

New Toronto Historical Society Volume 2 No. 2 May 2000

Upcoming Events

History of the Long Branch Racetrack

Our next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Alderwood Historical Society on the *History of the Long Branch Race Track*. The meeting will be held at the Horner Avenue Seniors' Centre (former headquarters of Booth Brick) located at 320 Horner Avenue on May 30, 2000 beginning at 7pm. Unveiling of the historical plaque for the Long Branch Racetrack will take place at 6:30 pm. Guest speakers will include Lou Cavalaris Jr., a famous trainer of thoroughbred horses and a former Racing Secretary and Handicapper; and Lou Cauz, sports writer, author, and managing Director of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame. Admission is free to paid up members of the Alderwood, Long Branch, Etobicoke and New Toronto Historical Societies. Non-members \$2.

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.

Continued from previous issue.....

Walk around the corner to Seventh Street and go north until you are on the north side of Lake Shore Blvd. W. again. Walk west toward Eighth Street. Cross to the left side of the street in front of the former New Toronto Public Utilities Building (2974 Lake Shore Blvd. W).

Built in the Neo Classical style in 1925, the building contained the offices of the local public utilities. It was here that people paid their water and electricity bills. The building was originally a one storey structure to which a second storey was added at a later date. Notice the impressive moulding and other architectural details on the front and side of the building.

Just to the north is the former New Toronto Fire Hall (130 Eighth Street) constructed in the Italianate style at a cost of \$17,000 in 1930. This is one of the only Italianate buildings in New Toronto. Note the elongated windows with rounded tops, the emphasis on the vertical, and the heavy bracketing under the eaves. The roof was originally covered in red tiles.

Continue walking north to the Legion Hall. In front of the building you will notice a small black cenotaph, which also acted as a fountain. This was a gift to the Town of New Toronto in commemoration of its citizens who lost their lives in WWI. It was originally located on the south west corner of Eighth Street and Lake Shore Blvd. W. next to the Brown Building (demolished) which originally housed the town offices across the street from the Public Utilities Building.

At Birmingham Street stop and look to the north-west where you will notice the impressive Birmingham Hydro Sub-Station constructed in the Neo Classical style in 1918. This

sub-station help fuel the growth of the many industrial operations which brought prosperity to New Toronto. It now stands boarded up and unused, its future uncertain.

Begin walking east along Birmingham. As you cross Eighth Street you will notice the facade of the former Reg. N. Boxer wallpaper factory on the north side. The company came to New Toronto in 1903 and bought up a number of closed factories on the block. Over the years, as it continued to expand, it occupied most of the block, constructing this impressive modern facade in the 1920s. Though many of the windows have since been bricked up, many of its architectural details remain. Notice the cornice that runs the length of the building, the detailing around the doorways and central windows.

Cross to the north side of Birmingham Street at Islington Avenue, and continue walking east. At Sixth Street you will notice a large building that was the former headquarters of the Bell Canada Telephone Exchange. This was, at one time, the nerve centre of electronic communication in New Toronto and the surrounding communities. Constructed in 1925 in the Neo Classical style, the building served over 1,500 telephone subscribers in the area. Staff at the office included 52 employees who processed an average daily calling rate of 13,000 calls in the 1920s.

Continue walking east along the north side of Birmingham Street. Just past Third Street is the large industrial building where Campbell Soup has been making soup since 1931. Designed in the Art Deco style by Mathers & Haldenby, the building sports fabulous fluting on the corners. The original entrance to the building was at the western corner of the building, but as the factory was expanded over the years, the entrance was moved further to the east. However, even through the entrance is now gone, the stairs for the original entrance remain in place, hidden behind a low hedge. Tour Ends.

Join Us !

Join us to learn more about the history of the Town of New Toronto. New Members welcome ! Please phone Wendy Gamble at 251-1349 for more information.

82 Year Old Pioneer Continues Activity In Building Developments

Mr. Alexander Keith Had Early Visions Of New Toronto As Industrial Centre - Laid Out the Town As We Now Know It

Back in the early 90's Mr. Alexander Keith (incidentally still hale and hearty and 82 years of age Nov. 29th next) was one of a small group who visualized New Toronto as an industrial centre. They organized the original "Mimico Realty Co.", which laid out the town pretty well as we know it today, secured railway facilities and enlisted the participation of a number of prominent Toronto manufacturing concerns who planned to relocate in this new model town.

Mr. Keith was one of the few who retained faith in New Toronto during and subsequent to the depression of the 90's, which wrecked the original plans for the town. He was personally and financially active here for many years and was particularly identified with the locating here of the Grand Trunk Railway about the year 1908.

During the early 20's and from 1929 to the present, the family both directly and through Lake Shore Developments Ltd., has been concerned with considerable development of industrial properties on 8th St. and Birmingham St., and with the developing and building up of some of the town's finest residential streets. They have erected over 100 buildings involving the addition to town assessment rolls of hundreds of thousands of dollars and their program has promoted a great deal of business activity in the area:

Since 1936 Lake Shore Developments Ltd., under the management of G.A. Keith has been

particularly active in building under the Dominion Government Housing Act, being one of the first in this area to accept the government's offer to cooperation. As a result 2nd and 3rd Sts. have been developed and some 50 fine homes provided to the great advantage of the municipality.

Mr. G.A. Keith has been identified with activities in New Toronto for the past ten years, including service as chairman of the Relief Board and as president of the New Toronto Lions Club.

The Advertiser, November 28, 1940

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.

Parks Quiz

Where Are These New Toronto Parks Located? Give the cross streets.

1. Prince of Wales
2. Don Russell
3. Rotary

You Know You're From New Toronto IF:

1. You call Lakeshore Boulevard "The Highway".
2. The Lake is always SOUTH.
3. You say that you're going "up street" to the highway.
4. You went to a numbered school.
5. You still remember that it was your town.
6. Campbells was just "the Soup".