floyd is nationally recognized for his contribution to the Aerospace industry in Canada who is primarily associated with A.V. Roe (Canada) located in Malton in the City of Mississauga. Floyd's association with Oakville is limited to his private residence and is limited two years, because he returned to England in 1959 due to cancellation of the AVRO Arrow project.
ii) Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	NO	It does not have potential to yield further information.

iii) Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community	NO	It reflects the work of Grant Whatmough, a Canadian architect who was “a devotee and follower” of Frank Lloyd Wright. Whatmough is an architect of local significance, whose residential commissions were mainly in Oakville, Burlington & Milton. There is no indication that his work made a significant contribution to the community of Oakville.
3. Contextual Value		
i) Is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	NO	The character of the area is in transition. The subject dwelling is associated with the former character of the area when modest suburban homes were built on lakefront properties in Trafalgar Township in the 1950s and 60s. The area is now a residential suburb within the Town of Oakville, increasingly characterized by large mansions along the lakefront.
ii) Is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	<u>YES (limited)</u>	It is physically linked to the natural topography and lakefront location of the site that informed the siting, form, and layout of the house and pool. <u>The physical links are an attribute of a private residence and do not have significant associations for the larger community.</u>
iii) Is a landmark	NO	It was designed to sit in the landscape and is not prominent from the street or the Lake.

Evaluation summary: the property meets 3 criteria for Designation but values are limited. (Limitations are underlined in the table above)

Recommendation: Designation is not recommended because the exterior has been altered and the architectural, historic and contextual values are limited.

6.0 CURRENT CONDITIONS

While the original design intent generally remains legible, a number of unsympathetic alterations have been made to the exterior of the building. The front elevation originally had a small window that has since been enlarged, the car port has been enclosed and converted to a garage, and a bay window has been added on the rear elevation to accommodate a breakfast room off the kitchen. The roof overhang has been modified in some areas and original wooden posts that supported the overhang in those areas have been removed. The masonry has been re-painted and the original exterior woodwork has been re-stained, clad with metal flashing, or in some cases removed. The concrete paving behind the house has been covered with wood decking and

an awning has been installed. The original in-ground pool remains but is in need of repairs. The interior remains largely unchanged, with most of the original finishes and fixtures intact.



ALTERATION: a bay window has been added on the front elevation – the roof overhang has been modified and the wooden post removed - the chimney profile has been modified and the exterior has been parged over



ALTERATION: the carport has been enclosed and converted to a garage



ALTERATION: a bay window has been added on the rear elevation and an awning has been installed – the glazing has been replaced - metal flashings have been installed over the woodwork – the concrete brick has been repainted

The building generally appears to be in fair condition, but a number of condition issues were noted. The exterior has been painted and the paint is peeling and flaking in a number of areas. The original design intent was for the masonry to be painted white and to contrast with the wood elements that were stained a natural colour. This was critical to the design and has been lost due to later alterations. The masonry has been painted a drab beige colour and the woodwork has been stained a darker colour or covered with dark brown flashing. There is a considerable

amount of organic growth on the roof suggesting that water is pooling on the roof and not draining properly. The exterior walls are loadbearing masonry walls and the house appears to be constructed on a concrete slab foundation.

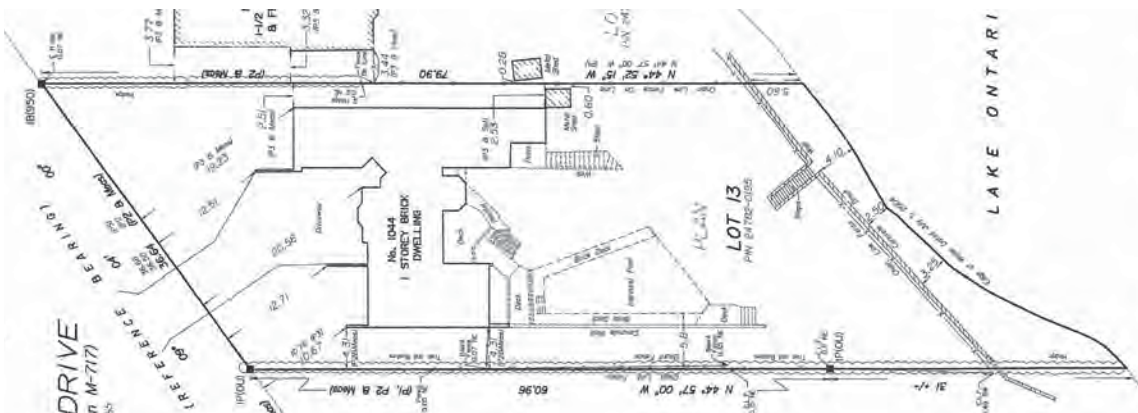


CONDITION ISSUES: organic growth on the roof and masonry indicating persistently wet conditions

7.0 PROPOSED DEMOLITION

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing 1-storey dwelling and construct a new 2-storey dwelling. The existing structure was designed based on the specific needs of the original owners and does not meet their needs.

There are a number of factors that limit potential for altering the existing dwelling to meet the applicant's needs. There are structural limitations because the existing load bearing masonry walls and concrete slab foundation cannot support additional floors above. There are lot constraints because the existing dwelling is sited in the centre of an irregularly shaped lot and has very narrow side yards. The rear yard is skewed because of the irregular shoreline that forms the rear boundary. Therefore, the amount of buildable space is limited to the area where the inground pool and lawn are currently located. Building an addition in this limited amount of space would not provide much additional living space and would significantly reduce the amount of amenity space in the rear yard. Furthermore, due to the lack of side yards, gaining access to the rear yard for construction would be problematic and materials and equipment would have to be craned over the house.



EXISTING SITE CONFIGURATION – the existing house is wedged in a narrow lot and has a small back yard that slopes on either side. When it was originally built, the pool was constructed before the house because there was no way to get material and equipment into the back yard once the house was built.

8.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The *Impact Assessment* finds that the subject dwelling is an early example of Modern residential design in Oakville designed by Grant Whatmough who was a follower of Frank Lloyd Wright. The interior is representative of the original design intent, but the exterior has been subject to a number of unsympathetic alterations.

Whatmough has received little recognition for his work and his work is not well documented. Based on the current limited understanding of Whatmough's architectural work, it has been determined that he primarily had local significance through a small number of commercial and residential commissions in Oakville, Milton, and Burlington.

The unsympathetic alterations include:

- installation of new glazing units in various styles
- addition of bay windows on the front and rear elevations
- alterations to the roof overhang and removal of wood posts on the main elevation
- conversion of the open carport into a garage
- repainting of the concrete exterior and re-staining, cladding or removal of original exterior wood elements
- addition of an awning and wood decking at the rear

The condition issues associated with the experimental design and modern materials include:

- modifications to the roof and flashings due to persistent leaks
- repainting of the exterior to prevent deterioration of the concrete masonry units
- parging of the chimneys due to deterioration of the concrete masonry units
- replacement of the original glazing units due to persistent leaks

The *Impact Assessment* finds that James C. Floyd was an early patron of modern architecture in Oakville at a time when architectural taste remained conservative in Ontario, creating an interesting parallel between his pioneering work in the field of aeronautics and Whatmough's experimental work in the field of residential design and construction. However, James C. Floyd only lived in the house briefly, from 1957 to 1959, before returning to England.

Floyd is nationally recognized for his contributions to his profession and is a member of the Canadian Hall of Fame in Aeronautics. As a private residence, the subject dwelling has limited potential for communicating the historical significance of the James Floyd's work in the field of aeronautics, for which he is recognized. His achievements in Canada are primarily associated with A.V. Roe (Canada), located in Malton in the City of Mississauga.

The *Impact Assessment* finds that the existing dwelling has very limited potential for expansion or alteration to meet the current owners' needed. Given the 'gestalt' quality of the design that is typical of Modern architecture of this era, sympathetic alteration that is compatible with the original design intent is not possible given the significant constraints of the site and the new owners interest in building a more vertical structure with views to the lake that is in contrast to the ground hugging profile of the existing dwelling

9.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Impact Assessment* finds that:

- the architectural value is limited due to the fact that the exterior has been subject to a number of unsympathetic alterations
- the historical association with James C. Floyd is limited to 1957-59, because he returned to England after cancellation of the Avro Arrow project in 1959

Furthermore, the *Impact Assessment* finds that the existing dwelling has limited potential for compatible alterations to be made to enlarge the existing dwelling due to:

- structural constraints
- site constraints
- the experimental nature of its design and materials

Therefore, given the limited architectural and historical value it has been determined that if demolition occurs, the loss of cultural heritage value can be adequately mitigated through documentation and salvage. Documentation included in this report is sufficient and no further documentation is required. The following interior elements have been identified as potential salvage items:

- wood ceiling beams



POTENTIAL SALVAGE ITEM: wood ceiling beams

8.0 SOURCES

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Town of Oakville staff, 'Grant Whatmough', Heritage Research Report. City staff files.

Whatmough, Kathleen (wife of Grant Whatmough), typed notes on Grant's life & architectural work. Town of Oakville, staff files.

9.0 QUALIFICATIONS OF THE AUTHOR

The author of this report is a professional member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals. Formal education includes a Master of Arts in Architectural History from the University of Toronto and a diploma in Heritage Conservation from the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts. Professional experience includes an internship at the Ontario Heritage Trust, three years as Architectural Historian and Conservation Specialist at Taylor Hazell Architects in Toronto, and 10 years in private practice in Ontario as a heritage consultant. Other relevant experience includes teaching architectural history at the University of Toronto and McMaster University and teaching Research Methods and Conservation Planning at the Willowbank School for Restoration Arts in Queenston. In addition to numerous heritage reports, the author has published work in academic journals such as the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* and the *Canadian Historical Review*.

APPENDIX A: PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



FRONT ELEVATION



FRONT ELEVATION



FRONT ELEVATION – detail



FRONT ELEVATION – masonry detail – horizontal banding



FRONT ELEVATION – masonry detail – corner detail



FRONT ELEVATION – masonry detail – buttress



ROOF – gravel roof with organic debris and biological growth



FRONT ELEVATION – recessed main entrance – garage doors installed in the original carport



REARE ELEVATION – wide roof overhang



REAR ELEVATION – the original glazing has been replaced



REAR ELEVATION – architectural planter with the same geometry, materials, and detailing as the house



REAR ELEVATION – bay window addition



SIDE ELEVATION – original glazing has been replaced on the lower level



REAR YARD



REAR YARD



IN GROUND SWIMMING POOL



VIEW FROM THE BACK YARD TOWARDS THE POOL & HOUSE



CONCRETE RETAINING WALL & FENCE AT THE SHORELINE



VIEW FROM THE BACK YARD TO LAKE ONTARIO WITH TORONTO VISIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND



ENTRANCE VESTIBULE



VIEW DOWN TO THE LOWER LEVEL



LIVING ROOM – EXPOSED MASONRY WALLS – EXPOSED WOOD BEAMS AND WOOD CEILINGS – WALL TO WALL CARPET – ARCHITECTURAL FIREPLACE – PLYWOOD & GYPROCK PARTITION WALLS



LIVING ROOM – RIBBON WINDOW ON SIDE ELEVATION



LIVING ROOM – LARGE EXPANSES OF GLAZING ON THE REAR ELEVATION



SITTING ROOM



SPLIT LEVEL INTERIOR - STAIRS TO THE LIVING ROOM (LEFT) AND LOWER LEVEL (CENTER)



KITCHEN



KITCHEN



PARQUET FLOORING



LAMINATED WOOD BEAMS AND WOOD CEILING



CORRIDOR TO BEDROOMS - DINING ROOM



BEDROOM



BATHROOM



LOWER LEVEL - FAMILY ROOM



LOWER LEVEL - OFFICE



STRUCTURAL WOOD BEAM AND WOOD CEILING

APPENDIX B: HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION



FRONT ELEVATION – entrance from Argyle Court



FRONT ENTRANCE – the window on the main elevation has been enlarged and the car port has been enclosed



CAR PORT – the open carport has been enclosed and converted to a garage



REAR ELEVATION – the in-ground pool and the concrete stairs reflect the geometry of the house – a bay window has been added in the centre to make a breakfast area off the kitchen – note the uneven topography of the site



REAR ELEVATION – an awning and wooden decking has been added



LIVING ROOM – the freestanding brick fireplace reflects the geometry of the house



LIVING ROOM & STUDY – the study is now used as a dining room



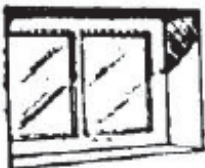
ENTRANCE FOYER – note the original wood partition above the stairs that has been replaced by glass – the wood sculpture on the wall may be by Grant Whatmough



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Advertisement for concrete masonry units produced by Schell Industries Ltd. in Woodstock used in the construction of 1044 Argyle Court. (Acton Free Press, Thursday October 25th, 1961)