

Tip Tip Tailors Building Should Be Conserved

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Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
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David Dunkelman was an innovator.

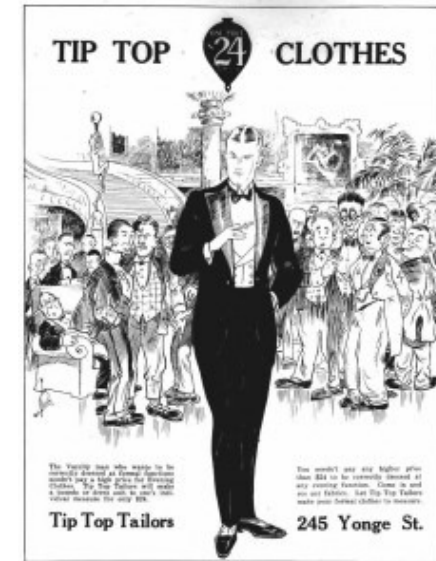
Born in Poland

Making buttonholes at age 13

Opened first factory and Yonge Street store in 1909

Expanded to Halifax and elsewhere a decade later

The leading name in men's clothing in Canada for almost a century



Acknowledgements:

- Original research by Heritage Trust members
- Garry Shutlak, Public Archives of Nova Scotia
- HRM Archives
- Dunkelman family, Toronto
- Duffus family, Halifax
- Canadian Business Hall of Fame
- Heritage unit, HRM staff

David Dunkelman liked modern architecture.

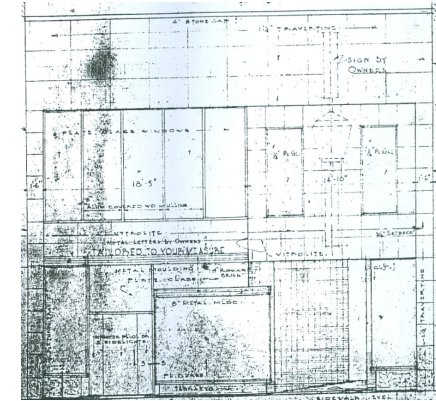
(Toronto factory, 1929, below)



Dapper David Dunkelman (left) and family at Atlantic City, 1936



In 1950, young Halifax architect Allan Duffus designed a new store for Tip Top Tailors on Barrington Street. Duffus' innovative front elevation for Tip Top Tailors is a study in cubes, squares and rectangles, inspired by the fifties' abstract art.

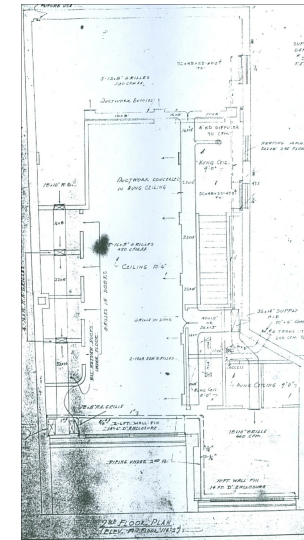


World War II

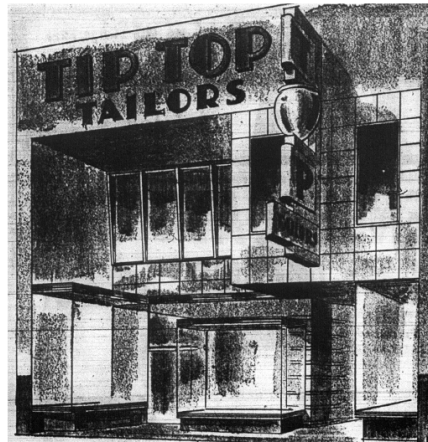
Tip Top Tailors devoted all their efforts to the War, making uniforms, helping to raise funds.



Duffus' original second floor plan had a cube-shaped ladies lounge, a tailor shop and a light well.



An L-shaped alcove had display cases on the ground floor and vertical windows on the second floor. The “cube” for the ladies lounge supported a sign with a rotating orb, with the letter I on one side and O on the other, continuously changing from TIP to TOP.



Tip Top on Barrington Street, 1957



October 10, 1951:

The *Herald* described the new building as “distinctively modern in design”. Tip Top advertised that the building had “the latest and newest in modern store design – the last word in luxurious and convenient appointments and beauty of design from front to back”.

Allan Duffus, FRAIC, FAIA, D. Eng, continued to design buildings with innovative shapes, including the oval Bedford United Church.



- Tip Top Tailors Building has heritage value because of its association with a brilliant Canadian businessman, a leading Canadian clothing firm, and an outstanding Halifax architect, and because of the originality of its design.

Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District, 2009.

Tip Top gained the same protections as registered heritage properties outside the District.



Church of England Institute

Former Tip Top Tailors

Tramway Building

Basic concept of a heritage conservation district:

- Studies show that, in heritage conservation districts where the rules are followed, customers are attracted, and business increases. Property values rise more rapidly inside proper conservation districts than in areas outside conservation districts.
- Please maintain the integrity of the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District by recommending that this application be turned down.

Two Requests from the Heritage Trust to the HAC:

- Recommendation to Regional Council to refuse a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of Tip Top Tailors.
- Recommendation to the Design Review Committee to refuse a Site Plan Approval for this application.

Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Revitalization Plan

HRM Policy:

“Policy 6: Preference for Retention of Heritage Buildings: HRM shall **make every effort** to seek the **retention**, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of **buildings**, streetscapes, features, spaces and areas with **heritage value** in the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District consonant with the municipality’s general policy stance on heritage conservation detailed in the Municipal Planning Strategy, particularly City-Wide (Section II) Policy 6.1.”

Trust Comment:

- Tip Top Tailors is a building with heritage value. “Making every effort” to retain it means **turning down** this application.

Downtown Halifax Design Manual:

Guideline 2.5 b: “Protect heritage buildings from unwarranted demolition.”

Section 4.1: “As a principle of both heritage compatibility and sustainability, new additions, exterior alterations, or new construction should not destroy historic materials, features, or spatial relationships that characterize a property.”

Demolition of Tip Top Tailors is **not warranted**. Protecting the building requires turning down this application.

The application would **destroy** historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize this property. The application should be turned down.

HRM Building Conservation Standards

HRM Standard:

e.g. Standard 2: “The **historic character** of the property shall be **retained** and preserved. The **removal** of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be **avoided**.”

Trust Comment:

The application would **remove** almost all of the historic materials and would alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. The application should be turned down.

Design Manual, slide 2

- Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4: “In instances where the heritage value of a building includes its three-dimensional character (width, depth and height), the entire building envelope should be conserved, and the transition of new construction to, and from, the heritage buildings should respect all three dimensions.”
- Section 4.5: “These guidelines **shall** apply to all registered heritage buildings, and all buildings in heritage conservation districts.”
- The **heritage value** of Tip Top Tailors **includes its three-dimensional character**, the L-shaped recess, the display windows, and the light well. The building envelope should be conserved. The first step is to turn down this application.
- Tip Top Tailors is in the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District so these mandatory guidelines apply.

Design Manual, slide 3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guideline 4.5.1 a: "The traditional architectural elements of historic building facades such as columns, pilasters, entries and shopfronts which establish a pedestrian scale and rhythm, should be retained." Guideline 4.5.2 a: "Existing traditional shopfronts should be retained." Guideline 4.5.4 b: "Vertical elements such as pilasters, columns, cornices, and projecting bays should be retained." Section 4.5.5: "The intent of these guidelines is to encourage the retention, repair, rehabilitation, and restoration of original windows." Guideline 4.5.7 a: "The retention of original cornices and parapets is required." | <p>Trust Comment:</p> <p>The application would not retain the architectural elements of the Tip Top Tailors Building, including the side pilasters, the entries, shopfronts, cornices, windows, and parapet. The application should be turned down.</p> |
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Summary:

- The Design Manual encourages and requires the conservation of buildings and features in the Conservation District.
- The application would not conserve the Tip Top Tailors Building.
- The application should be turned down.

Criteria in Barrington Street Plan Policy 8:

- | Criterion: | Trust Comment: |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the heritage value of the building ... (b) the structural condition of the building. (c) the potential for repair and continued use of the building. (d) the merits of the proposal for a replacement building. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Tip Top Tailors has heritage value and significance. (b) No evidence has been presented of structural problems. (c) The right of way can be cleaned, and the building used. (d) The proposal does not comply with the Design Guidelines. |

Alternatives:

- Past practice has been to turn down demolition applications so negotiations to save the building can start.
- Once this application is turned down, the owners can consider the alternatives of retaining the present building in its current envelope, expanding it or selling.

The Tip Top Tailors Building on Barrington Street

David Dunkelman was an innovator. Born in Poland, he moved to Toronto, where, at the age of thirteen, he operated a buttonhole machine in his father's factory.ⁱ In 1909 he realised there was a market for inexpensive ready-to-wear men's suits. He opened a factory on Adelaide Street West in Toronto and rented a store on Yonge Street. When the standard price for a suit was \$18 to \$25, Dunkelman sold suits for \$14; the suits sold well. A journalist suggested the name, "Tip Top Tailors", for the new venture. This would become the leading brand in men's clothing in Canada for nearly a century. A decade after the first store opened in Toronto, Dunkelman began to expand, opening stores across the country, including a store in Halifax.ⁱⁱ

In 1929, Dunkelman's interest in modern architecture inspired him to choose the Art Deco style for the company's new factory, head office, warehouse and retail store at 637 Lake Shore Boulevard West.ⁱ The building had strong vertical lines, multiple wall planes at the corners, and geometric and figurative decoration. Inside, an assembly line produced 10,000 suits each week. The building was listed as a heritage property in 1973.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 1935, Tip Top also started producing suits for women. During World War II, Tip Top won a contract to produce uniforms for the armed forces, and devoted all its resources to the war effort.

After the war, Tip Top decided to build a new, larger Halifax store at 418 Barrington Street (now renumbered 1592 Barrington Street).^{iv} The firm of Duffus and Romans, Registered Architects, was hired to prepare the design.ⁱⁱ Allan F. Duffus and Henry M. Romans had gone to King's Collegiate School, Dalhousie and McGill Universities before the war together.^v Allan Duffus travelled in Europe, where he admired modern experiments in architecture. Both Duffus and Romans had served in the Royal Canadian Navy.

In approaching this design, the partners had two considerations – the client and the context.

Regarding the client, they knew David Dunkelman liked modern architecture. They also knew the firm liked to be at the "tip top" of fashion. This was the ideal client for a piece of experimental, modernist architecture. They knew the extensive use of glass at street-level could show off their client's merchandise. Given Halifax' weather, a recessed entryway would let pedestrians take shelter, and be tempted by the fashions on display.

Duffus and Romans were perfectly located to consider the context, as their office was in the Green Lantern Building, diagonally across Barrington Street.ⁱⁱ The Tip Top site had two very different neighbours. To the left (south) was the two-and-a-half-storey, brick Church of England Institute, with a Mansard roof and vertical, arched windows with Gothic tracery. To the right (north) was the five-storey, concrete Tramway Building, with store windows on the ground floor, square windows on the second floor and vertical windows above.

Because of the differences between the two neighbours, the architects created a strongly asymmetric design. The front elevation has a recessed alcove shaped like an "L", bringing light to the ground-floor store windows, and to five second-floor windows at the left. The top of the

ground-floor windows matches the height of this feature in the Tramway Building. The remainder of the elevation is in the form of an inverted “L”, flush with the street. At the top is a strong horizontal band, acting as a parapet, with the height of its cornice exactly matching the cornice of the Church of England Institute. Suspended from this band at the right is a “cube”, for a ladies’ lounge, with two vertical windows, reflecting the vertical windows of the Institute. The architects left a passageway at the northern edge of the property for an exit from the theatre behind the site. At the upper level, this passageway brought light to windows in the office and tailor shop.

Allan Duffus applied for a building permit in November, 1950.^{vi} Robie Kaizer of Young Street was hired as general contractor. L.E. Shaw Ltd. made the bricks for the 16-inch-thick walls and pillars.ⁱⁱ



Attached to the front of the cube was a large, hanging sign, with the word, TIP, placed vertically and the word, TAILORS, horizontally. The letter, I, in TIP, was on an orb, which rotated, bringing the letter, O, on the reverse, into view, so the sign continuously alternated between TIP and TOP.^{vii} This eye-catching, “Spinning Top” sign was first introduced with this building, and Tip Top promised to use it on their other stores across the country.ⁱⁱ

The store opened on October 10, 1951. The *Chronicle-Herald* described it as “distinctively modern in design”. Tip Top proclaimed this “the most magnificent store in Halifax”, with “the latest and newest in modern store design — the last word in luxurious and convenient appointments and beauty of design from front to back.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Allan Duffus, who was primarily responsible for this design, became president of the Nova Scotia Association of Architects, Fellow and President of the RAIC, Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, founding member of the Halifax Landmarks Commission, President of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, and governor of Heritage Canada, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering from TUNS.^v In 1979, David Dunkelman was posthumously inducted into the Canadian Business Hall of Fame.

In 2009 the building was included in the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District. It is the official policy of HRM to “make every effort to seek the retention, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration” of this building.^{viii}



Barrington Street, 1957^{vii}

An application has been submitted to demolish the Tip Top Tailors Building.^{ix} This would be the first demolition of a building in the District. HRM's mandatory Heritage Building Conservation Standards^x clearly state, "The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be avoided." This application is not consistent with municipal policy and should be turned down.

The Tip Top Tailors Building is associated with a brilliant Canadian businessman, with Canada's leading men's wear firm and with a distinguished Halifax architect. The architect took a number of steps to respect the abutting Church of England Institute and the Tramway Building. Tip Top Tailors is one of the most original modernist commercial buildings in the city. District funds can assist with exterior restoration. This building deserves to be protected.

HRM Committee
Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
1588 Barrington Street
Halifax
February 1, 2012

References:

ⁱ City of Toronto By-law No. 261-2003, page 4.

ⁱⁱ Tip Top Store Utilizes Latest Improvements, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, October 10, 1951, pages 11, 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ Welcome to Tip Top Lofts, www.tiptoploft.ca.

^{iv} V.E. Day Riots in Halifax, Nova Scotia (1945), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hL2y87PoB3M>.

^v Allan Ferguson Duffs, www.duffus.com/allan%20f.htm.

^{vi} Job No. 5018, Building Inspection Number 40819, microfilm roll 70, target 80, HRM Municipal Archives.

^{vii} *Citadel City*, Nova Scotia Department of Industry and Publicity, 1957, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOmCwAcra6k.

^{viii} Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Revitalization Plan, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009, Policy 6, Preference for Retention of Heritage Buildings: HRM shall make every effort to seek the retention, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of buildings, streetscapes, features, spaces and areas with heritage value in the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District consonant with the municipality's general policy stance on heritage conservation detailed in the Municipal Planning Strategy, particularly City-Wide (Section II) Policy 6.1.

^{ix} Starfish proud of design, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, November 22, 2011.

^x Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District By-law (H-500), Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009, Schedule B, Standard 2: "The historic character of the property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the property shall be avoided."

<http://www.halifax.ca/legislation/bylaws/hrm/documents/By-lawH-500.pdf>.

The Lydon Lynch Proposal to Replace the Tip Top Tailors Building

Lydon Lynch has proposed a building to replace the Tip Top Tailors Building at 1592 Barrington Street. This application for a site plan approval and certificate of appropriateness should be turned down for the following reasons:

1. The application would require the demolition of the Tip Top Tailors Building, a building included in the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District, and a building that has heritage value. The importance of this building is described in a separate document. Demolition of this building is clearly contrary to HRM Policy 6 of the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Revitalization Plan.
2. The proposed building does not comply with the provisions of the National Building Code regarding snow load. The Code says that portions of buildings higher than abutting buildings must be set back from the property lines by about 15 feet. If the replacement building were constructed as proposed, snow falling on the replacement would be blown off onto either the Institute building to the south, the Neptune Theatre to the west or the Tramway Building to the north. The problem would be particularly serious for the Institute building. Here there is a skylight near the property line, which provides light to the stairwell in the building. HRM owns this building and is responsible for its protection. HRM should not put this skylight at risk by allowing this violation of the Code. Similarly, the Tramway Building has a light well at the property line. Snow blowing off the Lydon Lynch proposal would tend to accumulate in the light well, potentially blocking and damaging windows. The application should be turned down.
3. The proposed building would abut the Church of England Institute. Its design would not comply with the Heritage Design Guidelines in the Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law. These Guidelines will be discussed in the present document.

The Heritage Design Guidelines in the Design Manual:

Guideline 4.1: The Guidelines allow for three types of development - infill, abutting or integrated and additions. The proposed development does not fit into any of these categories, as all the definitions assume that heritage resources will be retained. For example, the definitions of infill and abutting state, “This type of development occurs on sites that do not contain a heritage resource.” “Heritage buildings are to be integrated into a larger building or building grouping” in an integrated development. There is no category for demolition followed by new construction. Since Lydon Lynch does not propose to retain the Tip Top Tailors Building, the application does not qualify, and should be refused.

Section 4.1 goes on to state, “As a principle of both heritage compatibility and sustainability, new additions, exterior alterations, or new construction should not destroy historic materials, features, or spatial relationships that characterize a property.” The proposed new construction would destroy the historic materials and features that characterize this property. The lack of compliance with this guideline immediately disqualifies this application. Nevertheless, we will go on to discuss some other guidelines.

Cornice Height, Guidelines 4.2.1 and 4.3.1: “Maintain the same or similar cornice height established by existing heritage buildings for the podium (building base) to create a consistent streetwall height ...” The cornice of the Institute is only two storeys (9.8 m) high. The cornice of the existing Tip Top Building matches this. The cornice of the proposal would be four storeys

(15.5 m) high. The cornice of the proposal would be 57% higher than it should be. The proposal would dominate the Church of England Institute.



First Storey Height, Guidelines 4.2.2 and 4.3.3: “Maintain the same or similar height of the first storey of new buildings to the first storey datum line of heritage buildings (i.e. the height of intermediate cornice lines or frieze boards between the first and second storeys).” The Institute Building is a registered heritage property, making it more relevant than the Tramway Building. The height of the first storey of the Institute building is 5.7 m. The height of the first storey of the proposal would be only 4.5 m, 21% too low. The first storey is also too low compared to the Tramway Building, as seen in the illustration.

Materials, Guidelines 4.1.4, 4.2.5, and 4.5.6: The first of these Guidelines calls for the “proportional use of materials”. The second and third state, “Provide similar materials to those in use in existing heritage buildings,” and “The objective is to retain the character of historic building facades by using traditional materials for both rehabilitation and new construction.” The upper storeys of the adjacent buildings and the Tip Top Building are predominantly masonry, brick, or concrete, with glass in smaller, recessed window openings. The proposal is predominantly glass on the front, with a small amount of brick. This use of materials is not similar to those of the existing buildings. Glass is not included in the list of allowed materials following Guideline 4.5.6.

Transparency, Guideline 4.1.6: “The level of transparency in the new work should be set at a level that provides a good fit on street frontages with existing buildings that define the character of the street in a positive way”, according to this guideline. The Institute building clearly defines the character of the street in a positive way, and has a low level of transparency. The proposal has too much glass and glazing to fit in. The skylight in the Institute and the light wells in the

present Tip Top and Tramway Buildings demonstrate that there are other ways to provide natural light to interiors on Barrington Street.

Window Shapes, Guidelines 4.1.5 and 4.2.4: “Work should take into account the proportions of buildings in the immediate context”, says Guideline 4.1.5, and Guideline 4.2.4 says, “Maintain the window proportions of existing heritage buildings (generally vertically oriented windows).” The upper windows in the two abutting buildings and the present Tip Top Building are predominantly vertical. The proposal would have windows and transparent curtain walls that would stretch all or almost all the 40-foot width of the site. The use of muntins or frames would not change the overall effect. These horizontal bands of glass would be out of proportion to the windows of the neighbours.

In summary, this proposal does not attempt to follow the Guidelines. It does not qualify for approval. The application should be turned down. Then the present or future owners can find a solution that conserves the building and follows the Building Code and the Design Guidelines.

It is clear that the Design Manual applies, as the Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law states in Section 8(4) and (5): “In addition to the requirements of this By-law, development on a non-registered Heritage Property in a Heritage Conservation District shall be subject to sections 4.5 and 4.6 of the Development in Heritage Contexts section of the Design Manual. In addition to the requirements of this By-law, development on a lot abutting a Registered Heritage Property shall be subject to the requirements of the Design Manual.” This is reinforced by Section 11(7) of the By-law, and by Section 5(6) of the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District By-law, and by Policy 5 of the Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Revitalization Plan.

HRM Committee
Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia
1588 Barrington Street
Halifax
February 1, 2012

References:

1. 1592 Barrington Street, HRM Site Plan Approval: Drawings, Lydon Lynch, 2011, <http://starfishproperties.ca/admin/FCKeditor/editor/filemanager/UserFiles/File/1592%20BARRINGTON.pdf>
2. Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law, Schedule S-1: Design Manual, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009, http://www.halifax.ca/planning/documents/DowntownHalifax_DesignManual.pdf
3. Downtown Halifax Land Use By-law, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009, http://www.halifax.ca/planning/documents/DowntownHalifax_LUB.pdf
4. Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District By-law, H-500, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009, http://www.halifax.ca/legislation/bylaws/hrm/documents/FINALBYLAWOctober2009_1.pdf
5. Barrington Street Heritage Conservation District Revitalization Plan, Halifax Regional Municipality, 2009.