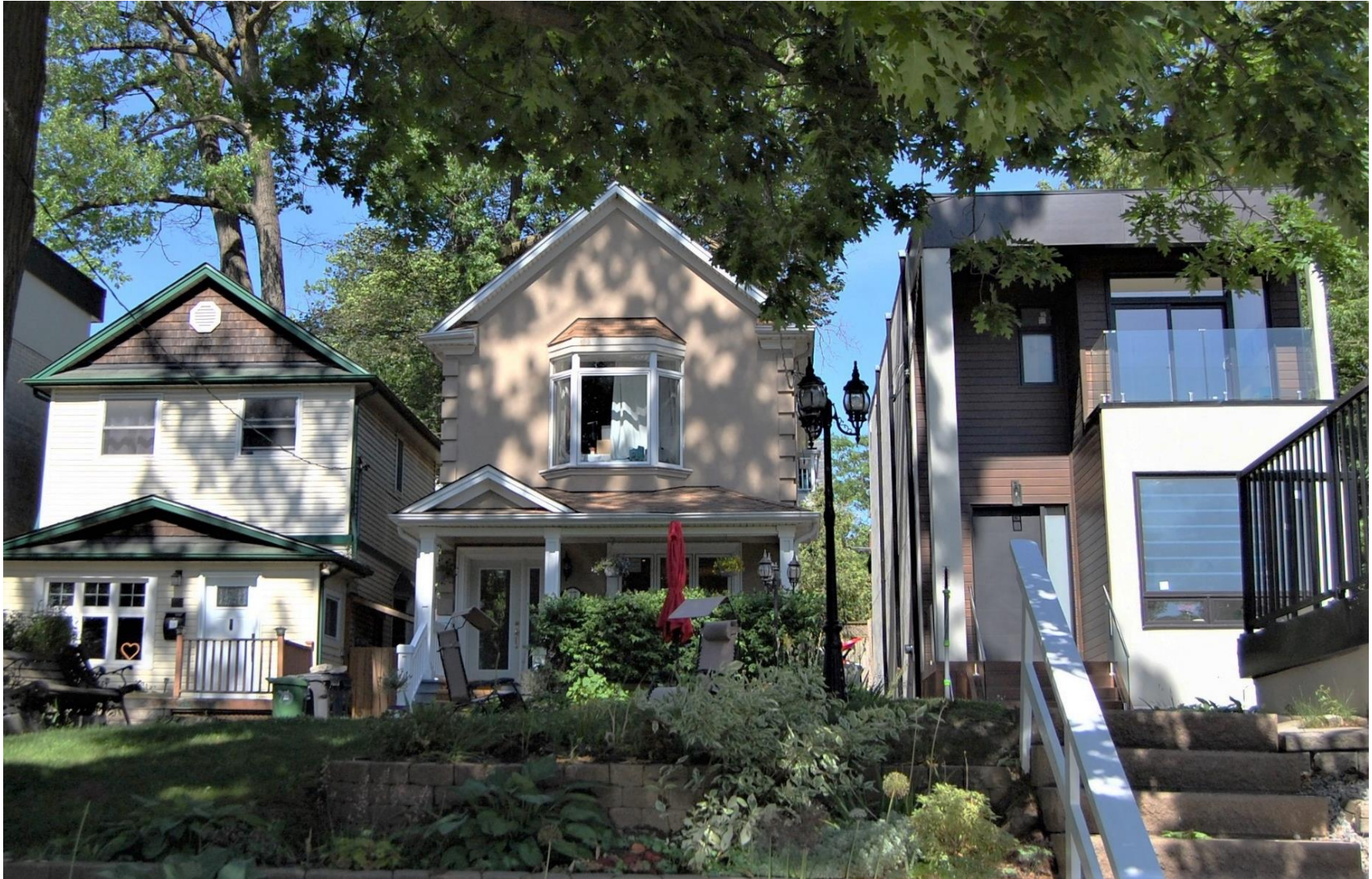
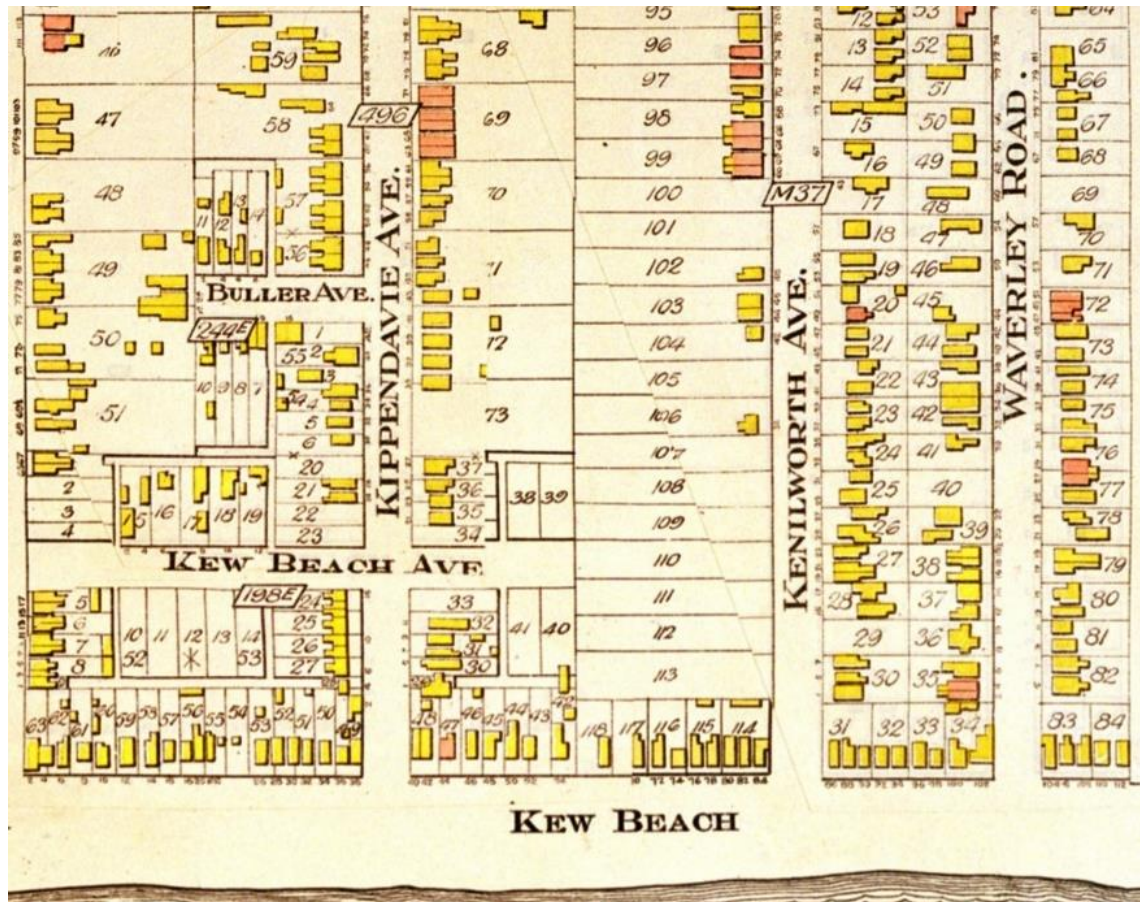


6. KENILWORTH AND KIPPENDAVIE: AN ENCLAVE OF NO CERTAIN AGE



Kenilworth Avenue, June 2021



Detail from Goad's Atlas, 1913 (colour depicts exterior wall material: yellow=wood, orange=brick)
The beach was completely lined with small, wooden cottages, all of which would be demolished in 1931

Not much remains of the original Kew Beach residential community - the area centered on Kenilworth and Kippendavie, west of Kew Gardens - and for this there appear to be two reasons. One is that a good part of its housing - more than at Balmy Beach - was expropriated and demolished to create Eastern Beaches Waterfront Park in 1931 (see Sights #3 and #5). Some fifty lakefront cottages were removed, along with a comparable amount of street-facing

housing in the block closest to the lake, up to Kew Beach Avenue. That same year the City also expropriated a large block of land to create Kew Beach Athletic Field (now Pantry Park); most lots there were unbuilt, so few houses had to be demolished, but its creation lessened the residential character of the area. The other reason, perhaps not as widely recognized, is that much of its housing was of inferior quality and over the decades has had to be replaced or substantially rebuilt.



Sketch, City Architect's Dept, c.1931 [CTA Series 1188, File 1, Item 52b]
Proposed entrance to the new 'Kew Beach Athletic Park' on west side of Kenilworth

The area was subdivided and made available for development quite early, in 1887. But lacking municipal water and sewer service and frequent, readily accessible streetcars to downtown - where nearly all jobs were - it did not immediately attract builders. Waverley Road was partially built up in the 1890s, with maybe twenty occupied houses by 1900, but the other streets were not.

Only after 1900, once services were in place, did full-scale development begin. By 1910 the area had well over a hundred houses – both sides of Waverley and the east side of Kenilworth were almost completely built up.

We have little visual evidence of these early houses. But we know from documentary sources that nearly all were wood-framed and wooden-clad (see 1913 Goad's above), which usually meant less than robust foundations, and that many were of rather low value. A few that were photographed in 1930 ranged in size from very small to medium, were of wood, and occupied little land. Some



11, 9, 7, and 5 Kippendavie Ave, March 1930 [CTA Series 372, SS 3, Item 783]

Each of these four houses, built between 1910 and 1912, was separately owned; #7 was occupied by its owner, a draughtsman; the other three were rented by their owners to, over the next few years, a widow, a painter, a printer, a salesman, a chauffeur, and a harness-maker.

on Kenilworth and Kippendavie close to the lake – year-round residences, not summer cottages – were little more than shacks. We also know that the

occupants of these houses – whether owners or renters – were mostly blue-collar workers of limited means.

Houses for the better-off middle-class were built too – the celebrated “Inglenook” on Waverley being one – but even these were entirely of wood and often lacked substantial foundations. So, all told, the housing here was structurally less sound and of lower value than most of the housing built about the same time in the central and eastern parts of the neighbourhood.



27 (left) and 25 Kenilworth, 27 March 1930, prior to demolition [CTA Series 372, SS 3, Item 790]
Construction dates and initial ownership are hard to determine but both houses were built pre-1910; in 1913, #27 (assessed at \$350) was owned and occupied by a travelling salesman and his wife and #25 (\$800) was owned and occupied by a foreman and his wife.

Why this should be is hard to say. Maybe builders were following a pattern set earlier, before the area was serviced, when its semi-rural ambience attracted those who, for whatever reason, could tolerate or even favoured rustic conditions – many incoming residents came from farms or small towns. And there was certainly a demand for ‘affordable housing’ within the expanding lower-middle-class of Edwardian urban society. In both style and quality, in other words, the housing might have been the builders’ response to demand.

Whatever the reason, the upshot was that in much of Kew Beach, especially along Kenilworth and Kippendavie Avenues, builders built plenty of housing destined not to last, or that, to remain desirable, was going to need future upgrading and rebuilding. This was apparent as early as 1944 when a city housing inventory classified this pocket as in need of renewal. That study’s authors were proven quite right.



Kippendavie Avenue, April 2021 (built 1907, 1914)



Kenilworth Avenue, April 2021 (built 1905)

Some original housing survives. A few small, nearly shack-like structures remain, as do some substantial houses, both semi-detached and detached; nearly all these survivors have been altered to some degree, yet they still reveal their original form. There is even the odd true original, often obscured by mature trees thriving in soil undisturbed by modern landscaping, and by shrubs, now gone feral, planted who knows how long ago. So the enclave's genesis is still apparent in its present landscape.

But the defining feature of this enclave is not its original housing but its veritable hodge-podge of building dates and styles – the result of countless rebuilds and infills – that follows directly from the poor quality of the original housing. Nearly an entire block on the west side of Kippendavie, which must have been especially poorly constructed, has been replaced by various forms of multi-unit housing built at different times in different styles by different builders. Homeowners, both resident and non-resident, have been underpinning and expanding, not to mention demolishing and rebuilding, houses here for many years, sometimes striving to retain their street's existing character but often inadvertently reflecting the time of renovation as much as the time of initial construction.

How old is this enclave? Who can say? Indeed, historians of design could likely find at least one structure built or substantially rebuilt in every decade of the twentieth century. One does not see much truly original housing here, but its absence tells us something about it.



Kippendavie Avenue, April 2021

SOURCES (in addition to those cited under the images):

"Proposed Improvements - Eastern Beaches," 1 June 1931, CTA, Series 724, Item 291; "Neighbourhood Classifications," *Third Annual Report of the City Planning Board*, Toronto, 31 Dec. 1944; Goad's Atlas 1910, 1913, and 1924, accessed at website 'oldtorontomaps'; Toronto City Directories, various years, accessed at website of TPL, digital city directories; City of Toronto Archives, Toronto Assessment Rolls, various years, and various photographs in Series 372, Sub-series 3; Registered Plan of Subdivision M27, 22 Dec. 1887 [Ontario Land Registry]; contemporary photographs by author.

