



THE DANFORTH IN PICTURES • TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD LOCAL HISTORY HANDBOOKS • NO THREE

A black and white photograph of a street in Danforth. The foreground is a rough, dirt-covered road. On the left, there are brick buildings, one with a sign that says "SALE". A person in a dark coat and hat stands near a wooden fence. In the middle ground, a horse-drawn carriage is visible. The street is lined with utility poles and wires. On the right, there are more brick buildings, including a two-story one with a large window. The background shows a continuation of the street and more buildings under a clear sky.

**THE
DANFORTH
IN
PICTURES**
Barbara Myrvold
A
BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE DANFORTH

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anforth Avenue in Toronto stretches some ninety-one blocks from the east side of the Don Valley opposite Bloor Street to Kingston Road in Scarborough. Today it is a vibrant polyglot thoroughfare of fruit markets,

fishmongers, restaurants, coffee houses, bakeries, pool rooms, discount clothing and furniture stores, car lots, travel agencies and so on. It claims to have the largest commercial concentration and best shopping in Toronto. Today "the Danforth" as local residents call both the avenue and the district surrounding it is a community with a strong sense of identity. It was not always so. During the nineteenth century the Danforth was a dusty country road running through market gardens and brickyards. Its hotels and road houses were popular spots for Torontonians to go to for weekend revels. But mostly it was a quiet backwater — a rural backyard for the more populous communities that existed further south along Queen Street East and the Kingston Road. The Danforth grew slowly in isolation from Toronto because of the barrier of the Don Valley and River. For most of the 1800's the only adequate bridge across the Don into Toronto was at Queen Street.

Then in the first quarter of the twentieth century the Danforth was transformed into one of the busiest and most prosperous commercial streets in Toronto. Improvements in transportation brought this great change: a streetcar line opened along Danforth Avenue and the Bloor Viaduct was constructed over the valley ending the Danforth's isolation. English, Irish and Scottish immigrants settled in the Danforth area. It became a lower middle class suburb of Toronto — a workingman's neighbourhood. This community remained more or less unchanged until the late 1950's. Then an influx of Italians came to the area, followed in the 1960's by Greek and other immigrants. The British sold their

homes and businesses and moved into apartments, or out to the suburbs. The Danforth became a cosmopolitan part of the new Toronto, barely recognizable to its former residents. Today the neighbourhood is experiencing yet another change, too soon to be called a trend. Second generation Greeks and Italians are abandoning it for the large lots and swimming pools of Scarborough and North York. Meanwhile the children of Anglo-Saxon suburbanites are returning to the Danforth attracted by its relatively low real estate prices and closeness to downtown Toronto. The subway line which opened along Bloor and Danforth in 1966 has made the area a haven for these middle class professionals, most of whom work and enjoy nightlife downtown.

Danforth Avenue is really a twentieth century thoroughfare. Most of the literature on the Danforth begins in the early 1900's and grows in volume in the pre and post Viaduct periods. Nineteenth century writings generally skirt the area, mentioning it only peripherally if at all. In the 1800's the main artery east of the Don River was Queen Street, then called the Kingston Road. This was due partially to the original layout of the two hundred acre lots east of the Don and the settlers' duties to maintain the road in front of their lots. The lots were laid out in a grid pattern. Between Queen Street, the base line, and Danforth Avenue, the First Concession Road, the lots ran north and south fronting on Queen Street. North of Danforth between Yonge Street and Woodbine Avenue, the lots ran east and west to make maximum use of frontage of the Don River, considered prime property to early settlers. Here the lots length, not front ran along Danforth Avenue. East of Woodbine to the Scarborough Township line the lots reassumed the north-south direction.¹ Only these lots actually fronted on the Danforth. These different configurations meant that Danforth Avenue was slow to be cleared because lot owners only had to clear timber for a road across the front of their lots.

Queen Street was also the important nineteenth century road as it was the main highway from York (later Toronto) to Kingston. John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, had conceived a single road from the

Thames to Kingston, with a branch road from Burlington to Niagara, in 1793. It was to be one of the great military roads of the province and was called Dundas Street. In 1799, the Executive Council of Upper Canada commissioned Asa Danforth, an American contractor, to open Dundas Street between York and the River Trent to the east. Construction began on 5 June 1799 on the east side of the Don River at Scadding's Bridge. The thirty-three foot wide road proceeded along the present Queen Street and Kingston Road where it branched off to follow a north-east course along today's Danforth Road. (There were actually two roads: the early Danforth Road, sometimes called "Dundas Street" for it was part of the main province-wide network of that name; and the later Kingston Road which followed Danforth Road in places but was generally closer to the Lake). Ironically Asa Danforth had nothing to do with the building of Danforth Avenue, the street which bears his name.

By the 1840's the Kingston Road (this now includes Queen Street East) was planked for eighteen miles from Toronto to the Rouge River. It was a toll road. Small villages appeared at the toll gates along the improved road: Norway at the Woodbine toll gate; Leslieville at Leslie Street; and Don Mount, later called Riverside, at the Mill Road. (The Mill Road or Don Mills Road opened in 1799. Now Broadview Avenue, it was the other main artery east of the Don River. It led to the mills established in the Don Valley around 1795 and expanded to become the village of Todmorden in the 1820's). By the 1880's the Kingston Road communities of Riverside and Leslieville had grown enough to warrant either becoming a single incorporated town or being annexed to the City of Toronto. Toronto owned extensive property in the district (the Don Jail and Industrial Farm) and was expanding rapidly to the east. It was most anxious to annex the area for "future exigencies". After much debate, Riverside and Leslieville were annexed to Toronto on 25 March 1884.² Annexation included all the land from Queen Street up to Danforth Avenue between the Don River and roughly Greenwood Avenue. Altogether Toronto gained 1,249 acres and almost 3,350 residents in the newly created St. Matthew's Ward, expanded and renamed

Ward 1 in 1891. Annexation brought a great improvement in public services and a real estate boom to St. Matthew's Ward in the mid-1880's. By 1890 Queen Street had been more or less thoroughly built up out to the Beaches, the resort communities east of Woodbine Avenue.

Meanwhile the Danforth was a sleepy county road surrounded by open fields, market gardens and dotted with the odd hotel and factory. Known until 1884 as the Don and Danforth Road, it had been planked in the 1850's. The Don and Danforth Plank Road Company, organized in 1851, planked from the old Danforth Road at Markham Road in Scarborough along the present Danforth Avenue to Broadview Avenue.³ Here the road turned down Broadview to Don Street (now Gerrard) where it crossed the Don River by a new bridge (Bell's) constructed in 1856. Tolls were collected at least until 1 November 1879 when the company abandoned the road. One toll gate was located at the south-west corner of Broadview and Danforth.

In the 1880's the unmaintained Danforth Avenue had degenerated into a dirt and gravel road. In a reminiscence of "Danforth Ave. in Old Days" which appeared in the *Evening Telegram* in 1920, J. McPherson Ross described the road and its landmarks:

It was a typical country road, dusty in summer and muddy in wet weather, while in winter often blocked with snowdrifts from the unbroken sweep of winds across the large sandy stretches of land, termed the Plains...many thick woods and groups of stately trees, such as elms and pines grew along the highway or close to the scattered homes that fronted the road, generally back a hundred years or so, and at some places nicely planted with shrubs and flowers. Passing the more settled parts of the road from the Don eastwards to near Greenwood's land, the road became more lonely...A veritable country road with deep ditches usually filled with water⁴.

At Broadview was a blacksmith's shop a busy place in the horse and buggy age, strategically placed to serve both the Danforth and Don Mills Road communities. Just slightly further east on the road at Ellerbeck was an old country inn called the Danforth Hotel. It was a rendezvous

for dancing, bicycling and sleighing parties from Toronto and for local political rallies. A few hundred yards directly north stood St. Barnabas' Church, constructed around 1860. It was surrounded by the dairy farm, orchards and market gardens of the Playter family, the original Loyalist settlers in the district. Opposite Logan's Lane on the north side of Danforth was a large clump of forest called Playter's Grove, "the favourite picnic grounds for Sunday Schools, and societies, temperance and otherwise". Directly across the road was the Blong estate: "A two storey residence with double verandahs facing a spacious lawn adjoining cattle pens and slaughter houses for the Blongs were prosperous butchers with stalls in the St. Lawrence market". At Pape was one of the largest of the many market gardens which ran on both sides of the Danforth north as far as Todmorden and east to Victoria Park on the flat, fertile, sandy soil usually called "the Plains". This was "Clyde Cottage" the one hundred acre farm of John Mills. The Frankland family, important butchers and politicians, lived in the large stone house at the north-east corner of Pape and Danforth opposite Mills' gardens. Between Jones and Coxwell Avenues, the Danforth was crossed by three creeks which emptied into Ashbridge's Bay. Tiny wooden bridges spanned these streams, all eventually absorbed by the municipal sewer system. The property on the north side from Donlands to Woodbine was glebe land owned by the Church of England. It was mostly undeveloped although near Coxwell a large portion was leased to W. Harris & Co., the owners of a foul smelling glue factory. Just slightly further east opposite the present Roseheath Avenue was a popular wayside inn called the Dutch Farm. The rye bread, bologna sausage and lager beer dispensed by its proprietor Charles Heber drew large crowds every weekend from Toronto and the surrounding countryside. At Greenwood was a large bush where strangers could easily get lost. Between Woodbine and Main Street was another country hotel, known in the 1890's as the Bay View. Charles Gates' old Newmarket Race Course was still behind it but its halcyon days when it had hosted the Queen's Plate were over. Just past Dawes Road was the laneway leading to Dentonia

Park, the impressive model farm and country estate of the Masey family, prominent Toronto implements manufacturers.

Small villages were located at each end of the Danforth. They were either self contained or linked with communities to the south rather than having a sense of identity with the Danforth itself. At the western end was Chester, also known as Doncaster. Chester began in the 1860's on the Mill Road just north of the Danforth. Dr. James Beaven, the rector of St. John's Norway and the founder in 1858 of a mission at Chester, is credited with giving the village the name of Chester after the old Roman city in Cheshire, England. A post office called "Doncaster" opened at Chester on 1 May 1869. This served a wide district including Chester and Todmorden, the old Don Valley milling village about a half mile further north. In 1871 Chester (Doncaster) contained about one hundred people and Todmorden about 150.⁵ With the annexation to Toronto of the land south of Danforth Avenue in 1884, intrepid developers began to lay subdivisions in the market gardens of North Riverdale and above the Danforth. A streetcar line opened on Broadview Avenue in 1889, running from downtown Toronto to Danforth Avenue. The Queen Street bridge was still the only adequate crossing over the Don River but this streetcar made Chester and Todmorden more attractive and accessible to city workers. However these villages were not incorporated and so lacked the power to provide many of the essential public services city dwellers would expect. To rectify the situation, the residents of Doncaster and Todmorden petitioned the York County Council in 1889⁶ and again in 1890⁷ to be incorporated into a single village, Chester. Both times they claimed their area's population exceeded the necessary 750. The approximate boundaries of the five hundred acre village were to Danforth Avenue, the Don River, O'Connor Drive and Leslie Street (now Donlands Avenue). Both times by-laws for its incorporation were passed by the County Council. However both were ultimately repealed when a check was made on the claimed population count. Chester never was incorporated officially. The lack of amenities and of a bridge over the Don River at Danforth prevented it from

developing into a town or city suburb as it had hoped. It must be stressed that Chester centred on the Don Mills Road, not on Danforth Avenue. Most of its residences, churches and Chester School were on the high ground along Don Mills Road. In the valley below were its industries, mostly brickmaking and butchering. Market gardening in and around the village was probably its most important economic activity.

At the eastern end of Danforth Avenue was another village known as Little York. It centred at Dawes Road, opened as a public road by a by-law of the Home District Council passed 1 July 1848.⁸ Dawes Road ran from the boundary between York and Scarborough Townships south on a diagonal line to Kingston Road where Main Street is today. The 1860 *Tremaine* map shows inns on three corners of Danforth and "Dawes" Road and a store on the fourth. Clem Dawes, a later hotel keeper, gave his name to the road. Coleman Post Office was established at the intersection on 1 July 1877. It was soon called Coleman's Corners after the first postmaster Charles Coleman. In 1883 the Grand Trunk Railway constructed a large freight assorting yard south of Danforth west of Dawes Road. The next year it opened a roundhouse and the York Station there. The railway brought a large number of settlers to the district. The village of Little York grew around Coleman's Corners. Close-by was the larger East Toronto, incorporated as a village in 1888.⁹ Its northern boundary ran slightly above Danforth Avenue and extended from the present Morton Road east almost to Dawes Road. The centre of East Toronto however was Main Street at Gerrard, not Danforth Avenue. East Toronto's coat of arms showed its dependence on the railway: it illustrated a locomotive roaring from the rising sun. Its motto "lux orientis" (light from the east) was perhaps a mischievous jest by its founding fathers. In January 1903, East Toronto was proclaimed a town¹⁰ following the Ontario Act of 1900.¹¹ Its boundaries were extended north and east to include the unincorporated village of Little York.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Toronto had just experienced a decade of phenomenal growth. Its expanding population began to settle in the north part of the city east of

the Don River, "the last close-in territory to be occupied". Chester, still viewing itself more as a small town than part of a great metropolis, braced itself for rapid growth. However the newcomers, practically all immigrants from the British Isles, did not settle on the Don Mills Road in the village of Chester as had been anticipated, but along the Danforth and the streets running south from it. Chester was still under the administration of the rural York Township and could offer few amenities whereas the area south of the Danforth Avenue was in the city of Toronto. Certainly the latter side of the Avenue developed much sooner than the north country side.

Nevertheless building codes were much less rigorous in the rural township and when the influx of settlers arrived in the Danforth area, some of them deliberately chose to live outside the city limits. Here they could construct their homes themselves without interference from building inspectors. Rev. T.F. Summerhayes, the rector of St. Matthew's Church in Riverdale, described "pioneering" along Chester Avenue:

Many of them paid a small deposit (with monthly payments) on a lot of land just outside the City limits. Then the men would erect a small frame cabin on cedar posts, cover it with tar-paper, and curtain or board it into two rooms, kitchen and bedroom. During the summer he would excavate a cellar, the wife often helping to pull up the barrow. Then a cement or brick wall for foundations, the neighbours often helping. Lastly the tar-paper was covered with clapboards or stucco and the roof tarred or pitched. That made a safe, warm dwelling for the winter. The next year he bricked it and added a top storey with bedrooms and inside plumbing, with the aid of a small mortgage. Finally, in time, the completed house.¹²

However in 1909 the village of Chester and all the lands east to Donlands and north of Danforth along Eastmount, Butternut, Canning, Selkirk and Milverton were annexed to Toronto. Developments began to be more planned and equitable as market gardens, such as the Playters, were subdivided and handsome homes built. East Toronto with a population of 4,800 had been

annexed to Toronto in 1908. In 1912 the old Helliwell farm was also annexed to the city. The muddy Danforth disappeared forever when it was paved from Broadview to Greenwood in 1912 and to the city limits in 1913.

Churches in Chester were quick to see the population trend away from Don Mills Road to Danforth Avenue and started to relocate. New congregations were also formed as population increased along the Avenue as far east as Pape: Riverdale Presbyterian in 1906, Danforth Methodist in 1907 and Holy Name Roman Catholic in 1913. An eleven room city school, Frankland, opened on Logan Avenue in 1910 to serve the ever increasing numbers of "good honest working-class people in the Danforth-Broadview area". Shortly afterwards land for a Catholic school, to be named Holy Name, was purchased on Carlaw Avenue. Around 1908 the first three storey commercial building opened on Danforth Avenue at Broadview. By 1914 there were numerous stores along the Danforth to Pape but east of that it was still country.

In 1913 two monumental events occurred that were to end the Danforth's isolation and give it its greatest impetus to growth. Until then the barrier of the Don Valley and the lack of adequate transportation facilities had prevented the Danforth from reaching its full residential and commercial potential. Firstly, in 1912-13 the Toronto Civic Railway laid streetcar tracks along Danforth Avenue and on 30 October 1913 the "Danforth" line opened from Broadview to Luttrell Avenue. Secondly, on 1 January 1913 the Toronto electorate agreed to build a viaduct across the Don River Valley to connect Danforth Avenue with Bloor Street and downtown Toronto. Construction began two years later and the Prince Edward Viaduct opened in October 1918.

With the operation of the Civic car line and especially after the opening of the Viaduct, the Avenue began to boom. Fortunes were made as property values skyrocketed. Market gardeners grew rich overnight as they sold their plots for subdivisions. In 1913 with the sale of the last one hundred acres of the old clergy reserves all the land along the thoroughfare was in the hands of the developers. The "Glebe estate" north of

Danforth to Milverton and east of Donlands to Monarch Park became part of Toronto on 1 May 1914. Familiar landmarks changed or disappeared forever as lots were subdivided, streets laid, new homes built and stores opened. The Danforth rapidly changed from a remote agricultural area at Toronto's backdoor to one of its busiest, densest and most prosperous commercial thoroughfares. The retail complex which extended only to Pape before 1914 quickly stretched from Donlands all the way east to Victoria Park after the Viaduct opened. The land on the north side of the Avenue from Monarch Park to Woodbine was annexed to Toronto on 1 September 1920. Population increased dramatically as British clerks and artisans flocked to the district. The school board frantically built new schools or tacked huge additions onto existing structures to cope with the ever increasing student enrolment. In 1923 through crosstown streetcar service with free transfer privileges began along Bloor and Danforth. By 1924 the main surge of growth was over and by the end of the decade the retail strip was developed much like it is today. More than seventy percent of the 1929 retail complex became established after 1914 showing the important role the streetcar and the Viaduct played in shaping the district.¹³

The Danforth community that emerged from this spectacular growth in the 1910's and 1920's had a distinctive identity. It is interesting historically because of the great changes the district has seen since the 1950's. Economic depression and the Second World War were to leave it more or less unchanged until well into the post-war period. Reading through the various reminiscences and books by writers such as Robert Thomas Allen and Gordon Sinclair one gets a good idea of the kind of people who lived "out the Danforth". Except for streets in the vicinity of Broadview (and the only ones to diverge from the grid pattern) where the more middle class and even affluent lived — Playters, Buchanans and the like — the Danforth was overwhelmingly a working class neighbourhood. Allen described it as "a flat suburb of English, Irish and Scotch cops, T.T.C. motormen and T. Eaton Company tie clerks"¹⁴. The occupations of people on a typical street (Lipton Avenue)

were: driver, bookkeeper, sheet metal worker, carpenter, clerk, teamster, wool worker, pressman, decorator, and examiner at Eaton's according to the 1921 *Toronto City Directory*. Unfortunately no census tracts were done until 1951 but oldtimers state the area's population was overwhelmingly of British Isles origin. "Foreigners" (i.e. non Anglo-Saxons) were objects of suspicion and Gordon Sinclair says "it had been automatic in our neighbourhood that anybody different was a fool to be called names".¹⁵ There was a feeling that the British were superior and important. Institutions loyal to Britain were loyally supported. Union organizers had difficulty making inroads into the solidly Conservative Danforth. With one exception, it elected the Conservative candidate in every federal election from Confederation until 1962 when the N.D.P. gained control of the by then more ethnic district.

The Danforth people led honest, hard working, unspectacular lives. Every morning at 6:30 they headed to work to places like Eaton's and Colgate-Palmolive carrying lunch pails. They returned home at 5:30 P.M. to the two and three storey semi-detached houses that the developers had jammed together on tiny lots on long straight streets running off Danforth Avenue. Their houses took up most of their free time: Allen feels "for every lurid moment in their lives, they spend six months doing things like repairing shingles".¹⁶ Proud to be home owners, they worked hard to pay off the mortgages on their \$2,500 houses. Most of them took in roomers to speed up the process for few women worked outside the home. They did their own cleaning, gardening, decorating and repairs, for pleasure as much as frugality. They felt the home was a complex mechanism that only ran as result of constant vigilance. Few went away for holidays. Most preferred to spend the time puttering in the garden and the money on some new household gadget. Excursions were to places that could be reached in a day: Scarborough Beach Amusement Park or the Ex. by streetcar; Niagara Falls by boat; a friend's farm on the radial car; or practically anywhere in Toronto by walking. Closer to home the church and neighbourhood parks and movie houses provided the main

diversions. Few had cars and those who did used them only for Sunday outings. The streetcar took you to work but walking home was considered healthy and saved carfare. Privacy was not greatly valued. It was an open friendly society where children could communicate with next door by putting their heads in the mutual hot air pipe in the upstairs front room. Adults enjoyed four family conversations without leaving their backyards. "Walking the Danforth" was a favourite pastime. It gave the gently materialistic Danforth people a chance to inspect the latest merchandise, greet neighbours and chat with the esteemed and fondly remembered shopkeepers: Lulu Waters the florist, Maud Richardson the druggist, Margaret Chambers the fishmonger, Mr. Capp the tobacconist, Mike Charai the seemingly ageless proprietor of Danforth Sweets and so on. The country was still close-by. Open fields and farm land remained not far north of Danforth Avenue. A cow could still wander in from the field and break up a backyard picnic. Keeping chickens was common practice.

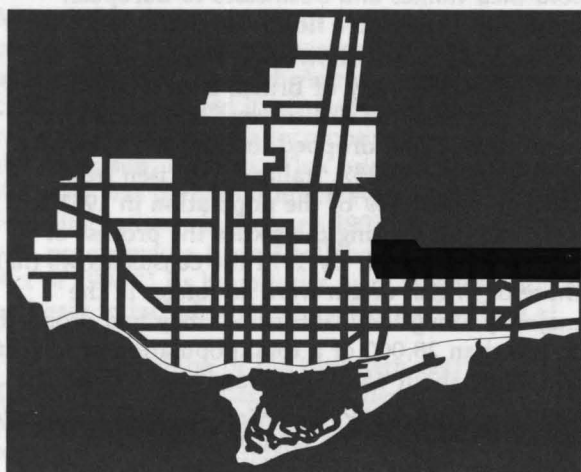
This unique Danforth community was to change radically in the late fifties and through the sixties. Private car ownership became commonplace and eliminated the need to use the streetcar or to walk short distances for consumer goods. The automobile made the suburbs that were sprawling north and east of the Danforth attractive and accessible. Many moved there and sold their homes and businesses to European immigrants that were flooding into Toronto.

The 1951 census shows that the Danforth was still overwhelmingly of British Isles origin: 83.5%. Ten years later the British were still in the majority but had dropped to 62.66% of the total population of 55,257. Italians had risen from being a mere 1.3% of the population in 1951 to 11% in 1961. During the sixties the process of change accelerated. By 1971 the census shows that those of British origin were no longer in the majority along the Danforth — they had dropped to less than 28,000 of a total population of almost 60,000 or about 46.5%. Italians now formed the second largest group with 17.16%. In some tracts, especially north of the Danforth the Italian proportion was considerably higher, as much as

46% of the population. Figures for those of Greek origin have not been recorded in the published census tract bulletins. However those belonging to the Greek Orthodox church increased from less than 5% of the Danforth's population to almost 15% from 1961 to 1971. What is interesting about these figures is that the Danforth area is not as totally "ethnic" as the popular press leads one to believe. In the last year for which figures were available (1971), the British were still the largest single group.

However the change in the Danforth's composition from almost totally British to a more cosmopolitan community caused local merchants considerable worry. Even more bothersome was the opening in 1966 of a subway line under the Avenue. Shopkeepers feared a detrimental effect on their neighbourhood oriented stores which were no longer visible to travelers, and distances between subway stops was greatly increased over the streetcar. The lack of adequate parking facilities made the independent merchants fear clientele would be driven to shopping centres, such as Gerrard Square which opened in 1975.

Overall the Danforth has responded well to the change. The subway has proved to be beneficial. With it have come apartment towers in the vicinity of Broadview and Pape and new customers. The shopping district serves its ethnic clientele well with the products they want. The future for the Danforth looks bright.

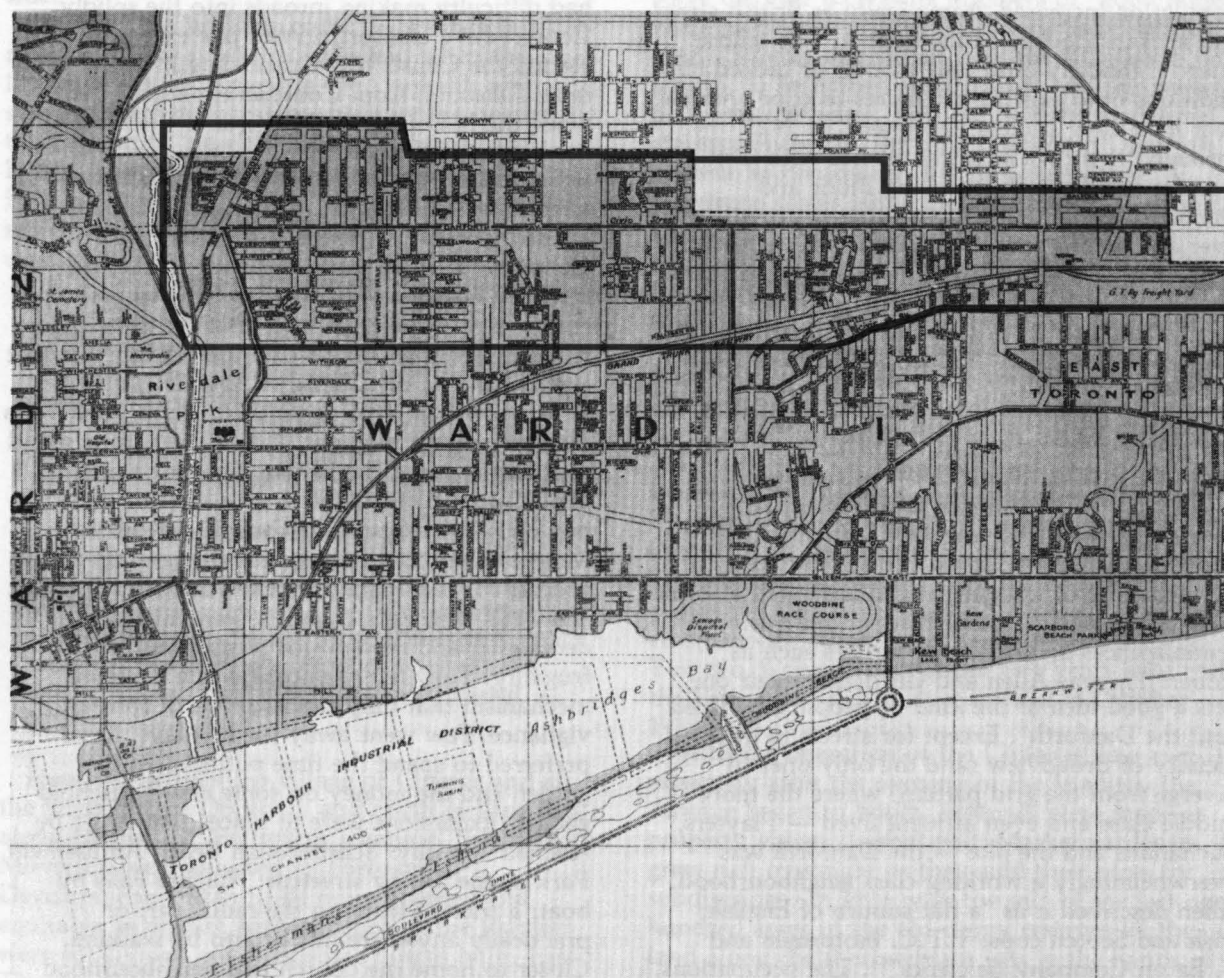


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Detail From Map of Greater Toronto and Suburbs.

Toronto: The Map Company, 1916.

Courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Library



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lthough the Danforth was planked in the 1850's, by the 1880's it had degenerated into a dirt and gravel road, "dusty in summer and muddy in wet weather, while in winter often blocked with snowdrifts from the unbroken sweep of winds across the large sandy stretches of land, termed the Plains..." Old timers can remember many incidents connected with the muddy Danforth which apparently became a regular quagmire every spring. Walter Taylor, whose family ran the paper mills on the Don, recalls that at Harris' glue factory at Coxwell, four horses were needed to pull each wagon from the mud which came up to the axles of the wheels. Mrs. George Curtis says that as late as 1906 the Danforth was a muddy country road with a three plank walk on the south side and a ditch nearly always filled with water on the north. When her family moved from England to the Danforth in 1906, Mrs. Curtis' first glimpse of the street was unforgettable:

In the middle of the road was a van piled high with furniture. It was up to the hubs in mud. The horses had been removed and the shafts were pointing to the sky. It remained there for several days.¹⁷

Although the mud obviously inconvenienced many, James Smith has more pleasant recollections:

my parents used to allow me to go in my bare feet from the 24th of May till the beginning of September and it was a pleasure to me to get out in my bare feet and run in the muddy road along Danforth Avenue. It was a mudhole — that was what made it so nice to run in, in your bare feet. The mud squeezing between your toes was nice and soft.¹⁸

Danforth Avenue was finally paved from Broadview to Greenwood in 1912.

Danforth Avenue Between Jones Avenue and Greenwood Avenue
7 August 1912
Courtesy City of Toronto Archives





The Playter family were among the earliest settlers in Toronto and York Township. They were a large family and have left many descendants. One of their homes, still owned by the family, stands at 28 Playter Crescent on part of the family's original crown grant.

Captain George Playter (1736-1822), the founding father was born in England but emigrated to America settling first in New Jersey, later in Pennsylvania. In 1765 he married Elizabeth Welding, a Quaker. Probably at his wife's urging Playter became a member of that denomination. However when the American revolution broke out he joined the forces loyal to Britain. After the war, Playter moved to Kingston briefly before coming to York in the early 1790's. Scadding remembered his neighbour George Playter as "a man of sprightly and humorous temperament", who wore a three-cornered hat, silver knee-buckles, broad-toed shoes with large buckles, white stockings, and always carried an unusually long gold-headed cane.¹⁹

As a Loyalist of officer rank, George Playter was granted in 1793 a front town lot in York and three separate tracts of land in York Township totalling five hundred acres. Today Queen, Yonge, Bloor and Bond Streets form the boundaries of his one hundred acre park lot. Playter probably built on the town lot at once but showed less interest in his "farm on the corner of Queen and Yonge", selling forty acres of it in 1797 for £56.50 and the remainder in 1799. The premature disposal of this property which was to so greatly increase in value in later years has become a legend in the Playter family. He preferred, "as being better land" the river meadows of his two hundred acres on the west side of the Don (no. 20, Concession 2 from the Bay) although most of this lot was taken up by the ravines of Castle Frank brook and the gullies and knolls of what was later Rosedale. Captain George Playter built his home on the eastern edge of these hills above Castle Frank, "where it is now the property known as Drumsnab" looking across the valley past the Sugar Loaf hill to his son's house on the opposite height.

The Playters are credited with providing the first bridge across the Don. Constructed about 1794, Elizabeth Simcoe records using this bridge on 6 June, 1796:

I passed Playter's picturesque bridge over the Don, it is a butternut Tree fallen across the river the branches still growing in full leaf. Mrs. Playter being timorous, a pole was fastened thro the branches to hold by. Having attempted to pass it, I was determined to proceed but was frightened before I got half way.²⁰

Captain George Playter had five daughters and five sons: John, James and Ely patented grants of land on the Don River in 1796. James Playter's two hundred acre lot (no. 11, Concession 2 from the Bay) was the one directly across the river from his father's. Today this property runs approximately from the river to Donlands Avenue and from Danforth to Browning Avenue.²¹ Ely Playter was granted the next lot north, no. 12. All the published accounts agree in placing John Playter's (1770-1853) lot across from his father's but actually he was granted no. 12, Concession 2 from the Bay, in the vicinity of the present Summerhill subway station between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. It was not until 1831 that John Playter formally bought the Danforth area land from his brother's family, but apparently he had lived on or near the property before.

According to Henry Scadding a neighbour of the Playter's, John Playter occupied the log cabin of John Scadding, east of the Don River and south of present day Queen Street, "during the absence of its owner and builder in England; and here Mr. Emmanuel Playter, his eldest son was born."²² Both Captain George Playter and John managed Scadding's property during his absence from Canada between 1796 and 1818. As well John Playter was elected in 1799 as overseer of the Mill Road (later Broadview Avenue).

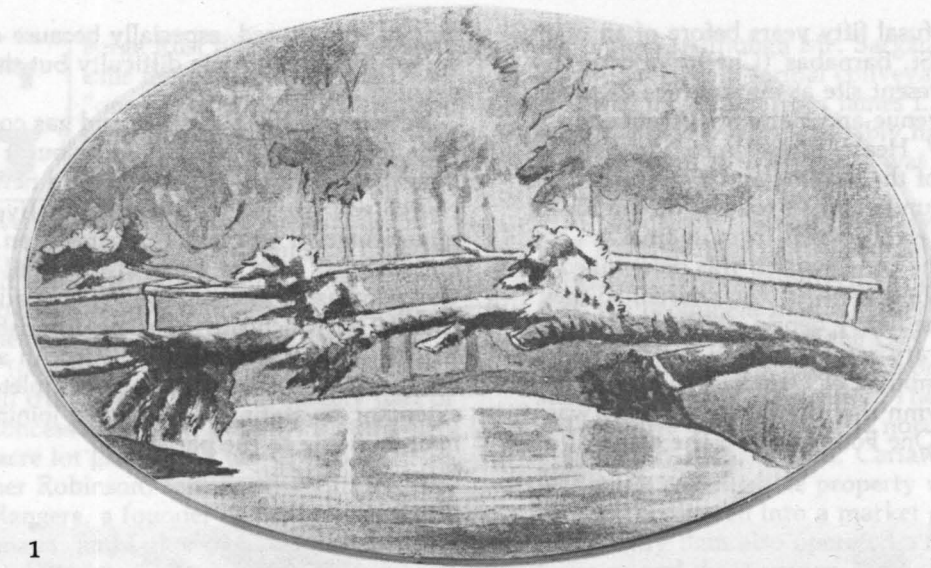
During the American occupation of York in July-August 1813, Ely and George Playter Jr. were heroes. At some risk, they gathered up ammunition and other valuables, stowed them in a boat and rushed them up the Don to a hiding place on their own land. Apparently the Americans were informed of this and journeyed up the river in search of the valuables but they never found them. Ely Playter's diary, preserved

today at the Ontario Archives, records this incident and many others of early Toronto.

John Playter and his wife Sarah Ellerbeck had three sons and four daughters. Richard Ellerbeck Playter, the heir of his father's lands near the Danforth, was given a good education in Toronto schools. He studied law but because of ill health, returned to farming until his death in 1871. In 1845 he married Mary Lea, they had nine children; one was John Lea Playter whose house is shown here. Richard Playter served York Township for many years; as a deputy reeve, on the county council and as a magistrate. Both Richard Ellerbeck and his wife were known for their charity and their kindness to the sick and needy.²³ In 1858 the Playter Family gave a quarter acre of their land to the Church Society of the Diocese of Toronto and St. Barnabas Church, (Chester) was built on what was later Ellerbeck Street.

By the 1860's the Playters began to sell parts of their two hundred acre estate to various purchasers. The western part of the land along the Mill Road was subdivided to form the village of Chester. The eastern part formed many small farms and market gardens. However, as late as 1910 the family retained a large parcel of land in the centre which they used for market gardening and dairy farming. By 1912 this property was subdivided, streets were opened up and substantial houses erected.

The Playter farmhouse which still stands at 28 Playter Cres. was built probably in the 1870's by William Playter, a market gardener and a son of Richard Ellerbeck Playter. The house was decorated with patterned brickwork, composed of a series of arrowheads meeting in the centre of the building. The appearance of the original house was changed greatly, probably around the turn of the century. The open airy verandah with its spool turned trim and delicate fretted brackets has been replaced by a heavy pillared stone porch, enclosed in glass and enlarged at the western end. All but one of the unusually high triple hung sash windows have been shortened. The carved posts on the balcony have been replaced by straight slats and two dormers now protrude from the roof. The solid stone fence which now surrounds the house is also a later addition.



1

1 Playter's Bridge Across the Don, 1794
 Built 1794
 Stood foot of Winchester Street
 Reproduction from a drawing by Elizabeth Simcoe, in King's Library British Museum, London
 Courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Library

2 Playter Farmhouse
 28 Playter Crescent
 Built ca. 1870
 Courtesy Playter Family

3 John Lea Playter House, ca. 1895
 1 Jackman Avenue at Danforth Avenue
 Stood ca. 1890 - ca. 1960
 Courtesy Playter Family



2



3

During the rectorship of Dr. James Beaven at St. John's Norway, a mission church was founded at Chester in 1858. Dr. Beaven, who also taught at University of Toronto, would drive his buggy from his home on Bloor Street East to conduct Sunday services at the mission.

In 1859 a pretty Gothic style church of board and batten construction was built on a quarter acre of land just north of the Don and Danforth Roads, donated by the Playter family. Known first as St. John's, Playter's Corners, then as St. John's, Chester, and even as the Church of the Epiphany from 1862 to 1871, it finally took the name of St. Barnabas' (Chester) in 1872.

For nearly half a century, the clergy and laymen of St. John's, Norway ministered in this "quaint, plain structure, picturesque among the surrounding trees". In 1905, Toronto's northern expansion justified the appointment of a full-time rector, Rev. Frank Vipond, and St. Barnabas' (Chester) became a separate parish. Then in its turn, St. Barnabas' (Chester) built a tiny mission church in 1906 at the corner of Pape Avenue and Bee Avenue: this was St. Andrew's "the church that was built in a day".

Between 1904 and 1906, a parish room was added and the original church of St. Barnabas' (Chester) was enlarged somewhat. However, an attempt to buy land adjacent to the church for a Sunday School and rectory failed. Realizing the population shift to the Danforth (and no doubt

regretting its refusal fifty years before of an offer of land there), St. Barnabas' (Chester) moved its church to its present site at the south-east corner of Danforth Avenue and Hampton Avenue in September 1907. Heavy rains forced postponement of the moving and by Saturday the church was grounded on its rollers "on the King's highway about eighty yards from its final destination". The congregation was determined to hold divine services in their own church, so they cleared away the heavy debris, cleaned the inside, put in a temporary ramp and held Sunday worship in the middle of Danforth Avenue. That morning one hymn that they fervently sang was "The Church's One Foundation". The disposal of

the old churchyard, especially because of the graves, presented some difficulty but the land was eventually sold.

New pews, a new furnace and gas connections were installed in the old building but it was soon hopelessly overcrowded. In 1910, a new brick church was opened with seating for five hundred, in anticipation of a larger congregation. The old building was used as a parish hall until more land was purchased on Hampton Avenue adjoining the church, on which site the present parish hall and Sunday School was built in 1918. An addition to the east side of the church was completed in 1923, extending its seating capacity and joining the main building to the parish hall.



St. Barnabas' Church (Chester), ca. 1880
 Ellerbeck Street, east side, between Pretoria
 Avenue and Butternut Street (1859-1907)
 Moved to Danforth Avenue, south side at
 Hampton Avenue (Stood 1907-1918)
 Courtesy Playter Family

George Rust d'Eye, a local historian calls this thirteen room building: "one of the most interesting and beautiful houses in the City — an 1850's brick farmhouse 'cottage', with its main floor high off the ground over a 'basement' floor containing the kitchen ... The house displays typically Georgian features. It has a Georgian door, centre hall plan, large shuttered windows with 6-pane, double-hung sashes, quoins, side-chimney and small verandah (portico)".²⁴

The well treed property was originally part of Lot 12, Concession 1 from the Bay, a two hundred acre lot granted by the Crown to Christopher Robinson, former officer in the Queen's Rangers, a founder of the Law Society of Upper Canada, and father of Sir John Beverley Robinson, Attorney-General and Chief Justice of Ontario. The crown grant was made in 1797 and the land, leased to tenant farmers, stayed in the Robinson family until 1859. In that year on 30 May, Robert Sargant granted a lease for life to John Wray with rent to be paid at the rate of £4

per annum. Although Mr. Sargant did not actually receive a formal conveyance of the property until 1860 from James L. Robinson, it would appear that he probably had possession of it in 1859 and that the house was built in that year.

In 1869 Robert Sargant sold the property to Neil Kennedy Bain, an immigrant from Dingwall Scotland. He was employed by John Taylor and Co., the prominent manufacturer of safes. In 1884 this area became part of the City of Toronto as St. Matthew's Ward and Bain's property was subdivided shortly thereafter. The 1890 *Goad's Atlas* shows the house in the north half of a block bounded by Bain, Frizzell, Carlaw and Pape. This was still a considerable property which Bain had by 1900 converted into a market garden. Apparently Bain also operated a feed and grain business and three grocery stores where the produce of his garden and orchards was sold.

James Bain (1877-1974), a son of Neil Kennedy Bain, was the last member of the family to own the house. From his birthplace in the north side bedroom at 14 Dingwall Avenue, James Bain

became a world traveller and adventurer. He was in the Yukon gold rush at the end of the nineteenth century and served in the U.S. Navy during World War I, where he survived the sinking of three ships. During the 1920's James Bain went on three Arctic expeditions, including one with the famous Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen. Apparently the Eskimo artifacts he collected on these expeditions were donated to the Royal Ontario Museum. He travelled for many years thereafter but made frequent visits to his Toronto home.²⁵

James Bain sold the family house in 1966 to Edit A. Koivula, who presently operates the Withrow Park Day Nursery there. The interior of the upper floors has been modernized for use by the nursery. James Bain told Mrs. Koivula that there were once barns, stables, outdoor bake oven and a separate kitchen which stood to the north of the house. Apparently Neil Kennedy Bain would allow neither gas nor electricity in the house during his lifetime.

Mr. and Mrs. Neil Kennedy Bain
Courtesy Edit Koivula



Bain House, 1979
14 Dingwall Avenue
Built 1859/60
Courtesy Toronto Public Library



In 1858, most of the land north of Hogarth Avenue to the Danforth, between Broadview Avenue and Logan Avenue was acquired by John Wilson Bowden, a builder. Bowden subdivided the largely undeveloped property in 1871. In 1875, the property known as 58 Hogarth Avenue was bought by Thomas Hogarth, the principal of the York Township school on Boulton Avenue in Riverside. Hogarth built the major part of the rural style house which stands today. In 1882, Hogarth sold the property to his daughter Elinor and her husband Thomas Heys. Heys was an analytical chemist and assayer who also taught at the Toronto School of Pharmacy. In the 1890's, Heys added a north wing and attached verandah to the house. The street name was changed from Wilson Street to Hogarth Avenue in 1896. (The Hogarths continued to live in the district, George Hogarth living at 66 Hogarth Avenue.)

The picture of Mrs. Owen Staples holding her baby in the Heys' apple orchards shows how rural Hogarth Avenue still was at the beginning of the

twentieth century. According to Mrs. William Heys, whose husband is a grandson of Thomas and who lives next door to No. 58, chickens were kept on the property and there was once a barn to park the family carriage.

The house remained in the Heys family until about 1964. After that the old house was allowed to deteriorate. It was a rooming house for a time and then left vacant for two years, when it was badly vandalized. Almost every wall and fixture was broken or destroyed. The speculators who owned the property hoped to tear down the house, but were opposed by local residents before the Ontario Municipal Board. Happily the house still stands on its well treed corner lot and is being restored. The house has still many of its original large doors and window frames — one of the most interesting features is the pair of floor to ceiling windows on the south ground floor. The huge lower sashes lift up into the second floor wall above the ceiling. There are several large fireplaces in the nine room house and much of the original wood floor still remains.

Mrs. Owen Staples holding her daughter Lillian at Heys' House.

58 Hogarth Avenue

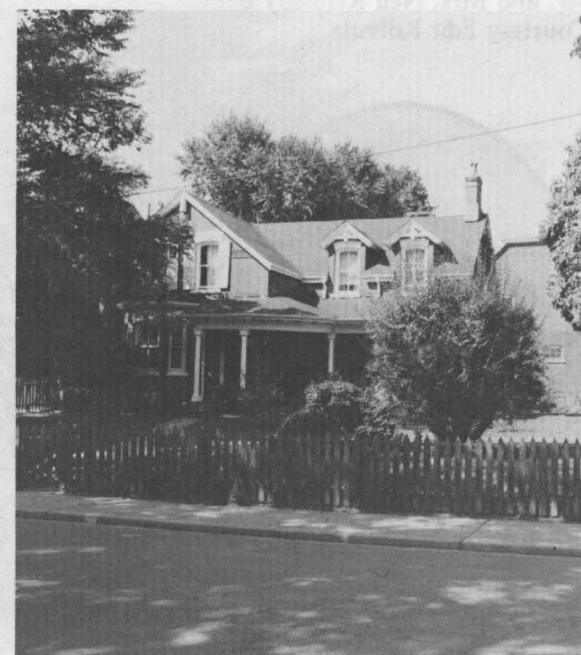
Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. William Heys

Hogarth/Heys' House, 1979

58 Hogarth Avenue

Built ca. 1875

Courtesy Toronto Public Library



R

iverdale Park provided an ideal spot for year round activities for the Danforth community. In the winter skaters thronged to the frozen Don River which ran through the Park. (Skating was very popular — there was also the Danforth Rink at Danforth and Broadview; the Maple Leaf Rink and Pape and Gerrard; and the huge outdoor rink behind the Broadview YMCA below Gerrard). The bobsled run at Riverdale Park was an exciting ride for the daring. If you were good, you could make a run of more than half a mile down South Hill all the way to Winchester Street.

During the summer the Don was still fresh enough for swimmers, fishermen and boaters. And of course the Riverdale Zoo, started in about 1899 with donations from private citizens, was a fascinating place filled with animals strange and exotic. The Park was also the site for circuses, picnics, community events and baseball games at

Millen Stadium.

Riverdale Park came into being through a series of fortuitous events. In 1856 the City of Toronto bought for £10,000 119.75 acres remaining from the Scadding farm which originally ran from the waterfront to Danforth Avenue between the Don River and Broadview Avenue. The City considered this a safe location for a jail and industrial farm as it was in 1856 outside the city limits and well beyond any populated area. In 1863/64 the western part of the property bounded by Winchester, Sumach, Carleton and the Don River was sold by the City to the trustees of the Toronto Burying Grounds. By 1870's the surrounding lands had become populated and the local residents strongly objected to the use of this land as a cemetery. Subsequently in 1871/75 these grounds were reconveyed to the City to form what was then known as the "Eastern Public Park". The name was changed a few times until 11 August 1880 when 'Riverdale Park' was

officially declared open. In 1890 the acres of the park increased to about 162 acres when the City set aside for park purposes all the lands acquired from the Scadding estate, except for a small portion reserved for the Don Jail, the Riverdale Isolation Hospital and the Smallpox Hospital.

In the early 1960's Riverdale Park was bisected by the Don Valley Parkway and its area was reduced to 104 acres. To compensate for this loss, the City Parks Department unveiled in 1962 a \$1,250,000 plan to improve the recreational facilities of the park. This included soccer and football fields, baseball diamonds, a quarter mile track, wading pool, a fifty foot toboggan slope, swimming pool, ice rink, field houses and an indoor centre which could include tennis courts. The Riverdale Zoo remained a City and neighbourhood institution until 1974 when it closed because of the new Metropolitan Zoo in the Rouge Valley. Riverdale Zoo re-opened as a nineteenth century animal farm in 1978.



Winter Sports in Riverdale Park, 17 January 1914
View from the west looking east to Broadview Avenue and Riverdale Isolation Hospital
Courtesy City of Toronto Archives

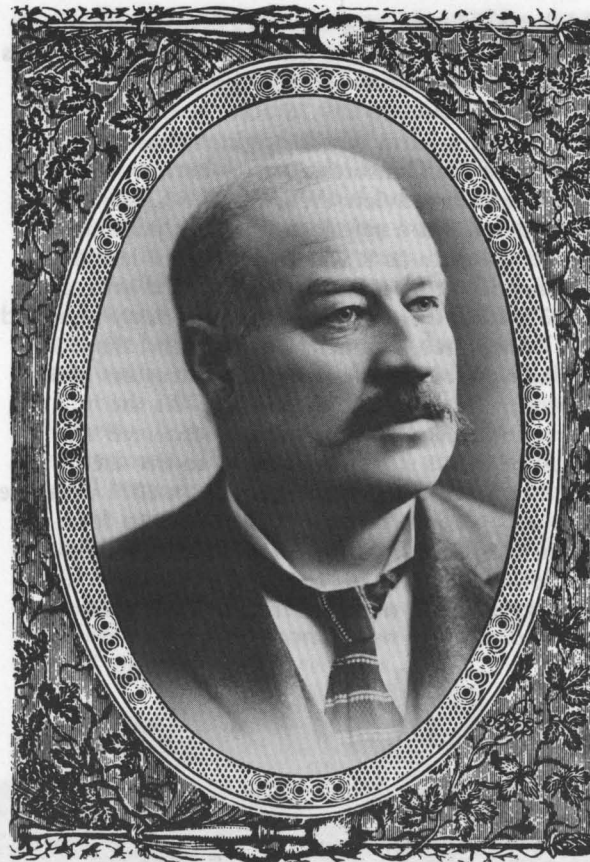
F

rom the mid-1880's to the early 1900's, Ernest Albert Macdonald was probably the best known resident of Toronto's east end. Known for his irrepressible energy, passion for investigating and making charges, extravagant promotional flair, wild speculations and boyish enthusiasm, it was E.A. Macdonald who developed many of the streets running east from Broadview north of Gerrard, created the village of Chester, and for several years represented the eastern district on Toronto City Council as alderman for St. Matthew's Ward, later Ward 1.

Born in Oswego, N.Y., Macdonald came to Toronto as a boy. He began his business career manufacturing children's novelties, but during the expansion of Toronto in the 1880's he got into the booming real estate business. His first major venture was in St. Matthew's Ward where from about 1885 to 1888 he bought or obtained options on large tracts of land then being used for market gardens, subdivided them, laid out and graded streets, installed sewers, constructed sidewalks, and in many places, erected expensive homes. Elliott, Victor, Langley, Withrow, Bain, Sparkhall and Dearbourne were some of the streets Macdonald laid out in an area he promoted as "Rosedale East".

Macdonald then began to develop a residential city suburb in and around the village of Chester, located along Broadview Avenue north of Danforth. Around 1885, he purchased the 160 acre farm of W.L. Taylor and proceeded to develop and noisily promote this and other former market gardens. For this much advertised real estate development, Macdonald was called the Baron of Chester. The fact that Chester did not develop into a thriving settlement at this time was due less to Macdonald's energy and advertising than to the lack of a bridge across the Don Valley at Danforth.

It was with the aim of encouraging settlement that Macdonald started Chester Presbyterian Church. He believed that "no intelligent citizen would care to establish a home in a community where no church was readily available". In 1889, he erected at his own expense a frame church on



the west side of the Don Mills Road (now Broadview) just north of Danforth. Today this congregation is part of Eastminster United Church.

Around 1890, Macdonald attempted to develop a suburban town in southern Scarborough, named Bellamy after the American writer Edward Bellamy, upon whose Utopian romance, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*, Macdonald modelled his ideal socialist community. This plan however coincided with the collapse of the real estate boom and Macdonald's fortune from land speculation, estimated at upwards of a half million dollars, was wiped out taking the Bellamy dream with it.

It was with a view to advancing his real estate projects that Macdonald entered municipal politics. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1885,

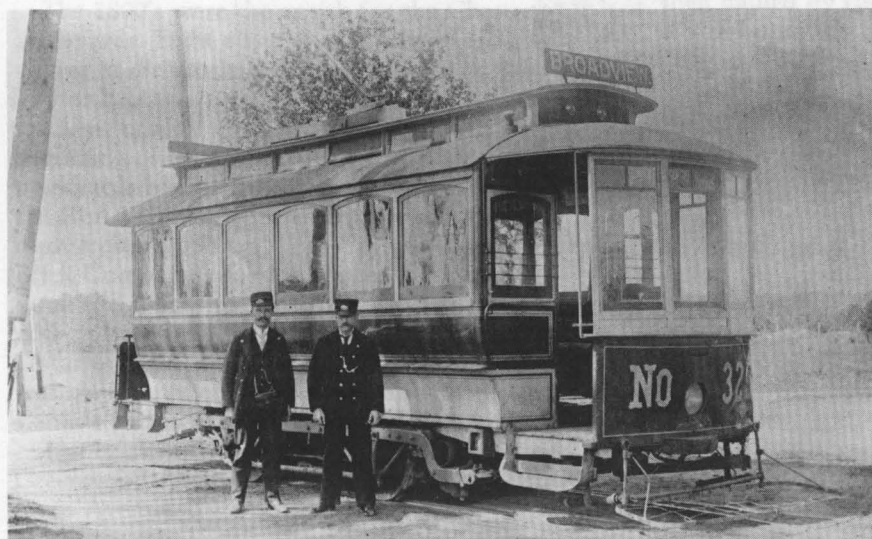
Ernest Albert Macdonald, 1858-1902
Courtesy City of Toronto Archives

Macdonald was elected to represent St. Matthew's Ward in 1886. From then until his defeat when seeking re-election for mayor in 1901, Macdonald, the "court jester of municipal politics", was a candidate for either alderman or mayor in every civic election in Toronto. His success was varied. He was elected alderman for St. Matthew's Ward in 1886, 1887 and 1889; for St. James Ward in 1890; and for Ward 1 in 1896, but was later unseated by judicial decision. He was an unsuccessful candidate for alderman for St. Matthew's Ward in 1885 and 1888; for Ward 1 in 1894; and for Ward 3 in 1892, 1893, 1895 and 1897. Macdonald also sought the mayoralty five times: in 1891 and from 1898 to 1901, winning the chain of office only in 1900. As alderman, Macdonald was a tireless fighter for the interests of the east end. He was instrumental in having a streetcar line opened on Broadview Avenue in 1889 and he continuously fought to have the service improved, the best method Macdonald believed was by a city-owned street railway. When he finally became mayor, Macdonald was seen as "the champion of the strap-holders".

After badly losing the mayoralty race in January 1901, Macdonald's seemingly boundless energy, enthusiasm and determination collapsed. Under the bravado, Macdonald was a sensitive man and his rejection at the polls caused a complete mental and physical breakdown from which he never recovered. Ernest Albert Macdonald died on 18 December 1902, burnt out at only forty-four years of age.

T

he Toronto Street Railway Company began service to the Danforth district in May 1889 with horse drawn streetcars which ran from Front and York Streets downtown, east along York, King and Queen Streets and then north up Broadview Avenue where they turned at the corner of Danforth in Chester Village. In 1891 the franchise for operating street railways was granted to the Toronto Railway Company. It continued the "Danforth" route, renamed "Broadview" in 1893, but simplified it somewhat; following Broadview Avenue from Danforth to Queen Street to Yonge Street downtown. Other changes in the Broadview route and other lines are documented in *Street Railways of Toronto 1861-1921* by Louis H. Pursley (Los Angeles: Interurbans, 1958). The cash fare continued to be five cents with ticket rates of twenty-five for one dollar and special fares for school children and children under nine years of age. The Toronto Railway Company electrified the Broadview Route by 11 June 1894. Another district line was opened in December 1893 along Gerrard Street from Sumach Street as far east as Pape Avenue. This electric car route was extended to Greenwood Avenue in September 1906.



Toronto Railway Company electric car standing on Broadview Avenue at Danforth, 1896
Courtesy Toronto Transit Commission

Chester Public School, ca. 1905
Broadview Avenue, west side, between Chester Hill Road and Helliwell Street
Built 1890
Courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Library

S

chool Section No. 27, York Township was formed in 1889 under the trusteeship of Joshua Ingham, Henry R. Frankland, and M.N. Whyte. It served children who lived on lots 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 in the second concession from the Bay and on Lot 11 in the third concession from the Bay, an area bounded today by Danforth Avenue, the Don River, Donlands and Eglinton Avenues. (Previously students had to travel to the present O'Connor Drive and Donlands Avenue to attend the Don Mills School, S.S. No. 7, founded in 1856.) Chester Public School was built in 1890 and classes opened in September 1891. It had three classrooms on the first floor and an auditorium on the second where school concerts and other community events were held. By 1906, the auditorium had been converted into three more classrooms. To the south and east of the school stood open fields. On cold winter days, the winds blowing across these fields would reduce the temperature inside the school to below sixty degrees and the children would be sent home. In the schoolyard was a pump with a white enamel cup attached to a long chain. It provided the only water supply. The original Chester School closed in 1959 and the next year the building was sold to the Estonian community for a cultural and recreational centre.



W

illiam Harris was born in Marston, Bedfordshire in 1848. While apprenticing as a butcher, Harris made an observation that would eventually make him a millionaire:

when a boy, working in a slaughter house in London, England, he heard that some of the by-products of the slaughter house industry were thrown away in America, and while still in his teens he made up his mind, he said, that he would save up his money and come to Canada. He came to Toronto in the spring of 1869, and before long was shipping by-products to his old employer in London.²⁶

W. Harris & Co. began on the Kingston Road (now Queen Street East) in 1870 and moved shortly thereafter to Pape Avenue just above the railway tracks. William Harris' home, built in 1900, still stands at the north west corner of Pape and Riverdale Avenues. In 1882, John B. Harris, a younger brother of William, joined the family firm. A directory of the day noted:

They are now engaged in the manufacture of sausage and bologna casings, fertilizers and fertilizer materials, animal oils, etc. They also do an extensive trade as stock dealers handling horses, cattle, milch cows, hogs, etc.²⁷

In 1901, William Harris formed the Harris Abattoir Company which in 1927 became part of Canada Packers Ltd. At his death in 1914, William Harris was a leader in the Canadian livestock business.

John Harris carried on the daily operations of W. Harris & Co., which had relocated in 1894 to the north side of Danforth Avenue at Coxwell, on land leased from the Church of England. This business, popularly known as Harris' dead horse factory or glue factory, was a major east end industry. With its extensive buildings and grounds, its tall brick chimney and its terrible smell which spread far and wide by the wind, W. Harris & Co. was a landmark in the area. Local residents would set their clocks by its noon and 6:00 P.M. whistle. Wilson Harris, a grandson of John B. Harris, can remember hog hair drying in the sun on the fields surrounding the factory.

Not surprisingly, John Harris had some difficulty in finding the necessary 150 to 200 men

needed to work at his factory. He solved the problem by an arrangement with the Don Jail, whereby a convict would be paroled if he agreed to work at the glue factory for the balance of his term. Harris would supply living quarters, clothing and pocket money, keeping the balance of the prisoner's wages until the end of the agreement.²⁸

After the Prince Edward Viaduct opened in 1918, much of the land around W. Harris & Co. was subdivided. While the new residents in the Coxwell-Danforth vicinity joked that if you paid your two cent fare and took the streetcar as far east as the Harris factory, you would at least get your "scent" back, they strongly objected to having the foul smelling industry in the midst of their spanking new homes. Public pressure mounted and finally in 1922/23 the company was forced to relocate to Keating Street. W. Harris & Co. remained there until the early 1960's when its property was expropriated for the Don Valley Parkway, and the company was sold to British Glues and Chemicals.

Familiar street names commemorate other Danforth area butchers. Sparkhall Avenue is named for Cubett Sparkhall, a retail and wholesale butcher, who had a farm on Logan Avenue below Danforth, from 1845 until well into the 1880's. Ingham Avenue comes from Joshua Ingham, a butcher and cattle exporter, who lived on the Don Mills Road (now Broadview Avenue north of Danforth) in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Ingham was also alderman for St. Matthew's Ward in 1887 and a trustee for School Section 27, York Township in 1889.

W. Harris & Co., 1900

Danforth Avenue at Coxwell Avenue, north east side

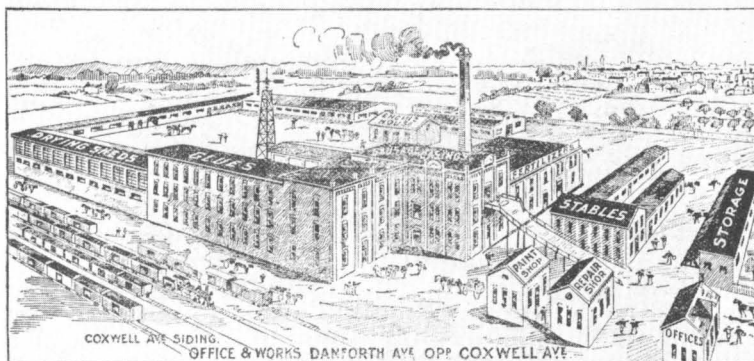
Stood 1894-1922/23

From *The Toronto City Directory*, 1900

GLUES

ESTABLISHED 1869

W. HARRIS & CO. Fertilizers



Manufacturers and Cleaners of

SAUSAGE CASINGS

DEALERS IN

Grease, Crackling, Hog and Horse Hair, Horns, Bones, Etc.

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DANFORTH AVENUE, TORONTO

B

rickmaking was an important east end industry from the 1840's to the 1930's. The clay and sand deposits left by glacial Lake Iroquois were burned to manufacture both red bricks and the white or yellow bricks. Brickyards were concentrated around two villages: at Chester (or Doncaster) in the Don Valley and at Leslieville further south east.

Bricks were made in the lower Don Valley area from the 1840's. Whitmore and Stotesbury were early brickmakers with extensive yards on the east side of Broadview Avenue between today's Sparkhall and Hogarth Avenues from about 1850 to 1870. By the 1870's several brick manufacturers opened in the Don Valley near Doncaster and further north at Todmorden. Samuel Arnold, Robert Goodings, the Doughty brothers and Henry Phillips were all brickmakers there in the 1880's. Each of these operations was medium sized by standards of the day, employing about ten men and producing from 800,000 to one million bricks annually. The Taylor Brothers established the Don Valley Pressed Brick Works near their paper mills at Todmorden at this time. But the area's largest brickyard was at the Don Jail where in 1885 sixty convicts turned out three million bricks.

The 1890's were the zenith for the Chester area brickyards. Eight companies are listed for the village in directories of the day. In 1894, the Taylor brothers received a gold medal for the excellent quality of their bricks. However by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Chester brickyards had all but disappeared. Only a few in the Don Valley remained. Drawing from vast resources of good clay, the Taylor's Don Valley Brick Company produced in the early 1900's, three and a half million red bricks and two million buff. At this time it was the only plant in Ontario to make enamelled or glazed bricks. It was considered one of the best brick companies in Canada and is still producing today.

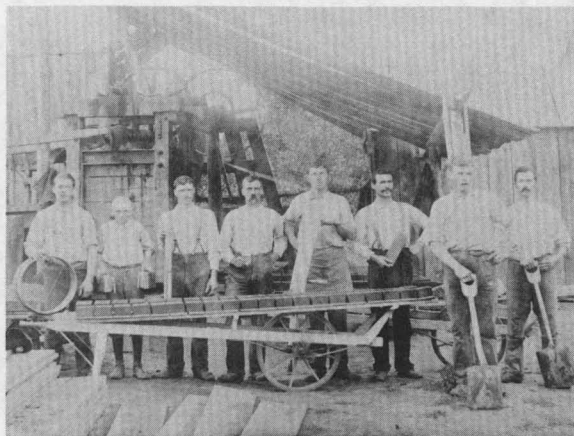
The brickyards in Leslieville were mainly on Greenwood Avenue and to a lesser extent on Jones Avenue. Two of the earliest brick manufacturers in this area were Joseph Russell

who began his business in 1857 and David Wagstaff who started there in 1863/64. By 1870 a directory listed nine brickmakers in the village and between 1874 and 1880 several more brickyards opened in Leslie. Like their Doncaster counterparts these yards were medium sized, each employed about ten men to produce an average of one million bricks a year.

Early in the twentieth century, the introduction of modern methods of drying and burning bricks greatly increased production and the brickyards along Greenwood Avenue were making several million bricks annually. Joseph Russell's yard at Queen Street East was now one of the largest in Canada.

The clay on Greenwood Avenue was of two different types. South of the Grand Trunk Railway tracks it was typical of the clay on the rest of the Toronto plain: mild and sandy with the upper part burning red and the lower part white. In 1905-06 there were seven yards here: John Price, W. Morley, J. Ashbridge, Bell Brothers, Morley and Ashbridge, T. Sawden and David Wagstaff.

North of the railway tracks towards Danforth Avenue there were four yards situated on top of a very deep ravine: J. Logan, A.H. Wagstaff, I. Price and J.E. Webb. They worked a stiff blue clay that had to be blasted loose by dynamite, then hauled by cable up to the brickyards where it was burned to a strong red brick.²⁹



By the 1930's, the clay deposits on Greenwood were almost depleted. Only Price's yard remained at 395 Greenwood, by then called the Toronto Brick Company, and it did not close until the 1950's. Some abandoned yards became housing sites. Other pits were converted to parks, e.g. Morley's yard at Dundas Street became Greenwood Park and Wagstaff's Monarch Park. Industry took over others taking advantage of the proximity of the Canadian National Railways tracks. Today the only reminder of this once important industry are the sloping contours of the parks and a few street names running off Greenwood — Wagstaff Drive and Sawden Avenue.

Thomas Jennings' Brickyard, ca. 1890
Jones Avenue east side between Danforth Avenue and Hunter Avenue
Operated ca. 1890-1894
Courtesy Todmorden Mills Historic Site

M

arket gardens and orchards once filled the Danforth area. In the 1880's, Messrs. Pape, Logan, Leslie, Greenwood, Cosburn, Sammon and Playter were all market gardeners. Today their names are commemorated as east end streets. They grew vegetables, fruits and flowers on plots ranging in size from two to forty acres on the sandy stretch of land termed the "plains" which ran on both sides of the Danforth back to Todmorden and east to Victoria Park. These market gardeners "sent their produce to the St. Lawrence Market (in the early times prices were very low and competition keen to get a stand in the market) and would drive their heaped-up wagons early the night before to a place in the market, keeping vigil over their load through the chilly night till the dawn brought business."³⁰

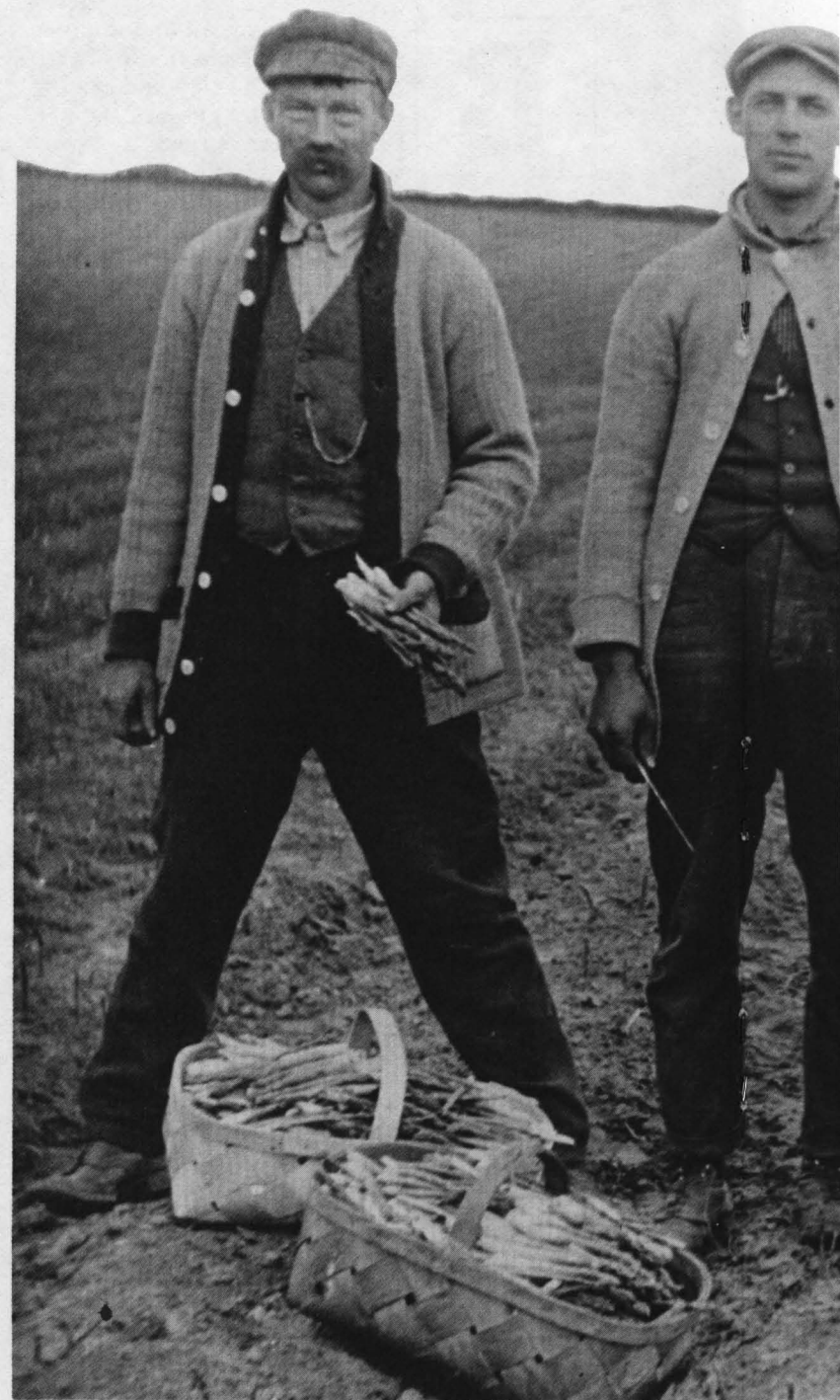
W.H. and J.E. (Joe) Jennings had a fifteen acre market garden around Greenwood and Sammon Avenues from 1898. They bought the largely swampy land for three hundred dollars per acre. By laying some eight thousand feet of tile drains on a low lying area, the Jennings were soon growing a large quantity and wide variety of excellent vegetables and small fruits. Theirs was a year round operation, large enough to employ four men all the time and up to ten during busy seasons. By continuously planting the liberally fertilized sandy loam, as many as three different crops could be harvested in the summer from the same plot. Greenhouses covered an acre so that during the winter such vegetables as lettuce, radishes, watercress, parsley and rhubarb could be force grown and sold for high prices. Unlike many market gardeners, the Jennings did not drive into Toronto to sell their produce from house to house or at the St. Lawrence Market. Their best market was east of the Don, where they sold to retail grocers and butchers. At this time there was no head lettuce — when leaf lettuce was scarce the Jennings made the bundles small and when plentiful large but the price always remained the same: forty cents a dozen.

By 1913, when the Jennings brothers were the subject of a long article in the *Globe*, the newspaper noted: "it is today rather unusual to

find a market garden of any extent located on the fringe of a large city".³¹ The increased population of most Ontario centres had brought real estate booms and inflated land values and "the market gardeners were lured from their legitimate calling by the wiles of the subdivision agent." However Joe Jennings optimistically but rather unrealistically assured the *Globe* that he was resisting the real estate man:

We have spent too long getting experience and building up our plant and trade to throw up our fifteen acres for house lots. It takes a long time to become an expert or successful gardener and we do not relish the prospect of being forced off our land by the speculation which has even reached past little Todmorden.³²

W.H. and J.E. Jennings' Market Garden, 1913
Greenwood Avenue and Sammon Avenue
Courtesy Todmorden Mills Historic Site





R

unning along the west side of Jones Avenue between Strathcona and Boulton Avenues is a forbidding high white stuccoed wall punctuated with two church-like Gothic entrances. Only the *magen david* above the northern door and two small plaques give clues to the nature of the property within the fortress — the cemetery of Beth Tzedec synagogue.

In the 1870's Martin McKee came into possession of some twenty-five acres fronting Clifford Avenue (later Jones Avenue) on the western outskirts of the village of Leslieville. The property commanded an excellent view of the land and lake below. Here McKee built a large turreted house, still standing at 450 Jones, for his wife Margaret and their five children. McKee was a small town merchant — he owned a general store and tavern on the Kingston Road just east of Pape and later operated a lumber yard there — with little interest in farming the property surrounding his home. Besides the area was too hilly to be cultivated easily. Thus in 1882 McKee subdivided much of the land west of Jones Avenue into 197 small lots and offered them for sale at a public auction to the city workingman wanting to be "his own landlord". He named three of the streets after prominent politicians of that time: Macdonald for the Canadian Prime Minister, Blake for the Ontario Premier, and Boulton for York East's M.P. Despite the promise that the properties were close to the city and transportation and yet in a healthy neighbourhood, workers did not flock to the freehold lots as McKee had envisioned. He resolved to rid himself of the land while it was still marketable.

In the spring of 1883 these circumstances could not have been more auspicious for a small group of East European Jews recently arrived in Toronto. They had just completed the organization of the city's second Jewish congregation, soon to be named Goel Tzedec, and although they were still without a permanent place of worship, they were busy with what they considered an even greater priority, the acquisition of a *bais oylom*, a cemetery.³³

Money was not plentiful in the new congregation and land in the city was expensive and increasingly difficult to buy for cemetery use. However the site on Clifford Avenue was ideal: it was outside the city; the village of Leslieville was familiar to local Jewry for the old Jewish cemetery was already located there on what is today Pape Avenue; the land was on high ground allowing burial in even the wettest weather; and the price was right. In the fall of 1883 the purchase was concluded with Martin McKee for \$135.

In the 1890's Galician Jews bought the adjacent lot for a cemetery. Fearing desecration of graves, the two organizations cooperated in 1918-19 to erect the enormous brick walls, which were later stuccoed.

Today there are few burials at Jones Avenue. After the amalgamation of the University Avenue

and McCaul Street synagogues, Beth Tzedec preferred the latter's Dawes Road cemetery, while the opening of the new Beth Tzedec Memorial Park on Bathurst Street further discouraged use of the congregation's original burial ground.

Jewish Cemetery, 1976

Jones Avenue west side between Strathcona Avenue and Boulton Avenue
Land bought 1883
Courtesy Bill Brooks

Notice of an auction sale for land in the Jones Avenue vicinity, 1882
Courtesy Olga Cable



H

ope United Church began one Sunday afternoon in July 1879 when a group of men met at the home of William Box on Dawes Road where they held a service.

These meetings continued in various houses throughout the area until the summer of 1884 when the Toronto Conference of the Methodist Church (Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda) established a mission at York Station under the care of Rev. John Carroll, D.D. (1809-1884). Carroll, a superannuated minister, had been coming to Little York from his home in Don Mount since the fall of 1883. As one of the most respected and influential Methodists in Canada, Dr. Carroll persuaded the Conference that, with the establishment of the Grand Trunk Railway's roundhouse there, regular church services were needed for the many new families moving into the district.

During the summer of 1884, Dr. Carroll conducted his services in Thomas Elliott's orchard on the south side of Coleman Avenue just west of Dawes Road. When the weather was cooler, the tiny congregation moved into Elliott's brick stable. A bell, a gift from an anonymous Toronto woman, and a flag were put on the roof to alert the parishioners and an empty barrel served as the pulpit. As winter approached, services moved to John Richardson's heated carpenter shop on the south side of Danforth just east of Westlake Avenue. However Dr. Carroll was determined to build a church. Although in his mid-seventies, he set out to accomplish his goal "with even more than his accustomed zeal and assiduity".³⁴ He canvassed for funds from Scarborough west to Chester and from the Plains south to Leslieville. He also raised money at "cottage socials", charging each person twenty cents for refreshments. Soon a small, rough-cast church, which cost \$1,200., was erected on the south side of Danforth Avenue just west of Main, on a plot donated by Benjamin Morton. While arranging the opening services at "Hope Tabernacle", Carroll suffered a stroke and died four days later on 13 December 1884. Apparently his dying words were "directions regarding the dedication of the church".³⁵ When Hope Tabernacle opened

the next day, the pulpit was draped in black in Carroll's honour. Hope Tabernacle was made a separate charge in 1887.

The Massey family, the farm implement manufacturers who owned a 240 acre country estate and experimental farm "Dentonia Park" a few miles to the east, were generous benefactors of Hope Church. They donated the church's present site at the north west corner of Danforth and Main. In 1900, the rough-cast church was moved to the rear of the lot and a new larger brick building, renamed New Hope Methodist, was erected. With donations from Walter and Chester Massey, the eight thousand dollar structure built by McMillen and Costain, opened in December practically debt free. After Walter Massey tragically died in October 1901, his widow Susan Denton, in the best Massey tradition, presented a new pipe organ to the church in her husband's memory. A manse just west of the church, was erected and furnished in 1908, also to Walter's memory.

Hope Methodist Church, ca. 1890

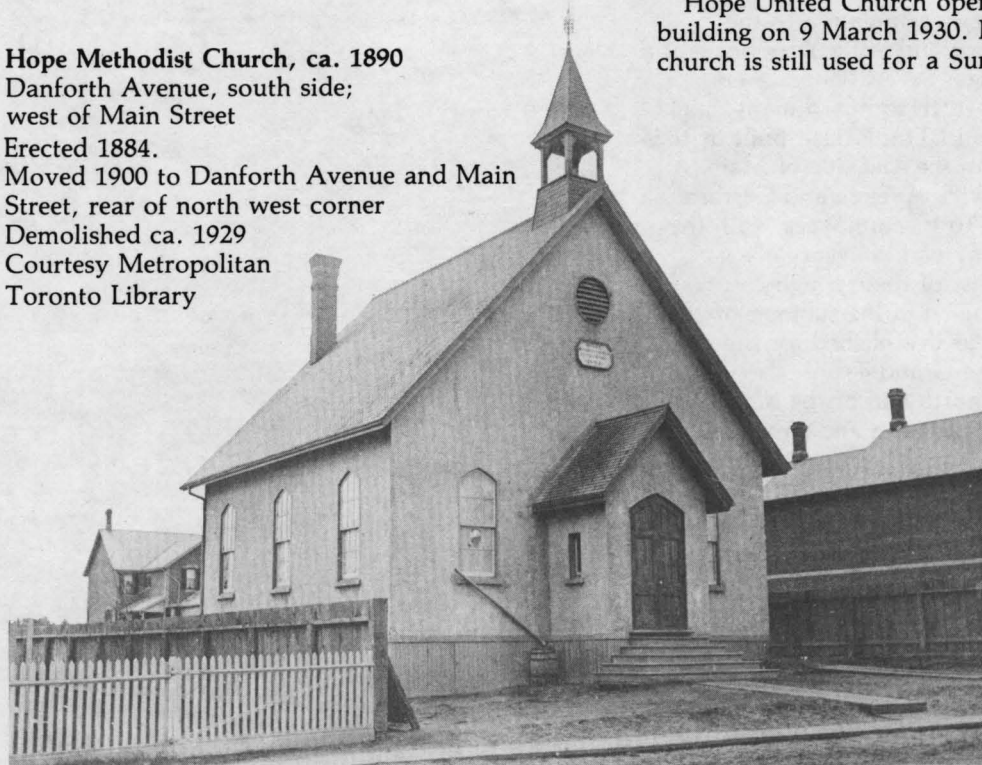
Danforth Avenue, south side;
west of Main Street

Erected 1884.

Moved 1900 to Danforth Avenue and Main
Street, rear of north west corner

Demolished ca. 1929

Courtesy Metropolitan
Toronto Library



Walter Massey's youngest child Denton (b. 1900) led a Bible Class at the church when he was only thirteen, foreshadowing the religious fervour that would make him a national figure in later years. Denton's role as leader of the York Bible Class for Young Men began in February 1925 with nineteen men in the basement of Hope Church Sunday School. Asked to lead the group, Denton specified that its members must work with him. The original six turned up with two friends each. By the end of 1931, York Bible Class membership had risen to nearly 2,500 and the class had moved to successively larger buildings ending in Yorkminster Church. In 1927 Denton began to broadcast the class over radio and soon the whole of Ontario and many American centres were listening in. In her book on the Masseys, Mollie Gillen notes: "To the class Denton brought his gifts of personality, administration and fervour. Like his idolized father, he had the ability to reach his audience and bring Bible history alive".³⁶

Hope United Church opened its present building on 9 March 1930. Part of the 1900 church is still used for a Sunday School.

I

n 1883, the Grand Trunk Railway laid out a new freight assorting yard five and a half miles east of Toronto on the south side of Danforth west of Dawes Road. Seven miles of tracks were built to store 420 cars. Double tracks from this yard to the Don River, a distance of four and one-third miles, were also laid to join the yard with existing tracks into Toronto. This was completed in 1884 with the erection of an iron, one-span bridge across the Don, south of Queen Street. In 1884, a roundhouse to hold thirty-two engines and the York Station for suburban travel opened. Dawes Road, which ran through the York yard south to Kingston Road was closed in 1884 at the railway tracks. Traffic was diverted to a new street, opened in 1885 and called Main, which ran straight north from Kingston Road to Danforth. A wooden bridge on Main Street over the tracks was also constructed at this time.

The sudden increase in population to the villages of East Toronto and Little York brought a severe housing shortage. Several hotels were opened along the Danforth to board many single railway men. The Grand Trunk itself built in 1884 five double cottages on the east side of Main Street between Swanwick Avenue and Gerrard Street. It rented these to its employees, with the understanding that they would eventually purchase them. The last of these rough-cast cottages was still occupied in the summer of 1965; shortly thereafter it was demolished for the new Kimberley School. The Grand Trunk also provided a lot at the north end of the Main Street bridge in front of York Station and gave \$4,000 towards the construction of a Y.M.C.A. With an additional \$2,500 subsidy from the Village of East Toronto, the Y opened about 1891. The large frame building was to be used for lay-overs by railway crews. Its assembly hall became a community centre used for church and society meetings, charity drives, etc. The Toronto Public Library used part of the building as its Eastern branch from 15 December 1914 until 1921 when it relocated to Main Street, south of Gerrard. The Y building was moved in 1903 across the tracks to a

new site on the north east corner of Gerrard and Main. It closed in 1922, the Grand Trunk deeded the land to the City of Toronto. The building was demolished about 1930 and the Ted Reeve arena now stands on the site. Just north of the arena is a playing field known as Grand Trunk Fields.

York Railway Station, Grand Trunk Railway, 1906
Main Street, east side; south of Danforth Avenue
Stood 1884 - October, 1974
Courtesy Empringham Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Library



Little York, 1900
 Danforth Avenue and Dawes Road, north west
 corner
 Courtesy Provincial Archives of Ontario



The people (and horses!) of Little York must have been warned that a photographer was coming for they certainly turned out en masse for this picture. The village of Little York grew around

Dawes Road and Danforth Avenue after the railway came to the area in the mid-1880's. A school was built on Coleman Avenue just west of Dawes Road in 1890. Little or "muddy" York was best known for its excellent soccer football eleven team. It played and usually beat teams from all over southern Ontario. Loyal fans from Little York often travelled with their club to "away" games. Little York's home field was east of Dawes Road on the north side of the railway tracks.

The centre of Little York was Coleman's Corner, as the Dawes-Danforth intersection was called, after the first postmaster Charles Coleman. Several shops, hotels and the Coleman Post Office were located here, making it a very busy place as this picture shows. The sleighs carrying grain or flour, coal and groceries are gathered around Paterson Bros. grocery store, which stood at the north west corner. Robert and James Paterson, the proprietors, claimed to run a "modern grocery and provision store" with "fruit, vegetables, etc. in season, prompt delivery"³⁷ and invited all to inspect their goods. Also shown to the right is the York Boot and Shoe Store, operated by Arthur Johnston. Apparently this building at the north east corner was demolished only in 1957, replaced by the Royal Bank.

On the south side of Danforth, from where this photograph was taken, were two hotels, both still standing although greatly altered. On the east was the Eastbourne Hotel, operated at this time by Mrs. Stackett. Across Dawes Road on the west was the Empringham, owned from 1881 by George Empringham (1837-1915). At the time of the laying of the streetcar tracks in 1912-13 the Empringham was moved back from Danforth Avenue and a new addition was built in front. The hotel was renamed the Danforth Hotel.

Little York became part of the Town of East Toronto in 1903 and was annexed to Toronto in 1908.

Charles Gates opened this large frame hotel probably in the late 1850's. It was popular for balls and banquets, but especially for racing meets for behind the inn was the Newmarket race course, a mile track "laid out on the undulating sand and gravel hills" and also owned by Gates. Charley Gates, a man of irascible temper, "was a power on the turf and it took fast horses and keen judgement to get the better of him".³⁸ His horse, Jack Bell, was the long shot winner of the Queen's Plate in 1870. His Newmarket, named for the famous tracks in England, itself hosted the Queen's Plate on a hot 17 June 1868:

No one had ever seen a crowd so large on Plate day. Estimates soared to twelve thousand as people coursed into the racing enclosure at Newmarket. Livery stables in Toronto were asking ten dollars a day for the rental of horses and by noon it was impossible to obtain one. The Grand Trunk Railway, which ran a special train, reported that extra cars were shunted to the Newmarket track during the afternoon and that thirty of them were piled with people for the homeward trip. Men and women even clung to the tops of the cars for the perilous ride home.³⁹

Charles Gates' last race was at his own funeral one cold winter day in the 1870's. We are told that the horses carrying the hearse to the family

plot at Highland Creek almost ran away when their driver got out to warm himself by walking alongside.⁴⁰ After his death, Gates' widow Jane carried on the business for a while but by the late 1880's the hotel became the Bay View run by William E. Owen. It continued to draw customers but the importance of the adjacent Newmarket Race Track declined once Woodbine opened on the Kingston Road in 1874. Trotting matches were held at Newmarket occasionally but by the 1890's it was used only for a training ground and stabling. Today two short streets just north of the Danforth in the vicinity of Main, Gates Avenue and Newmarket Avenue, are the only reminders of the hotel and race course that once stood on their site.

Empringham Hotel, ca. 1903

Danforth Avenue and Dawes Road, south west corner

Courtesy Empringham Collection, Metropolitan Toronto Library

Charles Gates Hotel, ca. 1870

Danforth Avenue, north side, between Woodbine Avenue and Main Street.

Pen and ink sketch by J. McPherson Ross

Stood ca. 1858-ca. 1910

From Toronto Evening Telegram, 23 December 1920, p. 10





wen Staples (1866-1949) is best known for the hundreds of sketches, illustrations and paintings he did of the Toronto scene depicting his own time and reconstructing Toronto's past for

John Ross Robertson's historical collection (housed today at the Metropolitan Toronto Central Library). Staples was born in Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset, England on 3 September 1866 and was brought to Canada at the age of six years and to Toronto when he was ten years old. In 1878, Staples' father died and the family moved to Rochester, New York to enable Mrs. Staples to work as a nurse. Owen worked also and in due course was employed at the Rochester Art Club as a messenger boy. Staples was soon inspired to try etching and painting and when he was only thirteen, won his first prize for a canvas exhibited at the Powers Art Gallery, Rochester. He later studied at the Rochester Art Club under such artists as Horatio Walker, James Dennis and Harvey Ellis; at the Art Students' League, New York, and at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

Staples returned to Toronto in 1885 and secured a job at the *Mail* making sketches and cartoons and drawing illustrations for news articles. In the mid-1890's, Staples became an artist-reporter and cartoonist for John Ross Robertson's *Evening Telegram* where he was to work until two years before his death in December 1949 at the age of 83. Until about 1906, he did political and portrait cartoons for the *Telegram*, signed Rosstap, a combination of the names of publisher and artist. From then until 1918, his time was devoted almost exclusively to the task of illustrating Robertson's historical collection, including the six volumes of *Landmarks of Toronto*. Most of the nearly three hundred churches from 1800 to 1904 illustrated in volume 4 of the *Landmarks* were done by Staples. During that period, Staples was commissioned by John Ross Robertson, to paint a series of nine large oils of scenes of York and Toronto from 1792 to 1908. These historical depictions were given to the City of Toronto.

The relationship between John Ross Robertson and Owen Staples is well described in Ron

Poulton's biography of the publisher, *The Paper Tiger*.⁴¹ Many of Staples' paintings were unsigned because Robertson did not allow any member of his staff to put on a one man show. Robertson felt proprietary towards and often would claim those paintings Staples did privately. Dorothy Staples recalls that "John Ross" would arrive at her father's doorstep at any time, holidays included, with pictures to be done. For years Robertson paid Staples \$10. a week and never more than \$35., although he did will him \$1,000. Staples was only getting \$40. a week and never more than with a settlement of \$500. and no pension.

C. W. Jefferys, a fellow historical artist, and Owen Staples designed the latter's cottage style house at 69 Hogarth Avenue. It was built a few years later by Jefferys' father, using discarded bricks from the local Don Valley yards. The northern ground floor front room was designed as the hub of the house, serving as the family living room and Staples' studio. An interesting feature of the room is the inglenook, the corner benches by the fireplace on which Mrs. Lillian Staples is seen reading. The house cost about \$2,000. to build and the thirty foot lot was \$300. (Dorothy Staples, who still lives at 69 Hogarth Avenue, says her father was not much of a businessman — the going rate for land in the Danforth area at the time was \$8.00 a foot.) At this time there were still only a few houses on Hogarth. The surrounding hills and orchards were an ideal place for the five Staples children to play. The Staples home soon became a centre for other artists of the day, such as many of the Group of Seven, C. W. Jefferys, G. A. Reid, etc. Today the Staples house is on the Toronto Historical Board's List as a building worthy of preservation.

Owen Staples' love for the Danforth area was shown in a series of illustrated articles he did for the *Telegram* in the 1920's, "How Spring Comes to the Don Valley". Staples also showed his appreciation to the Danforth community by presenting in 1919 to Danforth Avenue Baptist Church, a large mural painting in memory of the men of that church who died in World War I.

Owen Staples Home, ca 1905
69 Hogarth Avenue
Courtesy Dorothy Staples



T

he Frankland family long served the Danforth area community. Garrett Frankland (1834-1900) was born in England and came to Toronto in 1854. He soon settled on the Don and Danforth Road

and built a large stone house around 1858 on the north east corner of Pape and Danforth. Here he operated a wholesale butchering business. Garrett Frankland was also a pioneer in exporting livestock to Great Britain, a trade which he started in 1874/75 and which continued to grow between the two countries till the end of the century. Frankland also served on the Toronto City Council as alderman for St. Lawrence Ward from 1885 to 1890 and for Ward 2 in 1892. He had five children, three sons and two daughters.

Henry Robertshaw Frankland, (1858-1921) the eldest, was born 1 September 1858 on the family homestead where the Palace Bingo Hall now stands. He was educated in the public schools of York Township and private schools. When he was fourteen, he apprenticed as a butcher in his father's slaughter house. Two years later the young Frankland crossed the Atlantic in charge of the first consignment of live cattle to be exported to England from any North American port. In 1876, Henry Frankland started his own retail and wholesale butchering business at the St. Lawrence Market, which he sold in 1900 to become the federal collector of inland revenue for the Toronto region.

Early in his career, Frankland became interested in public and church affairs. He entered politics when he was only twenty-five, serving as deputy-reeve of York Township from 1883 to 1886 and as its reeve for a year in 1887. He was appointed



justice of the peace in 1885. Frankland was elected alderman for Ward 1 in Toronto for two terms, 1894-95 and 1898-99. He also contested the federal riding of York East, losing to the Conservative candidate W. F. Maclean by three votes in the election of 1896. Frankland was elected president of the Toronto Horticultural Society in 1905 and soon became a director of the Industrial Exhibition which he actively promoted into the Canadian National Exhibition. Frankland and his family were staunch supporters of St. Barnabas' Church. For many years he was superintendent of its Sunday School and it was not unusual to see him carry children across the muddy Danforth to Sunday School.

Living on the Danforth, Frankland was an early and eloquent promoter of the district's annexation to the city and of the building of a viaduct.

Frankland was equally interested in education. He became a school trustee in York Township in 1886 and helped in the formation of School Section No. 27 and in the building of Chester School there in 1891. In 1909 when plans were being made to build a school to serve the rapidly growing and newly annexed Danforth area, Frankland fought to have this school located central to the whole district. By agreement with the Toronto Board of Education, the new school was built on Logan Avenue, south of Danforth but the capital sum raised by the rural trustees passed into the hands of the city board so that both country and city children could attend this new school. The two-storey eleven room school which opened in 1910 was named in honour of the Frankland family and H. R. Frankland continued his interest in it, sending every St. George's Day a red rose to each staff member.

Henry Robertshaw Frankland, 1858-1921
Courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Library

Cadet training was a prominent feature of Toronto's educational system from 1875 until the 1930's when military drill was replaced by the present physical education programme. The highlight of the cadet year was the Empire Day parade. Each May all the cadets of the city's schools marched up University Avenue to Queen's Park where they assisted Toronto's school girls in decorating the monuments. Enroute they were reviewed by a prominent military figure, such as the Governor-General or the Minister of Defence and Militia. The scarlet tunicked cadets of Frankland School, pictured here, were drilled by the school's first principal Robert J. Blaney. This dashing, military figure left Frankland during World War I to join the 216th or so called Bantam Battalion in France. His example encouraged the student cadets remaining at Frankland to hope that "The Kaiser would hold out long enough for us to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces".⁴²

Frankland Public School Cadet Corps, 1915
Courtesy Alex Edmison



Frankland School itself began in 1909 in a two room portable at the back of the present yard with two teachers from Chester School, Miss Edmunds and Miss Calvert, in charge. In the summer of 1910 the first permanent building of eleven rooms was erected and on 25 October, four of these rooms were officially opened. By January 1911, all rooms were occupied. With the building of the Bloor Viaduct and the opening of the Danforth car line the community of "good honest working-class people in the Danforth-Broadview area" grew rapidly. Eighteen rooms were added to the school within four years. By 1917, Frankland had the third highest enrolment of any Toronto school with over 1,400 pupils and classrooms of more than fifty pupils each were common.

Frankland School was known in its early years for its "museum", a motley collection of butterflies, birds' nests, shells, minerals, coral, Indian artifacts, samples of manufactured goods in various stages of completion, etc. This

"museum" was used to illustrate "oral compositions", a novel approach developed by a Grade 4 teacher, Miss McCloy. In 1917, she proudly showed a *Star Weekly* reporter her record book with the subjects of recent student speeches: "How they take moving pictures under water"; "The Torpedo"; "How an Indian goes up rapids in a canoe"; "A picture talk on Brantford"; "the manufacture of cotton"; etc.⁴³ This practice at "oral compositions" may have launched at least two Frankland graduates on their future careers: Toronto mayor Donald Summerville and broadcaster Gordon Sinclair. Other Frankland old boys are author Robert Thomas Allen, whose nostalgic writings are often based on his boyhood in the Danforth area; rugby great Teddy Morris; hockey star Bob Davidson; and Queen's University administrator and National Parole Board officer Alex Edmison.

Frankland Public School, 1912
816 Logan Avenue
Courtesy Metropolitan Toronto Library



B

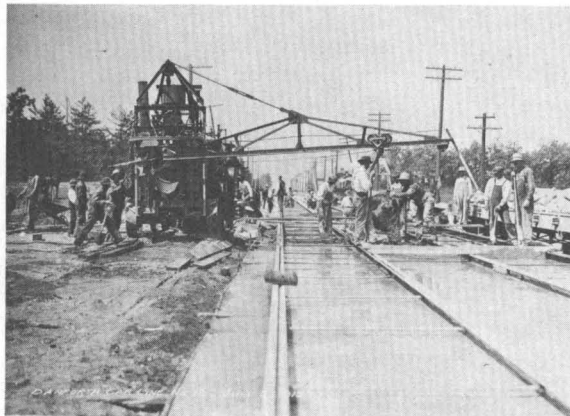
etween 1891 and 1910 the population and area of the City of Toronto increased substantially. The Toronto Railway Company, in a decision upheld by the courts, refused to

extend its one fare service, build new tracks or buy additional cars beyond the city limits of 1891, the year of its contract. The newly annexed districts in the east end bordering Danforth Avenue and Gerrard Street east from Greenwood were without any form of public transportation and remained vacant and unproductive. In an effort to stimulate the development of these areas the City stepped in and formed its own Toronto Civic Railways in 1911. Fares on the Civic Railways were lower than those on the Toronto Railway Company: adults paid two cents cash, with tickets at six for ten cents; children under nine years of age paid one cent; and infants in arms travelled free. The night fare (from midnight to 5:30 A.M.) was five cents cash. This abnormally low fare structure meant that the Civic Railways were always a deficit operation.

The Gerrard route was the first Civic car line to be completed and placed in operation. It began at the terminal of the Toronto Railway Company's Parliament line, at Gerrard Street and Greenwood Avenue and ran eastward to Gerrard and Main Street. Service began on 18 December 1912. The next year a line was laid on Coxwell Avenue from Gerrard to Danforth, connecting those two routes of the Civic Railways.

Another major route was built along Danforth Avenue during 1912 and 1913, at which time the south side of the Danforth was widened. This line, which opened on 30 October 1913, ran from Broadview Avenue eastward to Luttrell Avenue, a distance of 3.38 miles. On the day the line went into service, the Danforth was decked with flags, store windows were decorated, hundreds of people packed the eight Civic cars, speeches were made by Mayor Hocken and other dignitaries and there was a festive banquet at Playter's Hall. That evening the North Riverdale Ratepayers' Association had a huge celebration all along the Danforth. About twenty-five thousand citizens, shouting and blowing noise makers, crowded the thoroughfare, often blocking the new car service,

Construction of the Danforth Avenue Car Line of the Toronto Civic Railways, 8 July 1913 Courtesy City of Toronto Archives



to watch a parade of masqueraders led by the Forty-Eighth Highlanders band. At the North Riverdale Rink grounds prizes were awarded for the best costumes and more speeches were given. A giant bonfire and a promenade band concert in a vacant lot at Carlaw and Danforth kept the excitement at fever heat.⁴⁴

Connections of the Toronto Civic Railways' Danforth line were made at the west end with the Toronto Railway Company's Broadview route and after the Prince Edward Viaduct opened in 1918, with the T.R.C.'s crosstown Bloor route. (The privately owned Toronto Railway Company had built the line on the viaduct from Sherbourne to Broadview during World War I but the City of Toronto had financed it).

The Toronto Civic Railways were at best a piecemeal solution to the transportation problems of the east end and there were many inconveniences for the passengers. There were no free transfer privileges or connections from the Civic Railways to the central network of the Toronto Railway Company. Passengers had to change cars and pay another fare where the two lines met. The long queue in the picture graphically illustrates the inconveniences passengers had to suffer. It was not surprising then that the plebiscite taken in 1920 was overwhelmingly in favour of a single united municipally-owned transportation system which would provide economical, convenient and equitable service to all parts of the city. Accordingly the Toronto Transit Commission was incorporated on 1 September 1921. It inaugurated a one fare system with free transfer between former Civic and Company lines. Work began on integrating the tracks of both systems. On 1 July 1923 direct crosstown streetcar service commenced along Bloor and Danforth from Lansdowne Avenue to the eastern city limits at Luttrell.

Transfer of passengers from the Toronto Railway Company's "Broadview" line to the Toronto Civic Railways' "Danforth" cars during rush hour, 23 September 1920
Courtesy Toronto Transit Commission

F

or years the Danforth area developed slowly in semi-isolation because the Don Valley and River created an effective natural barrier between it and the rest of Toronto. As the city expanded north and east of the Don, and especially after Chester was annexed to Toronto in 1909, it became imperative that there be a crossing north of Gerrard Street other than the narrow rickety foot-bridge at Winchester Street. Finally on 1 January 1913, the Toronto electorate agreed to build a viaduct across the Don River Valley to connect Danforth Avenue with Bloor Street and downtown Toronto.

The idea was scarcely a new one but its acceptance was. As early as 1873, Henry Scadding had suggested in *Toronto of Old* that a continuation of Bloor Street traversing the Don Valley "would form a convenient means of communication between Chester and Yorkville".⁴⁵ In 1910 and 1911, two separate reports recommended the same thing. The first came from Jacob and Davies, a New York firm of consulting engineers, retained by City Council to consider the traffic situation and transportation facilities in Toronto. Their *Report on Transit* suggested that traffic problems could be alleviated by building a subway line on Yonge Street between Front and St. Clair followed by an east-west route on Bloor Street from Yonge to Broadview, crossing the Don Valley by means of a double-deck viaduct.⁴⁶ The second report came from the Civic Improvement Committee, a quasi-official body established in 1909 to find solutions to the city's traffic problems. Among its recommendations was



Mayor Tommy Church turns the sod for the Prince Edward Viaduct, 16 January 1915
Courtesy City of Toronto Archives

Construction of Prince Edward Viaduct, Don Section, 34 December 1916
Bloor Street and Sherbourne Street to Danforth Avenue and Broadview Avenue, over the Don Valley and River
Built 1915-1918
Architects: Thomas Taylor, City Engineer and Edmund Burke
Courtesy City of Toronto Archives



that a north-east diagonal road be built from Queen and Church Streets to connect with a Danforth Viaduct. The committee also noted that rapid transit, i.e. subways, to and from the suburbs must be seriously considered.⁴⁷

Although Toronto voters rejected the concept of subways and twice, in 1910 and 1912, defeated plans for a viaduct, they finally supported the latter recommendation in a plebiscite held in 1913 and \$2,500,000 was approved to build the bridge. The route of the viaduct and its final method of construction were debated fiercely as well. Finally it was decided to construct a steel and concrete bridge in three sections — the Don, Rosedale and Bloor — 1,620 feet in all stretching from Bloor and Sherbourne Streets east to Danforth and Broadview Avenues.

After three years of surveying, soil testing, planning and designing under the joint leadership of Edmund Burke, consulting architect, and Thomas Taylor, city engineer, Mayor Tommy Church turned the sod and construction of the bridges began in January 1915. The one recommendation of Jacob and Davies that was implemented was the inclusion of a lower deck on the Don Bridge to carry subway trains. It was this second deck that saved the city millions of dollars fifty years later when the Bloor-Danforth subway was finally built. The Rosedale Bridge opened for traffic on 29 October 1917, the Don Section on 18 October 1918 and the Bloor section in August 1919.

With the opening of the Prince Edward Viaduct, the Danforth area finally emerged from being "out in the country" to become an integral part of the city of Toronto.



This photograph has many fascinating details. It illustrates how at this time the north side of the Danforth was in the country and the south side was in the city. The north side of the Danforth and beyond belonged to the unincorporated village of Chester under the administration of York Township. Several country establishments are shown on the left side of the picture. At the front left buggies are parked outside a blacksmith shop. Apparently this building was started as a home for the Playter family but never finished and used afterwards for many years as a blacksmith shop.⁴⁸ Beyond it, in the middle of the picture, is a long frame building. This is probably Danforth Hall (possibly also called Priestly's), a country hotel which was built in the late 1870's or early 1880's at the north west corner of Ellerbeck. "Danforth Hall, where many stirring election campaigns were fought out, and where the young folks of the district, and frequently parties from the west of the Don, held many a happy dance".⁴⁹ Danforth Avenue Baptist Church held services in the hall for ten years before their church was constructed on the Don Mills Road (now Broadview Avenue) at Pretoria in 1894. In 1907 Danforth Methodist used the old hotel for the same purpose. The hotel was used also as a waiting and change room for skaters using the Danforth Rink, probably enclosed by the hoardings just to the hotel's left in the picture.



Broadview Avenue and Danforth Avenue, ca. 1908
Courtesy James Collection, City of Toronto Archives

Playter's Society Building, ca. 1910
Broadview Avenue and Danforth Avenue, south east corner
Built ca. 1908
Courtesy Playter family



The south side of the Danforth and below was annexed to the City of Toronto as St. Matthew's Ward in 1884. On the right side of the picture one sees several amenities of city life: the sidewalks are paved (1909); the streetcar tracks of the Toronto Railway Company's "Broadview" route curve and end here; and there is a three storey block of stores in the front right. This is Playter's Society Building, popularly called Playter's Hall, one of the first block of stores built on the Danforth. Playter's Hall was erected around 1907 by Albert E. Playter and his brother William, both market gardeners interested in developing the area. Sometime before 1912 an addition was put on the east side of the block. The building was strategically placed at the head of Broadview and Danforth Avenues, where the streetcars turned. The bottom floor was used for stores: Downes Bowers, men's furnishings, was one of the first occupants. Offices for dentists, doctors, etc. were on the second storey. The top floor was used for dances, card parties, lodge meetings etc. Playter's Society Building soon replaced Danforth Hall as the important meeting place and social centre of the district. The latter was torn down a few years after the north side of the Danforth was annexed to the city in 1909.

Margaret Chambers shown here in front of her store, has been called the person who "taught Torontonians how to fillet and eat fresh fish".⁵⁰ Although she had worked in the family fish shop in her native Greenock, Scotland since the age of twelve, the idea of selling fresh fish in Toronto was unknown. "Fish and chips and nothing else" she was told. But Mrs. Chambers went ahead and opened a fish store on the Danforth in 1915 on two hundred dollars borrowed from an aunt. The five year lease was for fifty dollars a month. The next year the Danforth area started to boom and Mrs. Chambers got her first break: surrounding rents almost doubled but hers could not. Mrs. Chambers eventually proved the sceptics wrong. At one time she ran five fish shops in Toronto and she worked well into her eighties. Her Danforth store is still in business, operated today by her daughter Margaret.

Mrs. M. Chambers, Fish Merchant, 1917
Danforth Avenue and Bowden Avenue, south east corner
Operated 1915-
Courtesy Miss M. Chambers



Allen's Danforth Theatre, 1919
Danforth Avenue, just east of Broadview Avenue
Built 1919
Architects: Hynes, Feldman and Watson
From *Construction* 12 (November 1919): 344



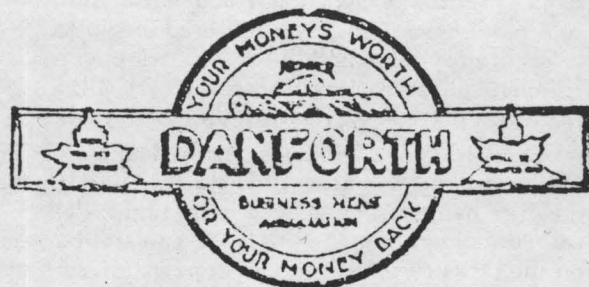
Movies were a very popular form of entertainment for Danforth area residents. One of the first theatres was Wilson's built around 1908 at Danforth and Broadview. Others quickly sprang up along the street and by 1921 there were five movie houses between Broadview and Pape: the Allen at Broadview, the Model at Arundel, the Iola at Gough, the Palace at Pape, and the Playtorium (sometimes called Playter Fun Theatre). Here for five cents you could see uproarin' cowpunchers such as William S. Hart, Tom Mix and Hoot Gibson or thrill to the endless perils of poor Pauline. And after the show what better place to enjoy a delicious ice cream soda or fresh homemade candy than Danforth Sweets, just east of Broadview.

By the depression a host of theatres flourished on the Danforth including the Prince of Wales at Woodbine managed for years by the Summerville family, all the way east to the Grover at Dawes Road.

These theatres were large and luxurious places, providing a full evening's entertainment. When the Palace, now a bingo hall, opened its 1,600 seats in 1921 the *Toronto Mail* of 21 February reported a bill featuring DeMille's "Midsummer Madness", the Mack Sennett comedy "My Goodness", a newsreel, travelogue, Paramount magazine, as well as a live ladies band.

Allen's Danforth Theatre, was one of ten similar buildings the chain constructed in Toronto at that time. The architects designed it with a simplicity in deliberate and striking contrast to the heavy ornamentation of most theatres of the day. (The Palace for example had a dome stage illustration of the meeting of Elsa and Lohengrin from Wagner's opera.) The 1,600 seat auditorium, of a modified Adams style coloured in subtle tones of gray, blue and old rose, attempted to eliminate all distracting features. It was still a luxurious place however with its tapestry silk walls, high French windows, richly detailed plaster ornaments and marble stairs. Although the theatre's name has changed several times, the carved monogrammed initials AT can still be seen on the tapestry brick and cut stone exterior.

The storekeepers who had opened shops along the Danforth banded together in the late 1910's to form the Danforth Business Men's Association. Its motto was "Your money's worth or your money back". Each spring, the Association sponsored a parade with marching bands and floats decorated by the members. It began at Pape, went along the Danforth, across the Viaduct and then back to Woodbine Avenue. During the 1930's, the Association annually held a mammoth three day picnic in Withrow Park which attracted over 100,000 people. The main event was the Boys' Derby, a race for homemade crates and wagons. As a local newspaper of the day, the *Danforth Tribune*, noted there was also a baby show "best next to Ex"; prize winning exhibits of home-grown produce which "all unemployed men are invited to enter"; and "other events too numerous to enlarge on".⁵¹ Today, although the Danforth Business Men's Association is not defunct, it has been relatively inactive since the major change of the Danforth shopping area from anglo-saxon to ethnic.



Float made by Percy Waters Florists for the Danforth Business Men's Association Parade, ca. 1918

Courtesy Kenneth Waters



Percy and Lulu (Louise) Waters opened their flower and nursery stock store on Danforth Avenue, near Logan in 1913. Although Percy's father, H. W. Waters was a florist in the Beach district, the Danforth seemed the perfect location for a young enterprising man to set up shop. There were no other retail nurseries in the area; new houses in need of landscaping were being built on nearby streets such as Logan, Wolfrey and Jackman; and with the recent plebiscite approval of building a viaduct across the Don River, the Danforth area would be connected to the rest of Toronto and there was the prospect of many more new residents and customers. Like the other merchants on the Danforth, Waters worked long hours, weekdays from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. and Saturday until midnight. He, however, was never far from his family as they lived right above the store. To get supplies the horse and wagon would go down Logan Avenue to Queen and Degross to the old Riverdale station. To supplement his income, Waters would use the same wagon to deliver laundry along the Danforth as far as Victoria Park, while Lulu minded the store. This taxing life style weakened Waters' resistance and he died of influenza in 1917. His widow and three sons, Kenneth, Russell and Victor, were left to carry on the fledgling business. Kenneth eventually became an alderman and school trustee for the area and the flower shop remained in the family until recently.

Percy Waters Florists Ltd., Armistice Day,
11 November 1918
Danforth Avenue between Hampton Avenue and
Logan Avenue
Operated 1913-
Courtesy Kenneth Waters

F

or years when people thought of cars they thought of Danforth Avenue. The Danforth grew up alongside the motorcar. Its old isolation ended with the opening of the Prince Edward Viaduct

which carried the ever increasing number of motorists over the Don into the district.

W.S. (Bill) Giles opened one of the first car dealerships along the Danforth in 1919. Four years before he was struggling to sell five cars annually at his Chevrolet franchise in his native Scarborough. Then instead of going into downtown Toronto to seek his fortune, "he pinned his faith in the Danforth district". His business, Giles, Rice & Peters Ltd., expanded rapidly as the Danforth grew. By 1927 he had two large showrooms at each end of the avenue and was doing over a million dollars worth of business a year selling Chevrolets, McLaughlin-Buicks and Pontiacs.

As car sales soared in the 1920's, other entrepreneurs soon followed Giles. Before long there wasn't a block along Danforth Avenue without a car lot: Riverdale Garage and Brown's Dodge at Pape and so on. Some blocks were all car lots. By the 1950's in the region east of Pape, the Danforth was the centre of Toronto's used car business. Neon lights, coloured pennants, flashy salesmen and radio jingles lured customers to "Try Ted Davey" or scores of other dealers.

A decade later the used car business had spread all over the city and into the suburbs. The Danforth lost its preeminence as an automobile centre and many new and used car lots closed. Giles, Rice & Peters Ltd.'s first showroom at Chisholm eventually became Mainway Ford, then it lay vacant for a time until it was finally demolished in 1978/79. Dentonia Ford Sales now occupies the site in a new building opened in 1979. W.S. Giles' west Danforth firm, opened in 1926 at Jackman, was taken over in October 1928 by an early sales manager George Hogan. It still operates today as Hogan Pontiac Buick Co. Ltd. with a sales staff that speaks a total of twenty languages.

Danforth Avenue Used Car Lot, 1950's
Danforth Avenue between Donlands Avenue and Caithness Avenue
Courtesy George Rust D'Eye

Giles, Rice & Peters Ltd., 1927
2494 Danforth Avenue, at Chisholm Avenue
Operated 1919 - 1947
Building stood 1919-1978/79
From: *Official Souvenir Program, City of Toronto Diamond Jubilee of Confederation.*
Toronto, 1927.
Courtesy George Rust D'Eye



T

his impressive renaissance style church is quite in keeping with the Mediterranean atmosphere of Danforth Avenue today. Surprisingly Holy Name Church was not erected by Italian

Catholics wanting to reproduce a bit of their home-land (Holy Name follows the general lines and proportions of S. Marie Maggiore in Rome) but rather was built through the efforts of an Irish priest who came to the newly established Danforth parish in 1913. This was Father Michael Cline (1870-1947) a much loved and respected figure, easily recognizable as he strolled along the Danforth by his ready smile, tall hat and jaunty walking stick. In 1913 there was no Catholic church for the large number settling there. Father Cline had to celebrate the mass on the second floor of the Catholic school which was built in 1913 on Carlaw Avenue just south of the Danforth. Excavations for a new church began in 1914 and by 1915 the basement was completed (the war caused a one year delay). This basement was to serve as Holy Name's church for the next eleven years. It was not until 14 March 1926 that the magnificent superstructure, built to seat 1,050 at a cost of almost \$200,000, was opened and formally dedicated. There are several interesting features in the 68 foot by 170 foot limestone building. It was only the second church in Canada to use indirect lighting in the nave instead of traditional chandeliers. The church's front entrances do not open directly onto the busy Danforth but rather to a tiled terrace enclosed by a stone balustrade with stone steps at either end giving access to and from the street level. Over the years Holy Name Church has kept pace with the Danforth's changing ethnic composition. Father Leo Smyth, a local product and Father Cline's successor, gave the church to Dutch and later Italian immigrants for services with their own pastors. (The Italians opened their own church St. Catherine of Siena in 1966 at Danforth and Byron Avenues). Holy Name Church has built a reputation on its social action, fine choral singing (Lois Marshall was a choir member in the early forties) and the large number of its members who have joined religious orders (thirty-six priests, twenty-five sisters and two brothers).

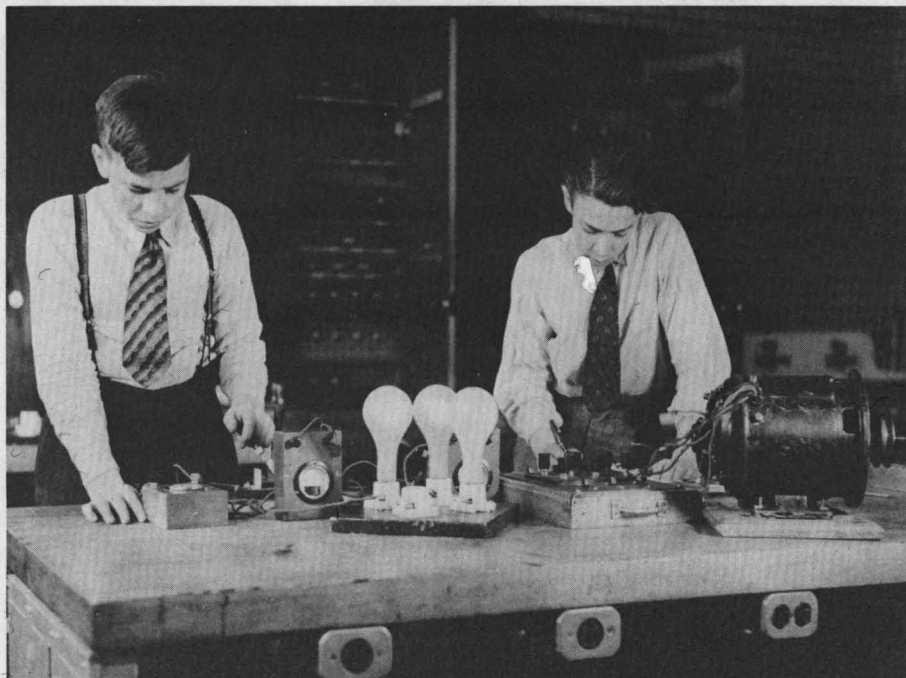
Holy Name Church, 1926
Danforth Avenue, north side at Gough Avenue
Built 1926
Architect: W. Holmes
From: *Construction 19* (June 1926): 184



Danforth Technical School began in January 1912 with evening classes at Riverdale Collegiate. It was called Riverdale Branch Technical School because it operated as a branch of Central Technical School. Students could only attend the eastern school for their first two years, then had to transfer to Central Tech for the final three. In July 1914 the Toronto Board of Education approved the site for the eastern branch technical school. The building opened on 4 September 1923 when Rev. F.E. Powell, rector of St. Barnabas' (Chester) was chairman of the board. It contained fifteen classrooms, four

laboratories, ten shops, two art rooms, a printing and pressroom, two kitchens, two sewing rooms, two lecture rooms, a large auditorium, a gymnasium and a swimming pool. The new school had a staff of fifteen and could accommodate eight hundred students. The name Riverdale Branch Technical School was kept until 1929 when the name was changed to Danforth Technical School. The school colours were also changed from purple and white to red and white. In 1931 Danforth Tech became a full fledged school and by 1933 the first fifth year class was organized. Additions were made to the original school in 1931, 1939, 1955-56, 1958, and 1962: it now covers a full city block.

"Ties in the Shops" at Danforth Technical School,
1942
840 Greenwood Avenue
Built 1923
Courtesy Pape-Danforth Branch, Toronto Public
Library



The Sunkist Fruit Market began in 1929 by Italian partners Sam Comella and Sam Badali. Today Comella's 2 nephews run the business. Like several other fruit and vegetable stands along the Danforth, the Sunkist market is open twenty-four hours. It started the all-night operation because there wasn't room in the store for all the produce and to save the trouble of bringing it in from the sidewalk. These markets serve their largely ethnic clientele with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, e.g. the Sunkist carries 8 different kinds of peppers.

Sunkist Fruit Market, 1979
561 Danforth Ave., south-east corner of
Carlaw Ave.
Courtesy Peter Rodney



Food Merchants of Danforth Avenue at Pape
Avenue Intersection, 1979
Courtesy Toronto Star.



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(Outside Front)

Row of stores being built, 20 January 1913
Danforth Avenue, south side, between Hampton
Avenue and Logan Avenue
Contractors: Weismiller and MacKenzie Bros.
Courtesy Todmorden Mills Historic Site



Danforth Branch, Toronto Public Library, 1929
701 Pape Avenue
Built 1929
Architects: George, Moorhouse & King
Courtesy Toronto Public Library

In 1928 the Toronto Board of Control granted \$100,000 for new branch libraries in the Danforth and Runnymede districts. Danforth Library opened on 20 November 1929. (Runnymede Library was completed for service on 12 November 1930). On opening day, the Danforth Business Men's Association gave a celebration luncheon where speeches were made by the Mayor, library officials, local aldermen and business people.

The new building had a decidedly English flavour with its front facade half stone and half timber work and stucco panels; and with its projecting bays surmounted by gables. "Producing a very pleasing effect and worthy of a more favourable setting", it covered almost entirely the 40' x 110' lot, bought at a cost of \$10,578 — "the best available at the time". Originally designed to hold 13,000 volumes, the library now has a collection of over 50,000 adult and children's materials in a wide range of media and languages. Extensive renovations were made to this busy branch during 1977. It was renamed Pape-Danforth Branch in 1979.

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**Danforth Avenue at Broadview Avenue looking east,
ca 1911**
Courtesy James Collection,
City of Toronto archives. (Opposite page)