

New Toronto Historical Society Volume 2 No. 1 February 2000

Upcoming Events

Annual General Meeting

Join us for our Annual General Meeting on February 22, 2000.

Our special guest will be Joel Rice who will give an illustrated slide show on the "History of the Long Branch Streetcar".

The meeting will be held at LAMP, 185 Fifth Street and begins at 7 pm with a New Toronto Quiz.

New Toronto Quiz

Bring your answers the night of the Annual General Meeting on February 22, 2000

1. In what year did New Toronto celebrate it Golden Jubilee ?
2. Where is the New Toronto Lawn Bowling Club located ?
3. What was the name of New Toronto's hometown newspaper ?
4. What were Brays and Gores ?
5. why was the Sir Winston Spencer Churchill Branch No. 3 of the Royal Canadian Legion moved from Seventh Street to Eighth Street ?
6. Who donated the land for the original New Toronto Library ?
7. What was the symbol for Anacaonda Copper and Brass ?
8. Where was Simpson Motors located ?
9. "Intelligence, Industry, Integrity" Where do these three I's appear ?
10. Why is the address 185 Fifth Street so important in the history of the town ?

20th Century New Toronto Walking Tour

Formed in 1889, the Mimico Real Estate & Security Company began to purchase and secure control of 550 acres of land in South Etobicoke, launching the suburb of "New Toronto" with a full page article in the Globe on October 25, 1890. Heralded as "Toronto's Growing Suburb" which "promises in time to equal, if not surpass, old Toronto as a commercial centre" the investors in the company subdivided the adjacent farmlands into residential and large industrial lots.

Recovering from the economic depression of the late 1890s and the collapse of the Mimico Real Estate & Security Company, New Toronto came into its own in the early 20th Century, leaving an impressive legacy of architectural buildings.

Our tour of 20th century New Toronto begins at the LAMP building at 185 Fifth Street. This building began as a four room school in 1910 built in the Neo Classical style. Later a second storey was added with a small wooden dome, known as a cupola, on top. The building served as a school, educating many children in the New Toronto community until 1947 when it was largely destroyed by fire. Within a short period of time however, it was rebuilt, and became the New Toronto Town Hall. It was here that the New Toronto Council met, and where many of the town services were located, including the police station and local jail. It was the focal point of municipal government until 1967 when New Toronto was forcibly amalgamated into the Borough of Etobicoke by the provincial government. Later it became the home of the Lakeshore Area Multi-Service Project (LAMP), and is still very much of a community focal point.

Walk south along Fourth Street toward Lake Shore Blvd. W. As you walk

south, notice the many homes built in the early part of the 20th century as New Toronto boomed and many new factories were opened in the area. Much of present day New Toronto is a result of this boom, and most of the homes in the area were built at this time.

At Lake Shore Blvd. W. turn right and walk in a westerly direction. As you walk along notice the commercial buildings that line the street. Many of them were built in the early 20th Century, and are evidence of the prosperity of the former Town. At Islington Avenue stop and admire the spectacular New Toronto Post Office Building on the corner (2930 Lake Shore Blvd. W.)

Built in 1935 in the Art Moderne style (a variation of Art Deco), this impressive building was designed by the architectural firm of Catto & Catto, a team of brothers. The structure is built of Ontario limestone, with polished black granite banding at the top and bottom of the building. If it is open, go in and admire the details of the interior public space, the unique terrazzo floor and intricate brass fittings and woodwork.

Cross the street to the south side and continue walking west along Lake Shore Blvd. W. to Eighth Street. Turn to the left and begin walking south. As you walk down the street you will begin to notice that many of the homes look similar to each other. These are the homes of the New Toronto Housing Commission, constructed by the Town in 1918 with a \$200,000 loan from the Government of Ontario under the Ontario Housing Act. The Act was designed to spur growth in the construction of housing so that returning soldiers could have their own home. Most municipalities made loans to individual veterans who then built their own house. However, New Toronto decided to use the money to build a single, integrated, and architecturally compatible project. The homes -42 in all- were designed in the Arts & Craft style by Harold Watson. Built of solid brick, with stuccoed walls, and cedar shingle roofs, the homes were meant to emulate cottages in an old English village. Built on a staggered plan to avoid monotony, the homes sold

for \$2,855 for a semi-detached and \$3,005 for a detached model. As an indication of the housing needs of the time all of the homes were sold before construction began. Many of the homes have been modified over the years, however two -at 97/99- remain in much of their original state and give us a glimpse of what the street must of looked like in the early 20th Century.....

(Continued in next issue)

Write Us !

We would like to hear from former factory workers of New Toronto plants about what the local businesses along the Lake Shore Road meant to them. Please phone Wendy Gamble at 251-1349 for more information.

Workman Unearth Five Skeletons

While Excavating on 5th Street Dig Up Bones Supposed to be Remains of

Early Settlers

Council is to Excavate More Ground in the Vicinity

New Toronto is experiencing a real thrill this week, and excitement will be kept for some time yet, as further developments are looked for.

Workman, employed by Contractors Hyslop and O'Grady, while excavating on Sixth Street, between Morrison St. and the Highway, unearthed human skeletons on Tuesday afternoon.

In a space of less than twenty feet in diameter five skeletons have been dug out by the workmen. Four of the skeletons are those of adult persons, and one is that of a child.

The bones were given to Chief Johnston and examined by Coroner Dr. A. D. Roberts who says that they have been buried for a least 75 years, and also states that the bones are of white people and not Indians, as many here are inclined to believe.

Mr. O'Grady says he believes that the bodies must have been buried at least

75 years ago, and is of the opinion that on this very spot a bloody scene has been enacted in the early days. He claimed that the remains had the appearance of being thrown roughly in a hole, and that all bodies must have been buried at the same time, as all bones were in the same state of decom[position]. Mr. O'Grady is having his solicitor search the crown titles as far back as possible in the hope of getting some clue of the original owners of this property.

Mr. J.A. Campbell, who was raised on the farm on which this property is, tells of finding a skull while at play near a stone pile exactly over the spot where the skeletons were found this week. Mr. Campbell lived on this property over 33 years ago and their barn was just beside the place where the bones were found. J. Murchison owned the farm before the Campbell family, but there is no record of this place ever being used as a burying ground, and this leads Mr. O'Grady to think that a massacre has taken place here, committed either by Indians or hold-up men on the early days. The old Hamilton stage coach road ran very near to this property and Mr. O'Grady says it may have been that a whole load of travellers were killed. The skeletons were found lying in all directions, no order was maintained in the burial that is certain and while a piece of decayed wood was found near the remains of one of the skeletons it does not look as if any coffins had been used.

The contractors appealed to the council to excavate all the earth between the basement and street, and Deputy Reeve McCullum, of the Works Committee, is making arrangements to excavate this ground and clean up any more remains that may still be under the ground. All the bones that have been found were only a few feet below the surface.

W.E. Baycroft & Sons have taken the bones and will give them a new resting place.

The Advertiser, Thursday May 21, 1925