



# Earlscourt Branch



## Historical Highlights

- 1911** Deputations from Earlscourt, annexed to Toronto in 1910, ask the Toronto Public Library Board "for the extension of library privileges"
- 1913** Earlscourt Branch opens 19 December. Named for its local community, the library and reading room are located in rented premises, 48 x 32 feet, in the old Boon Avenue Methodist Church, Boon Avenue, northwest corner of Ascot Avenue.
- 1919** Toronto City Council provides funds "by a special appropriation of \$100,000 for the purchase of sites and the erection of library buildings for the districts of Earlscourt and East Toronto".
- 1920** Present site acquired. Construction begins on 13 July.
- 1921** Opened 27 January. Charles J. Gibson, Architect. Total cost including site, building and equipment is \$78,864.
- 1925-32** Interior murals painted by George A. Reid, principal of the Ontario College of Art, and two of Reid's former students, Lorna Claire and Doris McCarthy.
- 1954** Southernmost 20 feet of land flanking Dufferin Street sold to the Salvation Army, 28 June.
- 1964** Renovation planned by Toronto Public Library staff begins 6 January. Murals painted out.

**HOW "13" WAS LUCKY FOR BUSY EARLSCOURT**  
**GROWING DISTRICT GETS LAST OF CITY'S BAKERS' DOZEN OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

Earlscourt's new library was not large enough to accommodate the crowd at the opening last night. They accordingly met in the Earlscourt Methodist Church, Mr. T. W. Wolf, President of the Library Board, was Chairman and was presiding.

"The name Earlscourt," he said, "comes from the name of Major Foster, situated at the corner of Dufferin street and St. Clair avenue. The Major is still living in the south of France. This building stands on what was known as the Roman House Place. Here were grown the vegetables and fruit for that famous King's Hotel here. This is the thirteenth public library in the city of Toronto. Out of these thirteen only two were in existence five years ago. This shows how the Public Library Board has managed out of its small appropriation to keep pace with the marvellous growth of the city. It now has for careful control of its funds."

Mayor Mackenzie, who was accorded a splendid reception, spoke upon the value of libraries and stated that in his own case it was the library that had laid the foundation of reading which had been most useful in his career. Mr. P. W. Lord took the difficulty of keeping children clear of street reading. Dr. Look, the Chief Librarian, spoke of the library as the social life in the community, and asked for the assistance of the citizens of the district. Addresses were given by the Rev. A. J. Reid, Rev. Beris Melton, Rev. R. Bryson, Mr. Henry Patten and Mr. T. Han- ton. There are 1,000 volumes in the new library.

Toronto Globe, 20 December 1913.



TPF Toronto Reference Library X71-150

**Earlscourt Branch, Boon Avenue, northwest corner of Ascot Avenue, 1913**  
 Earlscourt Branch, Toronto Public Library's 13th branch, opened on 19 December 1913 in leased quarters in the old Boon Avenue Methodist Church, a white wooden building constructed in 1906. (The new Earlscourt Methodist Church is the large brick building in the upper left.) Initially, the 48-by-32-foot reading room and stacks (with 1,000 books) were open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 13.5 hours a week.

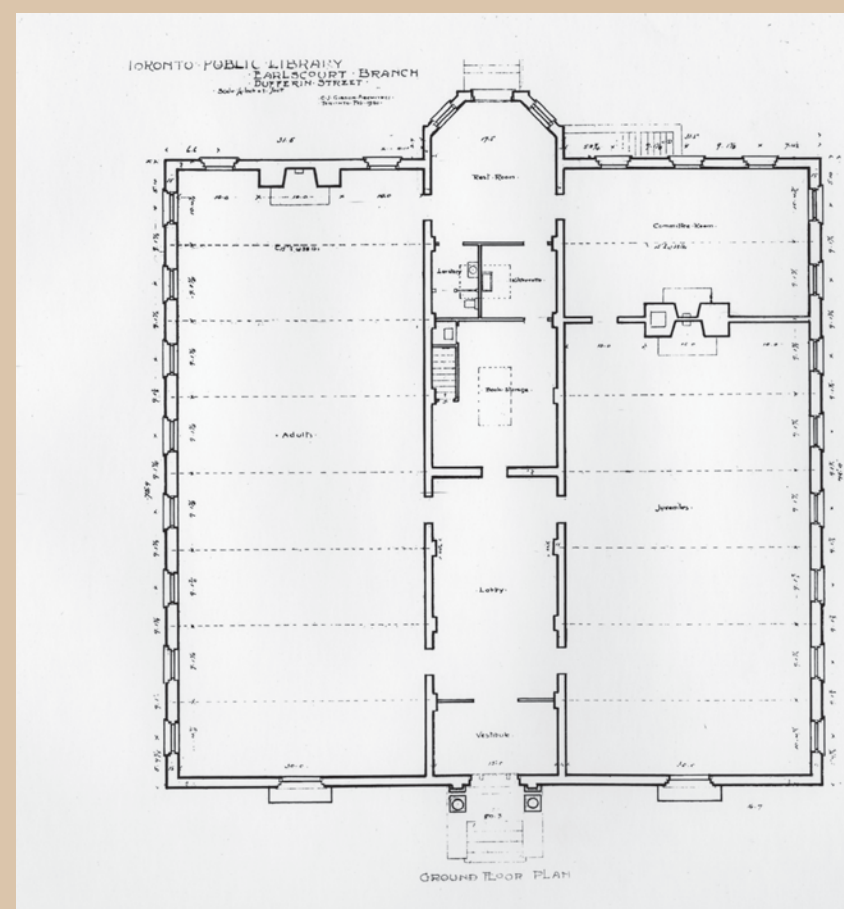
**NEW BRANCH IS NEEDED**  
 Earlscourt Public Library Is Well Patronized, Children and Soldiers, Too.

Earlscourt, Oct. 29.—The need of a new branch library is urgent. The people of Earlscourt are fond of their library, and it is always well patronized, particularly in the evenings. On Saturday the building was packed. In five hours there were 500 volumes handed out. The present building has been occupied for three years, and contains 7,000 books.

Toronto Star, 29 October 1917.

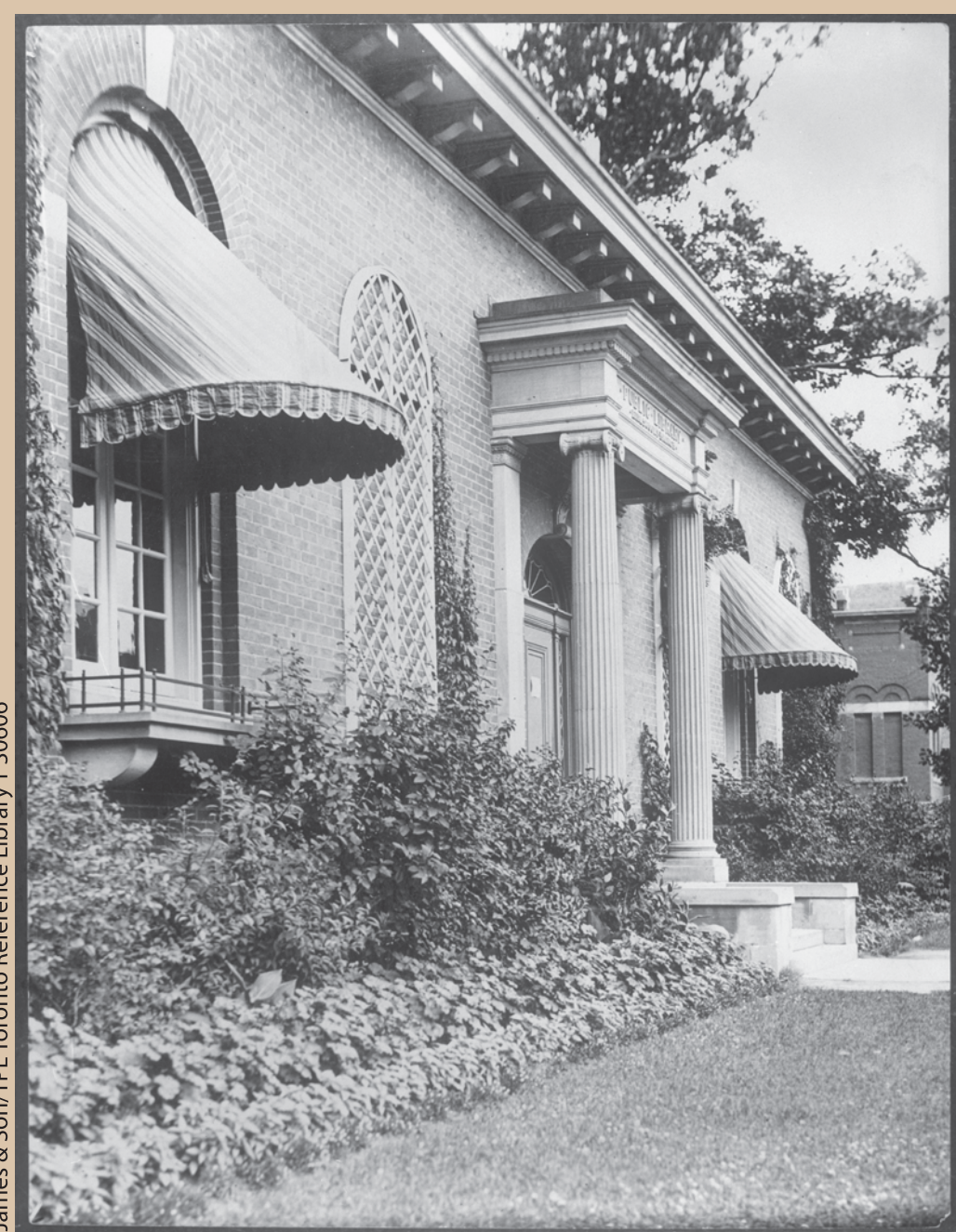
**LARGE BRANCH LIBRARY**  
 Earlscourt's new branch public library on Dufferin street, just south of St. Clair avenue, is fast approaching completion. The library room for adults is 30 by 72 feet and that for the children 30 by 54. The children are also to have a club room, 30 by 18 feet. Grounds are to be beautified with flowers and shrubs.

Toronto Telegram, 16 August, 1920



Plan for Earlscourt Branch, C. J. Gibson, Architect, Toronto, February 1920

C. Gibson, Architect/TPF Dufferin St. Clair Branch Local History Collection



**Entrance, Earlscourt Branch, Dufferin Street, 1922**  
 Earlscourt Branch officially opened in its own building on the east side of Dufferin Street south of St. Clair Avenue West on 27 January 1921. In October 1924, the Earlscourt Horticultural Society awarded its silver cup to the branch for the best kept large grounds in the district.



Toronto Public Library Annual Report 1920.

**"After school in the Children's Room, Earlscourt Library," 1920/1**  
 Library facilities for children, located on the south wing of the new Earlscourt Branch, were a dramatic improvement over services in the old library, which had prompted the Toronto Globe to plea in March 1919: "The children of Earlscourt should have a better chance than can be given them in the little back room of the 'shack' now called a library."



Toronto Public Library Archives fonds

**Boys and Girls Department after the 1964 renovation**  
 The adult and children's reading rooms were reversed, a larger story room and a central circulation desk were created, and all of the interior murals and two of the three fireplaces were covered.



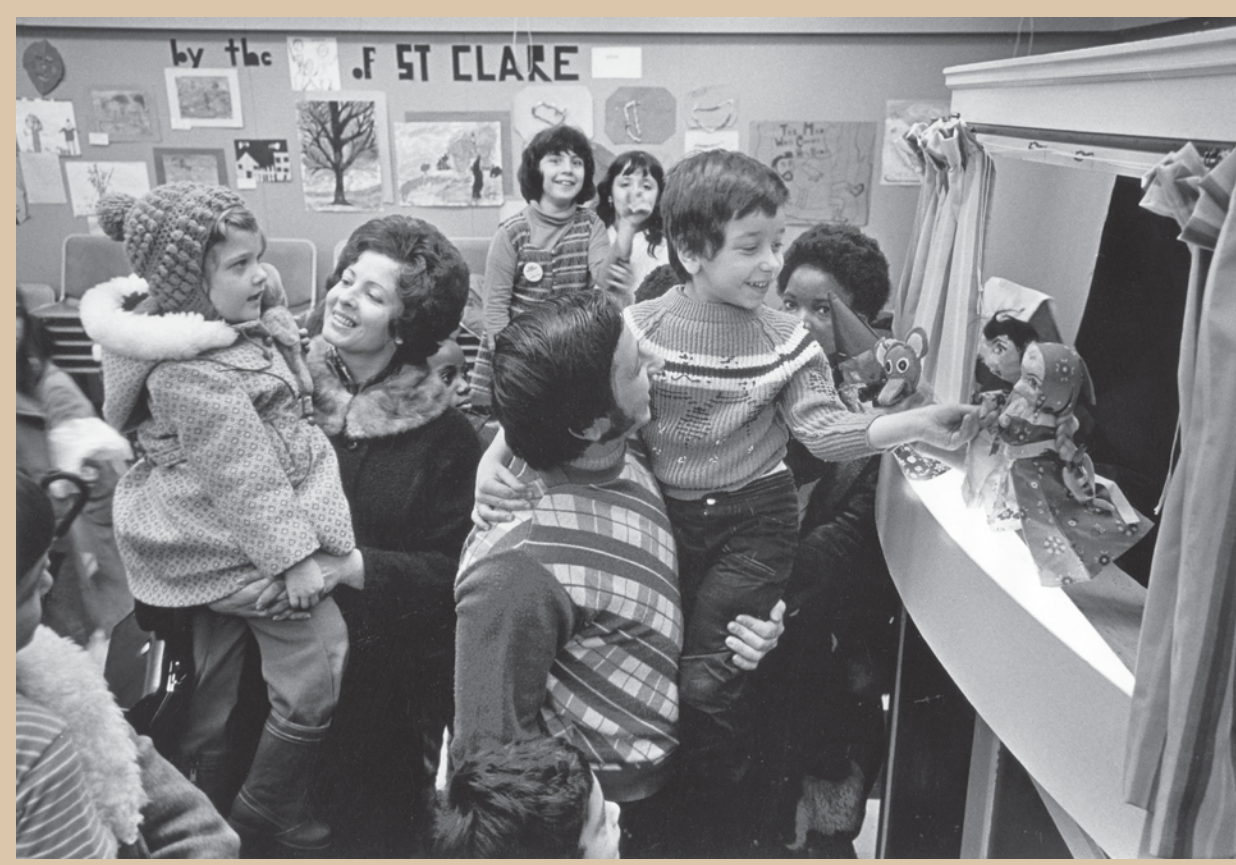
Toronto Public Library Archives fonds

**Earlscourt Branch, Dufferin Street façade, 1970s?**  
 Although window awnings remained, the original cornice and much of the landscaping had been removed from the Dufferin Street façade by the 1970s.



**"Mr. Fabio Rizzi assists Italian-speaking borrowers at the Earlscourt Branch," 1971**  
 Toronto Public Library appointed an Italian-speaking librarian to the Earlscourt Branch in the 1960s. It soon had the largest collection of Italian-language books in the library system, housed in the "Italian Room," created in the former children's club room.

- 1973** Renamed Dufferin/St. Clair Branch to indicate more clearly its location, 27 January.
- 1978-9** Renovation and expansion, Baird Sampson Architects. Officially opened 17 March.
- 2004** Mural panel, *The Family* by G. A. Reid, restored through the leadership of local residents, spearheaded by the Regal Heights Residents' Association, 21 April–12 May.
- 2006** Included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties, adopted by City Council, May
- 2007** Closed for renovation and expansion, 7 July, Makrimichalos Cugini Architects. G. A. Reid and Doris McCarthy murals restored.
- 2008** Reopened 28 October; presentation of Heritage Toronto plaque commemorating Earlscourt Branch



Toronto Public Library Annual Report 1973.

**"Open house at Dufferin/St. Clair for parents and children," 7 November 1973**

## Dufferin library getting ready for its next chapter

**LISA RAINFORD**  
 The Dufferin/St. Clair Library, one of the oldest in the city, will be restored to its original splendour by a major renovation project. The new interior will be designed by Baird Sampson Architects, in the architectural firm that has been hired to renovate the present site.

"I've worked with them before," said Cheryl Boushock, executive and senior manager for Toronto Public Library. "They're a really creative and professional firm."

The renovation project is a multi-phased process. The first phase will be to demolish the building's interior, which will be replaced by a new design. The second phase will be to restore the exterior, which will be replaced by a new design. The final phase will be to restore the interior, which will be replaced by a new design.

The library has had "wings" on either side of the original structure. The wings were built in 1921 and 1922. The wings were built on the site of the original building. The wings were built on the site of the original building.

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The Villager, 1 December 2006



Toronto Public Library Annual Report 1973.

**Earlscourt Branch is renamed Dufferin/St. Clair Branch, 27 January 1973.**  
 Heather Granatstein, an assistant in the Boys and Girls Department, watches as a sign with the new library name is placed over the original name carved in the portico.

## Italian leaders play key role in \$400,000 library renovation

**By Joe Serge Toronto Star**  
 The Dufferin-St. Clair branch of the Toronto Public Library has become a focal point for the predominantly Italian neighbourhood.

The Dante Society, a Metro Italian cultural group, regularly shows Italian films and lectures there. Old people's groups meet at the library and there is a tax clinic at this time of the year.

When the library's new \$400,000 addition and renovation is officially opened Saturday afternoon, people in the area, including Angelo Della Pia, a teacher, Ligo Prestigiacomo, a community worker, and Angelo DiLillo, president of the Italian Immigrant Aid Society on St. Clair Ave. W., can look back with satisfaction, knowing they played an important role in the project.

The upgrading of the 57-year-old library building on Dufferin St. is part of a program by the Toronto Public Library Board to renovate and expand old libraries at a cost of \$1.2 million a year. Two other libraries in the west end recently were renovated. Rensselaer on Huron St. W. was opened Feb. 23, and High Park on Bloor Ave. will be opened March 27.

In 1976, the library board adopted a program of branch renovations. Many of the 26 libraries had not been improved since they were built. Many were in poor shape and inadequate for community needs.

The board also decided to get area residents' views on library planning and invited them to join the building committee. An average committee consists of 12 citizens, the area librarian, two staff members from the branch library and one board member. It operates on a "double majority" voting system on major decisions, requiring agreement by a majority of the staff members and a majority of the citizens. Pia, Prestigiacomo and DiLillo are members of the citizens' group.

The Dufferin-St. Clair project, designed by architect George Baird, gives the place an additional 2,000 square feet of space for books, magazines and records. There is a casual reading area and facilities for film showing and lectures have been improved. The library entrance now has a ramp for the disabled.

The library has 10,000 books in its multi-language section — about 80 per cent in Italian. Children from Italian families go there for books such as *Cappuccino Rosso* (Little Red Riding Hood) and *Conterzola* (Cinderella) and, of course, Bianca Neve (Snow White).

Toronto Star, 13 March 1979.



Toronto Public Library Archives fonds

**Ground-breaking ceremony for renovation and expansion, August 1979**  
 Officials include Malva Kannins, West Area Librarian (far left), and Nancy Byers, Branch Head, Earlscourt-Dufferin/St. Clair Branch, 1971-1987 (second from right).

**BIBLIOTECA DUFFERIN/ST. CLAIR**

1625 Dufferin Street (a sud di St. Clair) 652-1460

**ORARIO**

Lunedì-Venerdì 12-8:30 (Estate 10-8)  
 Sabato 9-5  
 Domenica 1:30-5 (Ottobre-Aprile)

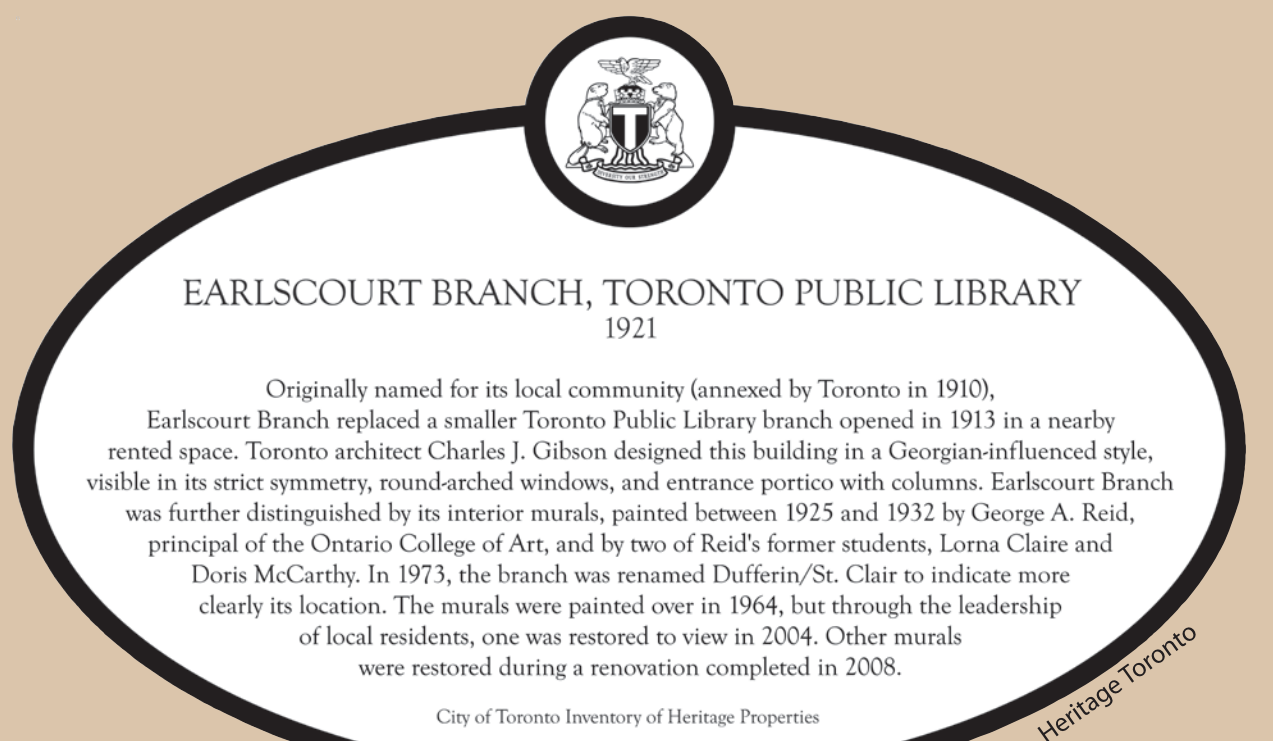
**Italian-language flyer showing Dufferin Street façade after 1978-9 renovation and expansion by Baird Sampson Architects.**  
 The renovation included additions on the north and south sides and a new front entrance with handicapped access.



Makrimichalos Cugini Architects/Toronto Public Library Marketing and Communications Department.

**Architectural rendering of Dufferin Street façade, 2007-8 renovation and expansion by Makrimichalos Cugini Architects.**  
 This renovation featured a new building entrance and restoration of much of the original 1921 façade; special lighting to highlight the restored wall murals; a redesigned interior and replacement additions on the north and south ends. The southern addition included a new program space named "Earlscourt Room" to honour the branch's heritage and a local 19th century estate.

**Text of Heritage Toronto plaque presented at Dufferin/St. Clair Branch, 28 October 2008.**



Heritage Toronto



# Dufferin / St. Clair Branch

