

# ***St. Clair West in Pictures***

A history of the communities of Carlton, Davenport, Earlscourt, and Oakwood

***Second Edition***  
***Revised and Expanded***







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A history of  
the communities  
of  
Carlton,  
Davenport,  
Earls court,  
and  
Oakwood

Nancy Byers  
and  
Barbara Myrvold

**Second Edition Revised and Expanded**

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## Cover

Front:  
Earls court, 14 October 1916.  
John Boyd/NAC/PA-69937

Front inside:  
North Earls court, showing Rochdale Avenue from the  
Harvie hill, 14 October 1916. The white house in the  
front centre stands at 35 Rochdale Avenue.  
John Boyd/NAC/PA-69932

## Key to Abbreviations in Picture Credits

Adam	Adam, G. Mercer. <i>Toronto, Old and New</i> . Toronto: Mail Printing, 1891; Coles, 1974.
AO	Archives of Ontario
AO/Horwood	Archives of Ontario. J. C. B. and E. C. Horwood Collection
ATA	Archdiocese of Toronto Archives
AUCC	Archives of the United Church of Canada
CTA	City of Toronto Archives
Careless	Careless, J. M. S. <i>Toronto to 1918</i> . Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1984.
Cauz	Cauz, Louis E. <i>The Plate: A Royal Tradition</i> . Toronto: Deneau Publishers, The Ontario Jockey Club, 1984.
Corley/Highlands	R. F. Corley Collection. Toronto Belt Land Corporation. <i>The Highlands of Toronto</i> , <i>Illustrated</i> . [Toronto, 1891.]
Crang	Crang, Jethro K. <i>History of one branch of the Crang family tree in England and Canada</i> , 1793 1977. J. K. Crang, 1977?
Durnford	Durnford, Hugh and Baechler, Glen. <i>Cars of Canada</i> . Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973
MTRL	Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library
MTRL/JRR	Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library/ J. Ross Robertson Collection
NAC	National Archives of Canada
OJA	Ontario Jewish Archives
Robertson's	<i>Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto</i> . 5 vols. Toronto: J. Ross Robertson, 1894-1914.
Ross	Ross, Margery, ed., <i>Robert Ross, friend of friends</i> . London: Cape, 1952.
Spadunk	Bull, William Perkins. <i>Spadunk or from paganism to Davenport United</i> . Toronto: Perkins Bull Foundation, George J. McLeod Ltd., 1935
TBE	Toronto Board of Education. Sesquicentennial Museums and Archives.
TFD	Toronto Fire Department
TPLA	Toronto Public Library Archives
TPLAN	Toronto Public Library. Annette Branch
TPLDU	Toronto Public Library. Dufferin/St. Clair Branch
TTC	Toronto Transit Commission Archives
Toronto	<i>Toronto; Canada's Queen City</i> . Toronto: Industrial Publishing Company, 1912
WTJHS	West Toronto Junction Historical Society



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## Preface

*St. Clair West in Pictures* began as the book “Earlscourt in Pictures” focussing on the area around Dufferin/St. Clair Branch of the Toronto Public Library. Earlscourt was a small unincorporated community in the first decades of the 20th century. Its boundaries were the City limits to the north, the CPR tracks to the south, Dufferin Street on the east, and the Grand Trunk Railway (now the CNR) tracks to the west.

However, Earlscourt’s roots went back into the 19th century, and its history flowed east and west of Earlscourt’s boundaries. Many of the district’s earliest settlers were associated with Carlton and Davenport, two small villages west of Earlscourt, established in the 1850s. These communities were the real beginnings of urban development in this part of Toronto. There was also the community of Oakwood, an early 20th century subdivision along St. Clair east of Earlscourt. People in the York Township districts of North Earlscourt, Fairbank, Silverthorn, and Rowntree, used St. Clair Avenue for shopping and transit.

*St. Clair West in Pictures* reflects, the enlarged area, bounded by Winona Drive on the east, Old Weston Road on the west, the CPR tracks on the south, and Toronto’s City limits on the north.

Part I follows the chronological development of the area from the time of Native portage routes and encampments to the present day. Part II highlights outstanding personalities, institutions, landmarks, and groups.

For their assistance with original documents, we thank Commemorative Services of Ontario (formerly the Toronto Burying Grounds); Earlscourt Family and Child Centre; Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library; Ontario Land Registry Office; Toronto Historical Board, and the archives of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Canadian Jewish Congress, City of Toronto, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, Salvation Army, Toronto Board of Education, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Transit Commission, and United Church of Canada. For much of the research, we thank students hired under federal government programs in the 1980s: Marydee Duthie, Elizabeth Elbourne, Cathy Simpson, and Diane Sullivan.



A special thanks to Barbara Forsyth for sharing information about Carlton and Davenport villages; Professor Richard Harris of McMaster University who provided three unpublished papers and notes on Earls Court, later incorporated in his book, *Unplanned suburbs; Toronto's American tragedy 1900-1950*; Dr. Mima Kapches of the Royal Ontario Museum who helped with Native settlements, also supplying a photograph; and Margaret Kelk for lending her photograph album of 83 Oakwood Avenue. In addition, we are especially grateful to several individuals who read the manuscript and offered useful suggestions: Charles Caccia, Ray Corley, Betty Disero, Joan Miles, and Florence and Dick Watts.

We also thank those who provided corrections and new information for the second edition: Kathryn Anderson, John R. Baldwin, Janet Bonellie, Mike Filey, Robert Fraser Marilyn Litvak, Christine Mosser and Alan Walker (Toronto Reference Library), and Brian Murphy, Joan Schwartz and Peter Robinson (National Archives of Canada) on the Ross family and their home; Jerry Hodge, John Martyn, and Dick Watts on Garrison Creek; Ray Corley on transportation; Florence Watts on the Crang family; Joan Roberts for identifying the location of the back cover picture; Joan Miles on the liquor issue in West Toronto; Harvey Naylor and Ken Webster for the picture of the Royal George Theatre; and Audrey Fox on the Turners of Bracondale.

Thanks also to those longtime community residents who reminisced about the area some years ago: William Attwells, Leonard Blakewell, Pearl Fine, Jack and Doreen Hughes, John Juniper, Mary Keith, John Martyn, Crawford Milne, and Alan Shaw.

A special word of gratitude to representatives from several community groups including the Corso Italia Business Improvement Association, Regal Heights Residents' Association, St. Clair Davenport Community Group Inc., and West Toronto Junction Historical Society, for their interest in this project. They were instrumental in having the book published in the first place, and tireless in its promotion and sales, ensuring its resounding success. Finally, we are gratified that so many readers from near and far took the time to give us their comments, and that the Toronto Public Library responded to this interest by publishing this new edition of the book.

Nancy Byers  
Barbara Myrvold  
October 1999

## PART I: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ST. CLAIR WEST AREA

### Introduction

*St. Clair West in Pictures* traces the history of a district in northwestern Toronto from its beginnings as a Native portage route and encampment to the present day. For almost all its recorded history, beginning with the first European settlements in the early 19th century, the district's evolution has been determined by its proximity to Toronto. The land in the region was originally granted to government officials, soldiers and other friends of the state in the last decade of the 18th century. However, none of these people came to live here.

By 1820, the Town of York (now Toronto) was growing quickly, and newcomers began to travel along primitive early roads - Davenport, Dundas and Weston - to settle well beyond the town's limits. At this time, the district received its first family - the Bulls of Tipperary, Ireland - who were to provide leadership for many years.

The area first provided timber from land clearances, and then fresh fruits and vegetables and other food, for the town dwellers. In turn, the area's early residents, primarily immigrants from Britain and Ireland, received wares from producers in Toronto. Soon a small farming and market gardening community of landowners and farm labourers grew. As the pioneering phase passed, other resources in the district developed. By the 1860s, the region's sand, gravel, and clay were furnishing building materials for the growing city.

As Toronto grew, it developed trade with a wider region through a well-developed transport and communications system. Railways constructed through the area supplemented local roads, and connected Toronto with its outlying areas. Beginning in the 1850s, small villages grew in the district along these road and rail routes: Carlton on Weston Road and the Grand Trunk Railway, and Davenport on Davenport Road and the Northern Railway. Canadian Pacific Railway established a railway junction in the area in the 1880s. This brought more people, land subdivisions, and factories, and led to an incorporated municipality: West Toronto Junction, which included Carlton and Davenport by 1889.

An economic depression stagnated growth for most of the 1890s, although the decade saw the beginning of street railway service. During the 19th century, the area was made up of families of Irish, English and Scottish origins, with the Canadian-born



population gradually outnumbering the immigrants. Methodist and Anglican Protestant denominations predominated.

In the first years of the 20th century, working-class immigrants flowed into Toronto and its outlying areas, and the district flourished as an industrial and suburban region. The new communities of Earlscourt and Oakwood emerged along St. Clair Avenue West, which became the main street of the area. Most newcomers were from the British Isles, with small but significant groups from Italy, Poland, the Ukraine, and Macedonia.

Large land holdings continued to be subdivided into building lots. Because the area lay outside the city limits, land was affordable for the new wave of immigrants. They purchased the lots, and in some cases built themselves rough shacks to live in until they could afford proper houses. Most gardened, plied a trade, opened a small retail shop, or worked in one of the industries which multiplied in the area.

Toronto's annexation of the various communities in the area in 1909 and 1910 dramatically improved civic services and amenities. Development proceeded, and gradually this once rural area boasted many businesses and industries, as well as several street railway routes. By the 1930s, almost all the lots had buildings, and services of every type had been established.

Following the Second World War, the ethnic composition of the area began to change. Each new wave of newcomers enriched the district with their culture, organizations and businesses. In the 1940s and 1950s, many Jewish families lived in the Oakwood area. By the 1960s, the St. Clair West neighbourhood was the heart of Metropolitan Toronto's large Italian community, and Roman Catholicism became the dominant religion. By the mid-1980s, the Jewish population had dwindled to a few hundred people, and those of Italian origin were relocating to outlying suburbs. St. Clair became home to other groups of new Canadians, especially those of Portuguese, West Indian, Latin American and Asian origins. Anglo-Canadians also rediscovered the neighbourhood, and settled there.

The area's industrial base declined during the 1980s and 1990s, when many large factories closed or relocated.

## Early History and Settlements to 1860

### Landscape and its influence

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The growth and development of the St. Clair area were influenced by the physical geography - a lower flat plain and upper rolling hills, divided by a steep hill. Geologist A. P. Coleman described the varying landscape in *The Pleistocene of the Toronto Region*: “The hilly part of Toronto north of Davenport Road and the Canadian Pacific Railway presents a strikingly different appearance from the flat, gently inclined plain that slopes south from that line to Lake Ontario. The part just mentioned was shaped by the waves of Lake Iroquois and has the smooth surface of deposits formed by standing water; while the upper part of the city was shaped by the ice sheet and has the hummocky hills and depressions characteristic of the work of ice.”<sup>1</sup>

About 14,000 years ago, the Wisconsin glacier covered this area. As temperatures steadily warmed, this ice sheet melted and its meltwaters filled the basins left by the moving ice. Between 13,000 and 11,000 years ago, Lake Iroquois filled the Lake Ontario Basin. At its highest level, it extended several kilometres inland from the present lake shore. The old Lake Iroquois shore is still visible locally as the fairly continuous high cliff just to the north of Davenport Road, rising from 50 to 75 feet above the flat below.

The meltwater also formed rivers and streams. Two small rivers reached Lake Iroquois in the Toronto region, one on each side of the city, the predecessors of the modern Don and Humber. During the high water stage of the lake, two large bays reached up to the east and west of the shore cliff in what later became parts of the Don and Humber river valleys. The western bay ran irregularly north to what later became Weston, bent a little northeast in the valley of Black Creek, and then turned southeast to today's Davenport Road and Caledonia Park Road. Over thousands of years, the waves of Lake Iroquois and the southward flow of the early rivers gradually built immense sand and gravel barriers across the opening of both bays.

As the climate became milder, an ice block that had dammed the St. Lawrence River at the Thousand Islands melted, and the level of Lake Iroquois gradually fell to what is now Lake Ontario. Coleman noted, “The gently sloping surface south of the Iroquois shore and the flat shallow water beds in the two bays became dry and have remained so ever since,

while the two rivers and smaller streams have carved valleys in them during post-glacial time.”<sup>2</sup>

The low and fairly flat shore plain became Toronto’s original site and continues to be its central core. In earlier days, Garrison Creek and Black Creek ran through the St. Clair area. However, both creeks have disappeared underground in sewers, and the creek beds filled.

The shape and composition of the local landscape influenced the activities of the people who settled there. The old bars provided tons of sand and gravel for construction projects; the clay was used for brickmaking; and the deep loamy soils on the plains were ideal for farms and market gardens. Because of the commanding views to distant horizons, people chose the top of the hill for building homes, and for locating institutions and parks. Because the hill is difficult to build on, much of it remains covered with trees and other vegetation, which make it an attractive habitat for small animals and birds.

The steep grade of the hill determined the location of Native trails and portage routes, and roads and railways. Many of these were laid out along the contours of the land. Major northward streets were cut into the hill, but several local streets end at its foot around Davenport Road.

## **First inhabitants**

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For thousands of years after the melting of the glaciers and before the arrival of the Europeans in the early 1600s, many different aboriginal peoples inhabited Toronto. Archaeologists separate the pre-European era in Ontario into three distinct periods: the Paleo-Indian (9000 B.C. to 5000 B.C.), the Archaic (5000 B.C. to 1000 B.C.) and the Woodland (1000 B.C. to European contact). Archaeological evidence suggests that Natives occupied the St. Clair area occasionally in prehistoric times.

Paleo-Indians were a nomadic people who got their food by gathering wild plants and hunting large animals, including the woodland caribou and the now extinct mammoth and mastodon, in the Tundra-like environment of Toronto. Their distinctive chipped-stone tools have been found in the Humber Valley, and remains of prehistoric animals have been “unearthed in the main gravel bar running west from the Davenport station.”<sup>3</sup> These included horns of caribou, a few fragments of elephantine bones, and mammoth remains.

While taking gravel from his estate on Davenport Road, east of (Old) Weston

Road in the 1850s, Samuel Thompson recalled “at a depth of 20 feet, I found an Indian flint arrowhead; also a stone implement, similar to what is called by painters a muller, used for grinding paint. Several massive bones and the horns of some large species of deer were also found.”<sup>4</sup>

Archaic people continued to be nomadic hunters and gatherers living in isolated seasonal encampments of small family groups. In the later Woodland period, when Natives began to cultivate corn and other crops, more permanent settlements evolved. In both eras, aboriginals would have located their camps along the springs and streams that then flowed through the area, but would have buried their dead away from water. A native burial ground was located on what later became Bartholomew Bull’s farm, east of Dufferin Street and north of Davenport Road. Flint arrowheads were also found on this property. A pop-eyed birdstone, an amulet made of slate from about 1,000 B.C., was found slightly north-east on the Gwynne farm in the mid-1880s. Natives also established a trail, the forerunner of today’s Davenport Road, along the base of the Lake Iroquois bluff. The path wound in a northwest direction from the Don River to the Humber River, then to the Toronto Carrying Place, the portage route connecting Lake Ontario with the Holland River, Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. After 1615, when Europeans first penetrated the area, French fur traders, explorers and missionaries followed the trail.

By the 1660s, Iroquoian-speaking Senecas established a village, Teiaiagon, near the mouth of the Humber River, in the vicinity of today’s Baby Point. By the early 1700s, Mississaugas, a group of Algonquian-speaking Ojibwas, occupied Toronto. The British purchased most of the Mississaugas’ land in Toronto in 1787 (legalized in 1805) to provide for European settlers arriving in Upper Canada (established as a province in 1791 and the forerunner of modern Ontario).



***Pop-eyed Iroquois birdstone, about 1000 B.C.***  
Found in the mid-1880s, this slate amulet was likely from the Gwynne farm, which was on the north side of St. Clair Avenue, east of Dufferin Street.  
Mima Kapches/Royal Ontario Museum

### **Establishment of Toronto and first land surveys**

In 1793, John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, chose a site on Toronto bay for the province’s permanent capital and officially changed its name from the Huron “Toronto” to the English “York.” Alexander Aitkin prepared a survey of York and the surrounding area. Lot Street (now Queen Street) was the base line; south was the Town of York - ten blocks bounded by the present George, Adelaide, Berkeley and Front streets. North of the base line lay the 1st concession lots, known as park lots, each with



frontages of 660 feet on Lot Street and extending one and one-quarter miles to the 2nd Concession Road (the present Bloor Street). The 100-acre lots were numbered east to west.

The 2nd concession lots, called farm lots, had 1,320 foot frontages on today's Bloor Street and extended one and one-quarter miles north to the 3rd Concession Road (the present St. Clair Avenue). These 200-acre lots were also numbered east to west. The 200-acre 3rd concession lots, numbering again from east to west, stretched to the present Eglinton Avenue. All these lots were within the original Township of York.

The area covered in this book is contained in lots 29 to 35 of the 2nd and 3rd Concessions from the Bay. Aitkin's plan also laid out north and south roads, called side lines. These included the present Bathurst, Dufferin, and Keele streets.

### Early roads

Aitkin's gridiron plan completely ignored the site's natural hills and ravines, as well as already existing trails. It did not consider either the Lake Iroquois shore bluff or the ancient Indian trail along its base. Early settlers decided to continue to use this old path, finding that, rather than charging the hill head on as Aitkin's north-south roads did, it provided an easy approach from York to the heart of their country land holdings. The trail is shown on a 1794 plan of York as the "new" road to Niagara although not included on formal maps until much later.

The road ran north from Lake Ontario up today's Parliament Street. South of the present Bloor Street, it turned northwest intersecting Yonge just north of Bloor. First called New Road or New Pinery Road because of the pine woods through which it passed, it had various other names over the years, including Spadunk (derived from the aboriginal word for plateau) Trail, Bull's Road, and Plank Road. An 1847 plan of the Bull farm used the thoroughfare's modern name, Davenport Road,<sup>5</sup> referring to the section west of Bathurst Street. Historian Henry Scadding provided this apt description of Davenport Road in his 1873 book, *Toronto of Old*: "It is a peculiarity of this old by-road that, instead of going straight as most of our highways monotonously do, it meanders a little."<sup>6</sup>

Dundas Street was another early road. Along with Yonge Street and Kingston Road, Simcoe planned it to connect York with the west, north and east areas. Mrs. Simcoe noted in her diary in 1793: "Capt. Smith is gone to open a road, to be called Dundas Street,



#### **Springmount, 1830-1883.**

In 1830, Bartholomew Bull constructed the first brick house in York Township on the north side of Davenport Road, just west of today's Springmount Avenue. The name of the farm may have been suggested by the Garrison Creek; its two branches flowed through the Bull property.

Robertson, 3: 28

from the head of the lake to the River La Tranche”<sup>7</sup> (now Thames). Dundas Street extended to York by 1800, but it was a mere track full of stumps and roots, with numerous streams to ford. Weston Road, another trail used by the Indians, branched off from Dundas Street and followed the contours of the land crossing the Humber River at Weston, where a saw mill was built in 1792.

### **Early settlers and services**

In 1793, the Executive Council of Upper Canada dealt with many land petitions. The park lots were given to military and government officials with the hope of establishing a landed aristocracy, but few, if any, were developed in this way. The farm lots were intended to provide agricultural support for the town’s inhabitants. It would be another 15 years after the initial crown grants before there was much settlement in the area northwest of York. Many farm lots, like the park lots, were given to government officials and friends who withheld them from settlement speculating that their value would rise. Author and agitator Robert Gourlay condemned this in 1818: “For five miles around the capital of Upper Canada, scarcely one improved farm can be seen in contact with another.”<sup>8</sup>

Some of York’s most prominent citizens gradually established country villas along the hill above the old Native trail, although the area was a long way outside of town. They believed in the health-giving properties of the air on the “mountain,” and were attracted by the magnificent view over the forest to Lake Ontario and the town. John McGill’s *Davenport* on Lot 25, 2nd Concession was the first house on the hill in 1797. It was followed by Dr. William Warren Baldwin’s estate on Lot 24, 2nd Concession in 1818, “a very commodious house in the Country - I have called the place Spadina, the Indian word for Hill - or Mont.”<sup>9</sup>

The building of these fine residences was only one sign of the growing prosperity in York and the surrounding area following the close of the Napoleonic War in 1815. After the war, immigrants from Britain and Ireland began coming to Upper Canada, joining those who had arrived earlier from the United States. Several individuals who were to have a major impact on the district acquired land and began clearing farms northwest of York during this time. These included Bartholomew Bull from County Tipperary, Ireland (1824); George Cooper, a native of Rutlandshire, England (1831); Aaron Silverthorn, a member of a Loyalist family originally from New Jersey (1834); and David Rowntree of Cumberland, England



(1844). Many of these pioneers had large extended families and their descendants continued to live in, or be associated with, the area for many years. Rowntree, for example, married twice, had 20 children, and on his 80th birthday celebrated with 60 grandchildren.

In the 1830s and 1840s, a church, a school, and a hotel were established in the area. Bartholomew Bull's original log cabin southeast of today's Dufferin and St. Clair was used for a schoolhouse sometime after 1830. Methodist church services, attended by all faiths, were also held there by 1834 (considered the founding date of Davenport Church, now Davenport-Perth United Church). Later, the Methodists used a frame church that George Cooper had built on his property near Dundas Street and today's Bloor Street. The Peacock Inn was established in the 1830s at the southwest corner of Dundas Street and Weston Road. The tavern was a popular stopping place for farmers on their way to and from Toronto (incorporated as a city in 1834).

### **Road improvements, 1830s - 1850s**

By the 1840s, control of the main roads in the district passed from the government (using statute labour and volunteer pathmasters) to private or joint stock road companies. These companies agreed to maintain the highways in return for the right to collect tolls. The West Toronto Macadamized Road Company, formed in the 1830s, had by 1842 placed crushed stone (macadam) on Dundas Street for about 16 miles west of Toronto, as well as two miles of the Lake Road running westward. In 1841, the Weston Road Company began to build a planked route from the Peacock Tavern through the thriving village of Weston, to the hamlets of Thistletown, Clairville, and Coleraine, a total of 18 miles. Construction was completed by 1846.

The Yorkville and Vaughan Plank Road Company began in 1849 to plank a road from the town of Yorkville to Vaughan Township. This route began at Potter's Field, a cemetery on the west side of Yonge Street between the 2nd Concession Road (Bloor) and Davenport Road, and followed the latter west to today's Bathurst Street. There it turned north, then northwest along the present Vaughan Road to today's Dufferin Street and Eglinton Avenue, where it continued north up Dufferin through Vaughan Township.

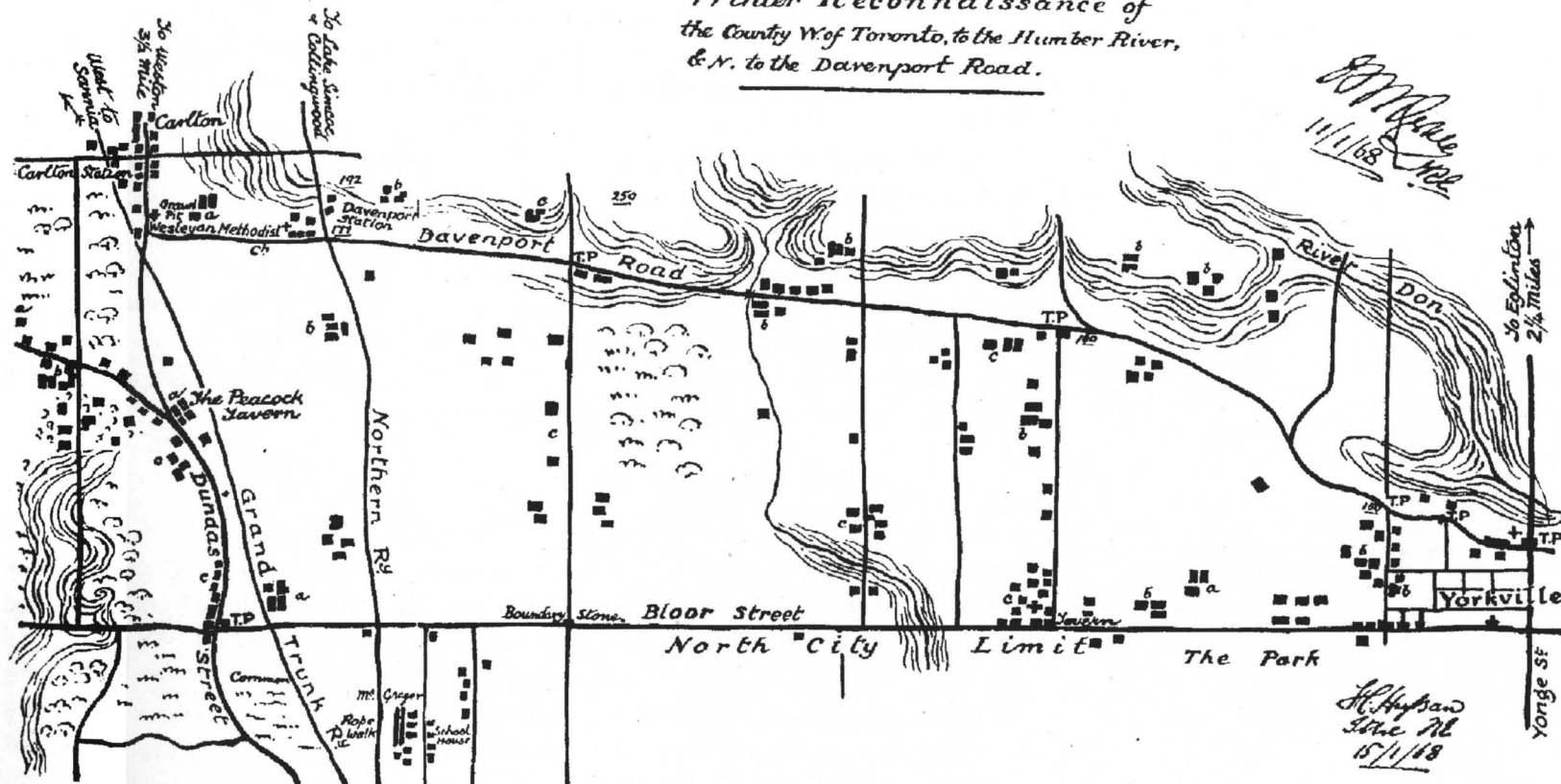
In 1850 the Davenport Road Company was established. The main part of its route was along Davenport Road but the company also planked sections of roads that had not



This pen-and-ink drawing from 1893 depicts the first Peacock Tavern building which had burned down in 1878.

William James Thomson/MTRL T11047

*Sketch Sheets  
of a  
Winter Reconnaissance of  
the Country W. of Toronto, to the Humber River,  
& N. to the Davenport Road.*



Detail from "Sketch Sheets of a Winter Reconnaissance of the Country W. of Toronto to the Humber River, & N. to the Davenport Road," 1868, showing several local buildings: the Northern Railway station at Davenport, the Grand Trunk Railway station at Carlton, Davenport Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the Peacock Tavern, as well as toll gates (marked "TP") along Davenport Road at today's Yonge Street, Avenue Road, Bathurst and Dufferin streets.

NAC/Spadunk, 204

already been improved by the other two companies. The improved thoroughfare began at Queen Street and Crookshank's Lane (Bathurst Street) and travelled north before turning west along Davenport Road. Travellers could connect with the Yorkville and Vaughan Plank Road at Bathurst and Davenport Road, or farther west with the Weston Plank Road.

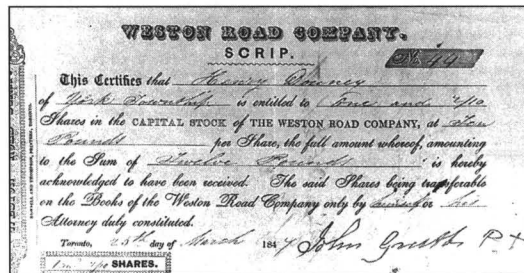
Toll gates were built at various points along these roads. One of the toll gates on Davenport Road was located at what is now Dufferin Street, according to a military sketch map drawn in 1868. An important Weston Road gate was at the 3rd Concession Road (St. Clair).

These private road companies experienced continual financial difficulties, compounded by competition with the newly-built railways in the 1850s, and seldom maintained the thoroughfares adequately. The story of neighbourhood roads was "one long epic of mud,"<sup>10</sup> according to local historian William Perkins Bull. Writer John Ross Robertson recalled in 1896 that the roads in the district were, in the 1850s, "innocent of every attempt at paving, and remarkable only for their utter desolation in winter through snow drifts, their discomfort in spring owing to quantities of mud with which they abounded and their all but impassability in summer from the clouds of dust always arising."<sup>11</sup>

### Coming of the railways, 1850s

During the first half of the 19th century, the area's population and development were limited. Robertson estimated that in 1850 the land bounded by the present Bloor, Dufferin, and Keele streets, and Davenport Road/St. Clair Avenue had "not, all told, three hundred people, men, women, and children."<sup>12</sup> But, in the 1850s, the hamlets of Carlton and Davenport formed at major crossroads, and grew with the coming of railways. Individuals and communities quickly realized that businesses would locate where railway companies built stations, and competed heavily for lines through their properties. Local road companies saw traffic and profits diverted from their slow, seasonal thoroughfares to the long-distance, all-year rail routes.

The first major railway line in the province ran through the district. The Toronto, Simcoe and Huron Rail-Road was chartered in 1849, becoming, the following year, the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Rail-road (OS&HUR). It linked the three lakes for which it was named, but became known as the Oats, Straw and Hay, for the products it transported. It was the first passenger train ever run in Canada West (now Ontario).<sup>13</sup> Crowds lined the



#### Weston Road Company scrip, 1847

Weston Road was created on an aboriginal trail, and planked in the 1840s by the Weston Road Company. This certificate entitled the owner to one and two-tenth shares in the capital stock of the company.

Ray Kennedy/TPLAN



***Davenport Railroad Station from the north, 1923.***

Built in 1857 on the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Union Railroad Company's line from Toronto to Collingwood, it was probably designed by Frederick W. Cumberland, an architect and also the railway's chief engineer. For the next 75 years, Davenport Station "valiantly withstood the onslaughts of material progress,"<sup>138</sup> and the gradual replacement of Davenport Road by St. Clair Avenue as the main street in the area. A subway was constructed at St. Clair in 1931, and the Canadian National Railway built a new station called St. Clair Avenue, which went into service at midnight, 10 January 1932. Davenport Station was soon demolished.

CTA Salmon 1057

route when the first section, a 30-mile run from Toronto to Machell's Corners (now Aurora), opened to the public in 1853. By the end of 1854, the 94-mile line was completed to the company's northern terminus at Collingwood on Georgian Bay.

Local residents had several reasons to cheer the new service. James Good, a son-in-law of Bartholomew Bull, designed and built the *Toronto*, the locomotive used on the inaugural run, and the first locomotive built in Canada West or possibly in any British colony. And Davenport Road was the first stop out of Toronto on the new line. At first, Davenport Station was "simply a wooden shed, open, except at the roof,"<sup>14</sup> but in 1857 a more substantial railway station was constructed on the east side of the OS&HUR track just north of Davenport Road. William Perkins Bull described it as "a smart, high-gabled little building, quaint and delightful."<sup>15</sup>

The Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) was the second railway company to service the district. Its main line from Montreal to Toronto opened in 1856 and extended to Guelph (1856), London (1858), and Sarnia (1859). The GTR's western line ran through Carlton, and Carlton Station opened in 1857 on the east side of the track, south of present-day St. Clair Avenue.

### Carlton Village

In 1851, Browne's *Map of the Township of York* identified "Carlton" and showed a cluster of about 30 buildings along (Old) Weston Road on the north side of the 3rd Concession Road (St. Clair Avenue). William Bull, a carpenter and a nephew of Bartholomew Bull, established a carriage and wagon manufactory at the northeast corner of the intersection in 1846-7, and a shoemaker and a blacksmith located in the village in 1852-3. Local businesses catered both to the surrounding farmers and to the traffic along Weston Road on the way to and from the Toronto market.

In 1850, Reverend Walter Stennett (1821-81), the curate of Holy Trinity Church in Toronto, conducted services for a Church of England congregation at Carlton. The first entry in the church records, a baptism, dates from 1854, considered the founding date of St. Mark's Carlton (now St. Mark's and Calvary Anglican Church).

Despite these developments, writer W. H. Smith described Carlton pessimistically in 1851-2: "Just beyond the Peacock another attempt has been made to start a village, not however with much success, as but few lots have been sold."<sup>17</sup> Editor John Ross Robertson

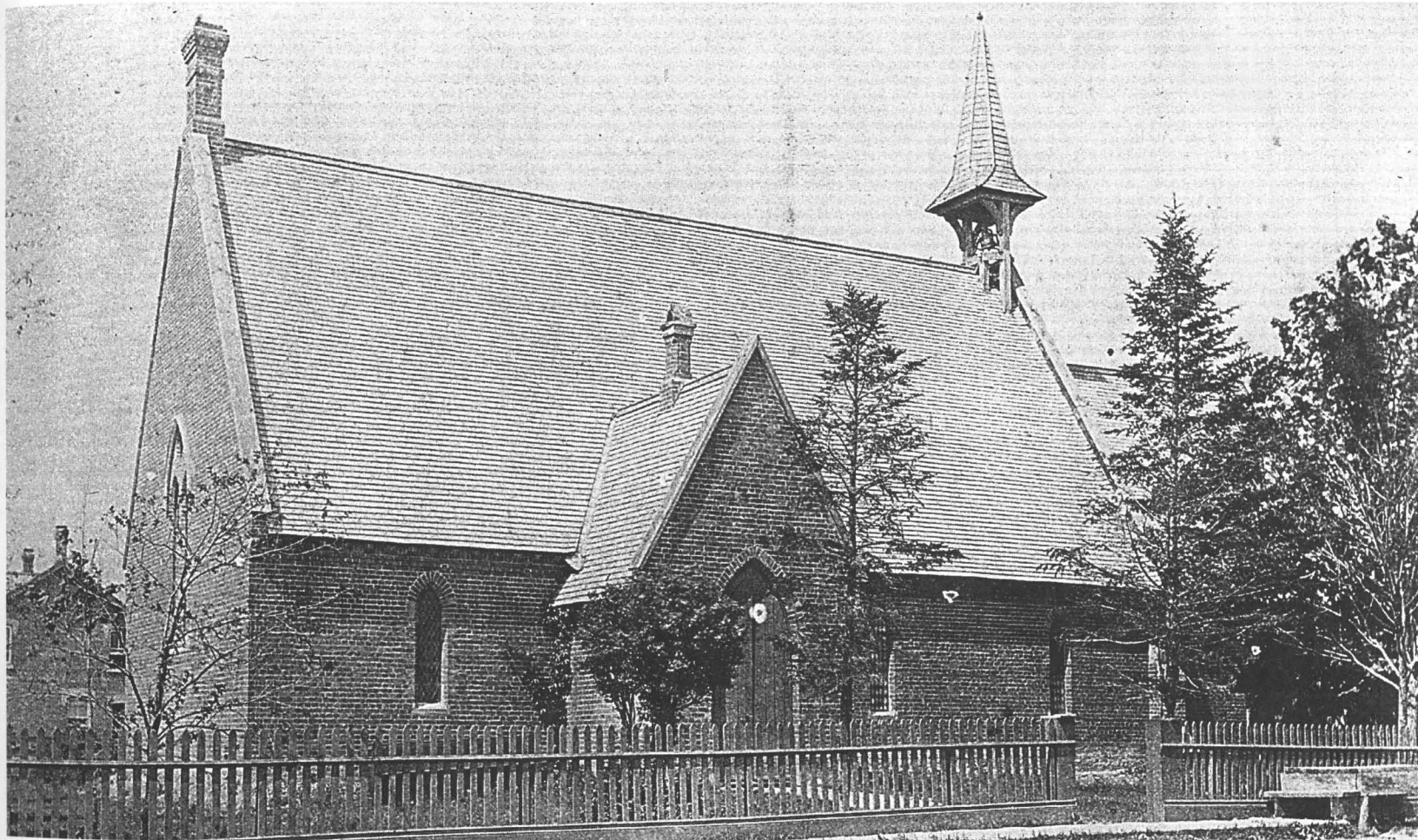


**Cottage at St. Clair Avenue and (Old) Weston Road, 1911**

This Gothic Revival cottage was built when Carlton was a village. It may have belonged to the Bull family: William Bull, a carpenter, established a carriage and wagon works at the northeast corner of this crossroads in 1846-7, carried on by his son, John Alfred Bull.

CTA Salmon 1720





***St. Mark's, Anglican Church Carlton, 1890s.***

Constructed in about 1859 in an early English style, complete with a tiny belfry and steeple. The congregation moved to a new church building on the east side of Blackthorn Avenue north of St. Clair Avenue in 1930, and the original church at the northeast corner of Ford and Connolly Streets was demolished. Behind the high altar of the new church is a screen painted by Sylvia Hahn.

MTRL T10775

recalled that in 1854, “on the road leading to Weston, where it intersected by what is now called St. Clair avenue, were four or five houses, a blacksmith’s shop, and a very small grocery store. These houses were on the edge of the woods.”<sup>18</sup>

Carlton grew once the Grand Trunk Railway opened Carlton Station in 1857. A post office was established in 1858, with John Robinson as first postmaster. By that time, the Durham Heifer, a storey-and-a-half roughcast structure, stood on the northwest corner of today’s Old Weston Road and St. Clair Avenue. In 1867, Francis Heydon ran the inn, which had been renamed the Carlton Hotel.

In about 1859, the Church of England mission at Carlton constructed a small brick church building just south of today’s St. Clair Avenue on the east side of today’s Ford Street. Reverend William A. Johnson, rector of the Church of England at Weston (St. Philip) and the founder of Trinity College School, conducted the services at St. Mark’s Carlton. Samuel Thompson (1810-1886) donated land for the church. The prominent Toronto printer, editor, politician and businessman had moved to Carlton in 1853. He lived on Davenport Road at what he described as “a very pleasant residence with a fine lawn ornamented with trees chiefly planted by my own hands.”<sup>19</sup>

Thompson and his family registered several subdivision plans for Carlton village during the 1850s. Samuel Thompson’s 1855 and 1856 plans of a small part of Lot 34, 2nd Concession, laid out King (now Ford), Queen (now Osler), Carlton (now Connolly) streets and what eventually became Laughton Avenue, as well as 53 building lots. His sisters, Sophia and Anna Thompson, registered a plan in 1857 for land on the north side of the 3rd Concession Road (St. Clair Avenue) west of the Weston Plank Road on Lot 35, 3rd Concession. Sixty lots and Union, Albert, and Victoria (now Townsley) streets were laid out. (Albert Street no longer exists.)

Mitchell’s *Canada Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1864-65* is the first directory in which Carlton, or Carlton West appeared. Twenty-five residents were listed including three hotel proprietors (at the Peacock and the Carlton), three shopkeepers (two were women), two blacksmiths, a painter, a schoolteacher, a weaver, a butcher, a postmaster, and a justice of the peace. The directory briefly described the village: “A post village situated on Black Creek, in the township and County of York West Riding, and is a station on the Grand Trunk Railway. Distant from Toronto, the county town, 5 miles; Hamilton, 45 miles, and London, 115 miles. Daily mail. Population about 150.”<sup>20</sup>



## Davenport Village

In the early 1850s, according to editor John Ross Robertson, "On the north side of Davenport road, nearly opposite to the spot where now runs Churchill [now Perth] avenue, were one or two paltry cottages . . . On the south side of the road from the railway station, and for a long way both towards Dundas street and Weston road . . . was dense bush land through which few people either cared or attempted to pass."<sup>21</sup>

Before long, a small community developed around Davenport Station. Eventually, the village of Davenport extended along Davenport Road between the modern streets of Old Weston Road and Lansdowne Avenue, less than a mile from the centre of Carlton. In 1854, the dynamic George Cooper and his wife, Mary, relocated their farm to Lot 32, 2nd Concession, and built a fine red brick house, *Preston Villa*, on the north side of Davenport Road, west of today's Lansdowne Avenue. The house stood on Davenport Hill, overlooking the city and Davenport Station (1857). The Coopers also built a dozen farm labourers' cottages along Davenport Road opposite the woods near Davenport Station.

In 1857, George Cooper supplied the property for the Methodist congregation to relocate from Dundas Street to the north side of Davenport Road, west of the railway track. There a larger church of red brick, Davenport Methodist, was constructed. In 1859, a one-room, brick school, York Township School Section 13, opened in the village. A post office was established in 1862, with George Samuel Yearley<sup>22</sup> as first postmaster. Davenport Station keeper Joseph Green succeeded him in 1870 and was postmaster until 1888.

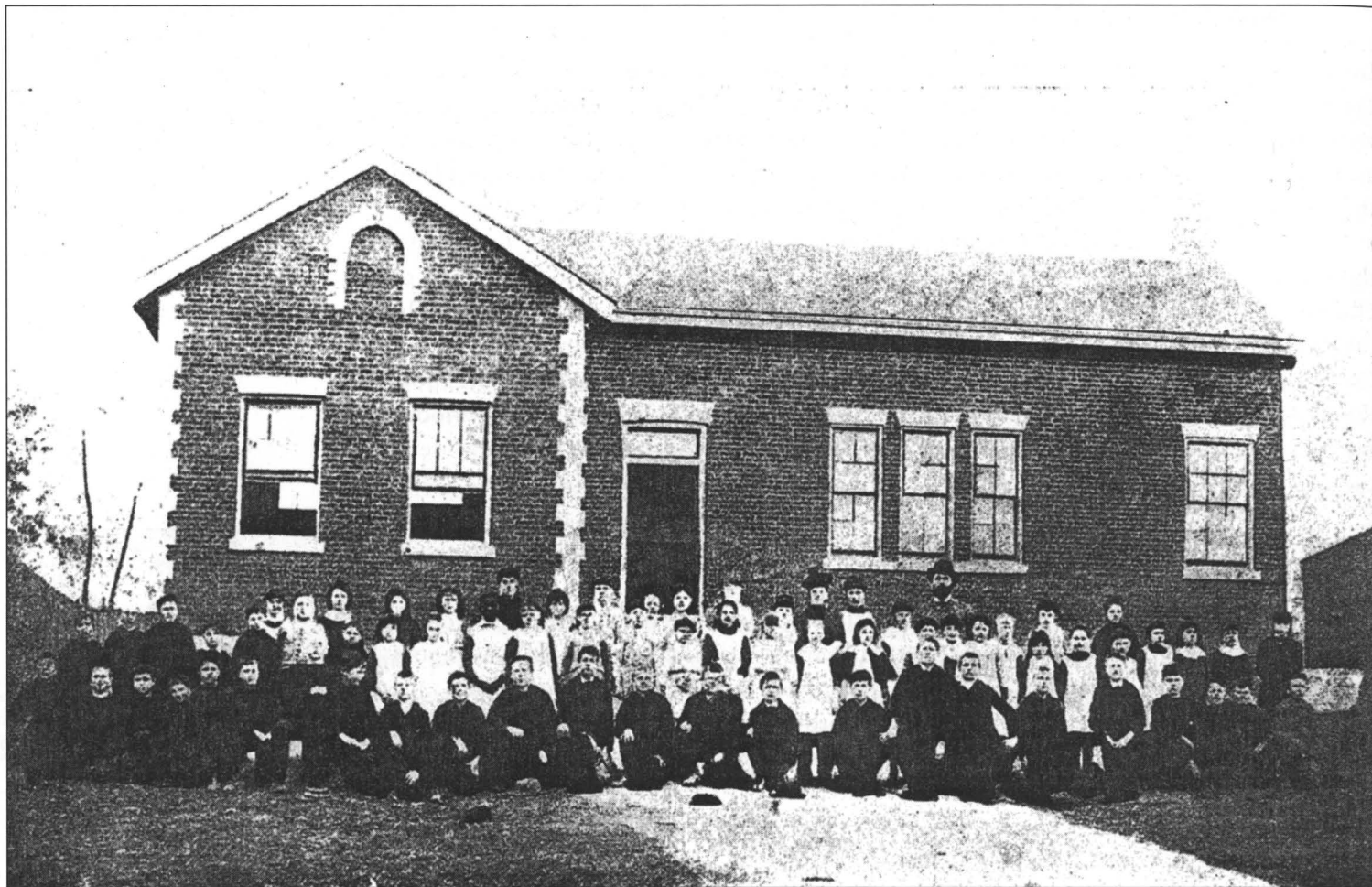
Early directories, gazetteers and atlases provide a picture of the village's growth. *Mitchell's Canada Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1864-65* was the first directory in which Davenport appeared. Fifteen residents were listed (possibly those who had paid for inclusion) including six farmers, a school teacher, a carpenter, a mason, a plasterer, an ex-coachman to the governor-general, and a crown land agent. The only woman mentioned was a Miss Yearley, a milliner and dressmaker. The directory briefly described Davenport: "A small village and station on the Northern Railway, in the township and county of York. Distant from Toronto, 5 miles. Daily mail. Population about 50."<sup>23</sup> In 1875, *Tackabury's Atlas of the Dominion of Canada* listed Davenport as having a population of 120, an increase of almost 60% in ten years.



**Davenport Methodist Church**

"Cooper's Church, Davenport Station" opened in 1859, the cornerstone having been laid in 1857.<sup>23a</sup> Davenport Methodist Church was rebuilt in 1900-1, with only the east wall remaining from the 1850s church. Davenport-Perth United Church, as the church at 1900 Davenport Road is now called, and the church fence were designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1987.

Owen Staples/Spadunk, 209



***Davenport School, School Section 13, York Township, 1880s***

Located on the north side of Davenport Road, one lot east of Davenport Methodist Church and beside its cemetery, Davenport School opened in 1859 with one room. In 1882, a second room was added and an additional teacher appointed. It was replaced in 1889 with a two-storey, eight-room red brick school, Carlton, at the southwest corner of Carlton and Queen streets (now Connolly and Osler respectively).  
Spadunk, 288

The first land subdivision plans in Davenport were registered at this time. In 1853, Toronto barrister Samuel B. Harman subdivided the property between the present Bloor Street and St. Clair Avenue on the west side of today's Dufferin Street (part of Lot 31, 2nd Concession) into 17 estate lots. The Honourable John Ross, a prominent and well-connected lawyer, politician, and businessman (he was then president of the Grand Trunk Railway), acquired the largest and most northern two lots of plan 61 in 1854-55. He soon erected a 20-room mansion on the brow of the hill near the northwest corner of Davenport Road and today's Dufferin Street.

## New Economic Directions, 1860 to 1900

### Gardens, gravel, and bricks

By 1878, many prosperous farms were along St. Clair Avenue, so named in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of York* published that year. Two new economic activities - market gardening and the production of building materials - were also flourishing in the district. Fruits, vegetables and flowers for Toronto markets were grown on 10- to 30-acre plots. Early gardeners included Myles Hendrick, Thomas Kingsley, and Peter Laughton, all natives of the British Isles, and later commemorated in street names.

Local entrepreneurs used the rich deposits of clay, sand, and gravel to produce bricks and other materials for Toronto's buildings and roads. One of the earliest local brick-makers was John Scarlett, whose yards were near his home, *Runnymede*, built in 1838 on Dundas Street west of today's Keele Street. By 1885, about six brickyards flourished in the Carlton area. Two families - Townsley and Pears - were the main brick manufacturers in Carlton, and carried on their businesses over several generations. Both had brick-making businesses at Yorkville since the 1850s but, as clay supplies there were depleted, expanded their operations to (Old) Weston Road, north of St. Clair, in the 1870s and 1880s. In the mid-1880s, each operation employed about 20 men in Carlton, producing about two million bricks annually.

Gravel businesses also prospered in the district for many years, carting away much of the Davenport gravel bar for use in building. A military sketch map of 1868 shows a gravel pit on the north side of Davenport Road, east of (Old) Weston Road. An 1878 map has the

Toronto Gravel Company at the same location on Lot 34, 2nd Concession. Another cache of sandy gravel was found in the graveyard of Davenport Methodist Church. When the remains buried there were transferred to Prospect Cemetery in the late 1880s, the church sold the gravel.

### **Railway expansion, 1870 - 1889**

Until this time, the area was primarily agricultural. During the 1880s, animals were still pastured on farms along Davenport Road. St. Clair Avenue was used so little, Mrs. John Paxton later recalled, that open-air dancing parties were held along the thoroughfare on Saturday evenings “quite undisturbed by any traffic, and should a vehicle per chance present itself, they would all gasp in amazement.”<sup>24</sup>

The railways brought dramatic growth and changes. In the 1870s, two new railway lines traversed the area. The Toronto Grey & Bruce Railway Company (TG&BR) ran from downtown Toronto to Orangeville in 1871, extending to Owen Sound by 1873. The Credit Valley Railway Company (CVR) began service to Orangeville via Streetsville from Parkdale in 1879, extending to downtown Toronto in 1880.

In 1883, both the CVR and the TG&BR were taken over by the Ontario and Quebec Railway (O&QR), which, in turn, was acquired by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1884. Acquiring the first two lines gave the CPR a western entrance to Union Station. But it still lacked a direct eastern right-of-way and entrance into Union Station for its O&QR division, to compete with the Grand Trunk Railway. Before long, the CPR decided to construct a route to skirt the northern fringe of the city and connect with its TG&BR line from the north and its CVR line from the west. All of its trains could then run into the city on the one track. The CPR also established yards, shops, and a roundhouse for 48 engines in York Township at the junction of these various lines. By the end of 1884, the CPR opened West Toronto Junction Station on the south side of its east-west track, west of (Old) Weston Road.

The GTR also expanded its operations in the area by establishing the Carlton & Weston Road Station (later called West Toronto Station) in 1885 on the east side of its track. In 1888, the GTR took over the Northern and North Western Railway Company, acquiring Davenport Station as well.



***West Toronto Railway Station, 1957.***

The Grand Trunk Railway built the Carlton & Weston Road Station (later renamed West Toronto Station) in 1885, on the east side of its track, on the west side of (Old) Weston Road. Additions date from 1902-12. Taken over by the Canadian National Railway in 1923, the station still stands, the last of West Toronto's historic railway stations.

J. V. Salmon/ MTRL S1-4131B

## **Area growth, 1880-1889**

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All this railway activity saw a dramatic rise in the area's population. Many of the newcomers settled in the new village of West Toronto Junction,<sup>25</sup> west of Keele Street in the vicinity of Dundas Street, where Daniel Webster Clendenan, a lawyer, and his uncle, J. M. Laws, were the major land developers. A post office was established in 1884. A census taken in 1887 for York County Council found 879 inhabitants in the Junction area. Two years later, a special issue of the *York Tribune* grandly proclaimed that the Junction was "the most progressive town in the Dominion." It enthused, "six years ago a race course and a hamlet. Today with a population of five thousand, and an assessed value of \$2,714,004.00."<sup>26</sup> Dr. John Taylor Gilmour, Liberal MPP for York West, established the area's first newspaper, *York Tribune*, in 1888. Rival Conservative papers were soon published as well.

Both Davenport and Carlton villages also saw significant growth during the 1880s. Newcomers flocked to the area; houses and stores were built and businesses established. Davenport School was filled to bursting. Teacher Harold Clark recalled that in 1882, "I faced 108 pupils and had to teach every class from the beginning up to the entrance." [i.e. to high school]<sup>27</sup> The trustees agreed to add a second room, and appoint another teacher.

Several impressive residences were constructed during the decade, reflecting the rise in prosperity. In 1891, the *Globe* noted that St. Clair Avenue was among the best streets in the area with mansions, "which would grace any city," and that "Prospect avenue [now Caledonia Road] is now opened up, and on it, too, some fine residences are being erected."<sup>28</sup> A map of Toronto in 1886 included St. Clair Avenue as one of several proposed city drives.

## **Land subdivisions, 1880-1890**

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During the 1880s, investors and speculators subdivided local farms and market gardens into building lots. Several plans for the Bull farm, south of St. Clair and east of Dufferin Street on Lots 29 and 30, 2nd Concession were registered.

In 1886, the Dovercourt Land Building and Savings Company divided the land south of Davenport Road into 23 building lots, each about 40 by 170 feet. The area was known as North Dovercourt. In 1887, the Land Security Company subdivided another large tract in Dovercourt south of Davenport Road. Plan M24 (Lots 29 & 30, 2nd Concession) laid out





***Braemar, 1890s.***

This house was built in about 1880 by John Brimer, a wealthy tailor from Toronto, on a wooded seven-acre lot that had once been Samuel Thompson's property, on the north side of Davenport Road between the present Osler and Uxbridge streets. In 1904, hotelier Alexander Heydon purchased it and until 1913, he operated a profitable gravel pit there. To get at the gravel under the house, Heydon eventually moved it closer to Davenport Road. He sold the house to the Roman Catholic Church in 1912, and it was used as a residence for Polish priests and later as a small hospital. St. Mary's Polish Catholic Church was built behind Braemar in 1915. The house was demolished in 1930.

WTJHS



Hamburg (now Bristol), Bartlett, Salem, Westmoreland, Dovercourt, Cumberland (now Delaware), Somerset, Lancaster (now Ossington), and Main Street (also now Geary).

In 1890 Bartholomew Bull's three sons - John Perkins, Edward, and Thomas Henry - divided another section of Lot 30: from Davenport Road north to St. Clair, west from today's Alberta Avenue to Springmount Avenue. Only one plan in 1885, was registered for the land south of Davenport Road west of Dufferin, when Arlington (now Geary), Brandon, Chandos, Dunbar (now Beaver), and Lightbourn were laid out as streets.

At least four subdivision plans were registered for lands north of St. Clair in the 3rd Concession. In 1881, Eliza A. Gwynne subdivided the south part of Lot 30 on the north-east side of Dufferin and St. Clair into 27 lots. Plan 494 included Murray Street (now Lauder Avenue). In 1889, three separate subdivision plans were registered for lands west of Dufferin Street, north of St. Clair. Prospect Park was laid out on Thomas Gilbert's old farm on Lot 33. Subdivision plan 886 included Lambert, East, Gilbert, St. Clair, Prospect (now Caledonia Road), Campbell (now Prescott), McRoberts, Norman, Innes, Corby, and Summit avenues. The developers claimed all the streets were graded and sidewalks laid. The lots were priced, according to a promotional poster, "within the reach of all - \$25 cash down, balance in monthly instalments."<sup>29</sup>

The Ontario Industrial Loan and Investment Company of Toronto purchased Alexander Nairn's property on Lots 31 and 32, formerly that of Edward Grossman, along St. Clair Avenue about 700 feet west of Dufferin Street, and laid out Boon, Earls court, Nairn, Harvie, Ascot and Derby (now Hope Street) avenues. The building lots on the Nairn Estate were small, each about 36 by 125 feet, but an advertisement in *Charlton's West Toronto Directory* for 1890-1891 noted they were "at low prices and on easy terms" and "beautifully situated" on land that was "high and dry and commands a fine view." The developers also claimed, stretching the truth somewhat, "The West Toronto Stations of the GTR and CPR are only a few minutes walk from any part of the estate and afford the unsurpassed transit service to and from the city of over 20 trains per day."<sup>30</sup>

Clendenan and Laws subdivided John Robinson Bull's farm at the northwest corner of Dufferin and St. Clair (Lot 31, 3rd Concession) into 383 building lots, each approximately 36 by 100 feet. Plan 1034 extended Ascot and Derby avenues to Dufferin Street, and created Bull (now St. Clair Gardens), Boon, and St. Leger (now Morrison) avenues, as

well as Jeffrey Avenue which no longer exists. With the downturn in real estate and Clendenan's disappearance from the area in the 1890s, plan 1034 was never realized.

There were several smaller plans registered during the 1880s as well. New streets in Carlton included Edmund (now Osler), Charles (now Miller), Lindner, and Russell (now St. Clarens). Among the new Davenport streets were Mackenzie (now Lansdowne), Malvern (later renamed St. Clarens), Primrose, and Brandon. William Shields' old farm on the west half of Lot 32, 3rd Concession remained intact: his heirs sold the property in 1887 to the Toronto General Burying Grounds Trustees for Prospect Cemetery.

During the 1890s, the area, along with the rest of Canada, was in the throes of a devastating economic depression. The real estate market collapsed, and few subdivision plans were registered. Existing plans either lay undeveloped for several years, or were never realized. Commercial and residential construction came to an end before the close of 1890.

### Incorporation of West Toronto Junction as village and town, 1888-1889

By 1885, several hundred people lived around the railway junction. Through Deputy-Reeve Daniel W. Clendenan, they pressed York Township Council for more amenities, especially a waterworks system. The Township was reluctant to finance such expensive undertakings for this small area. The only way to get them was to incorporate West Toronto Junction as a village. The municipal taxes could then go for local services.

In 1887, the Village of West Toronto Junction was incorporated. It received provincial assent on January 1, 1888. Its boundaries extended north from Bloor Street, south of the CPR tracks, and west of the GTR tracks to Elizabeth Street (now Runnymede Road). In 1888, West Toronto Junction Council passed bylaw 40 to build a water system and issued a \$75,000 debenture for it. The water would be brought from Lake Ontario and a pumping plant built in Swansea.

Initially, Carlton and Davenport preferred to remain under the jurisdiction of York Township and to continue to depend upon pumps in their backyards for their water supply rather than join the railway village south of the tracks (West Toronto Junction) and risk a sharp increase in taxes. During 1888 both villages grew dramatically and the demand for serviced building lots became acute. Many local residents remained dubious however, about joining the Junction. In November 1888, a delegation from Carlton and Davenport



In 1889, a group of investors laid out the Prospect Park subdivision on Thomas Gilbert's old farm on the north side of St. Clair (Lot 33, 3rd Concession). Prospect Avenue is today known as Caledonia Road.  
WTJHS

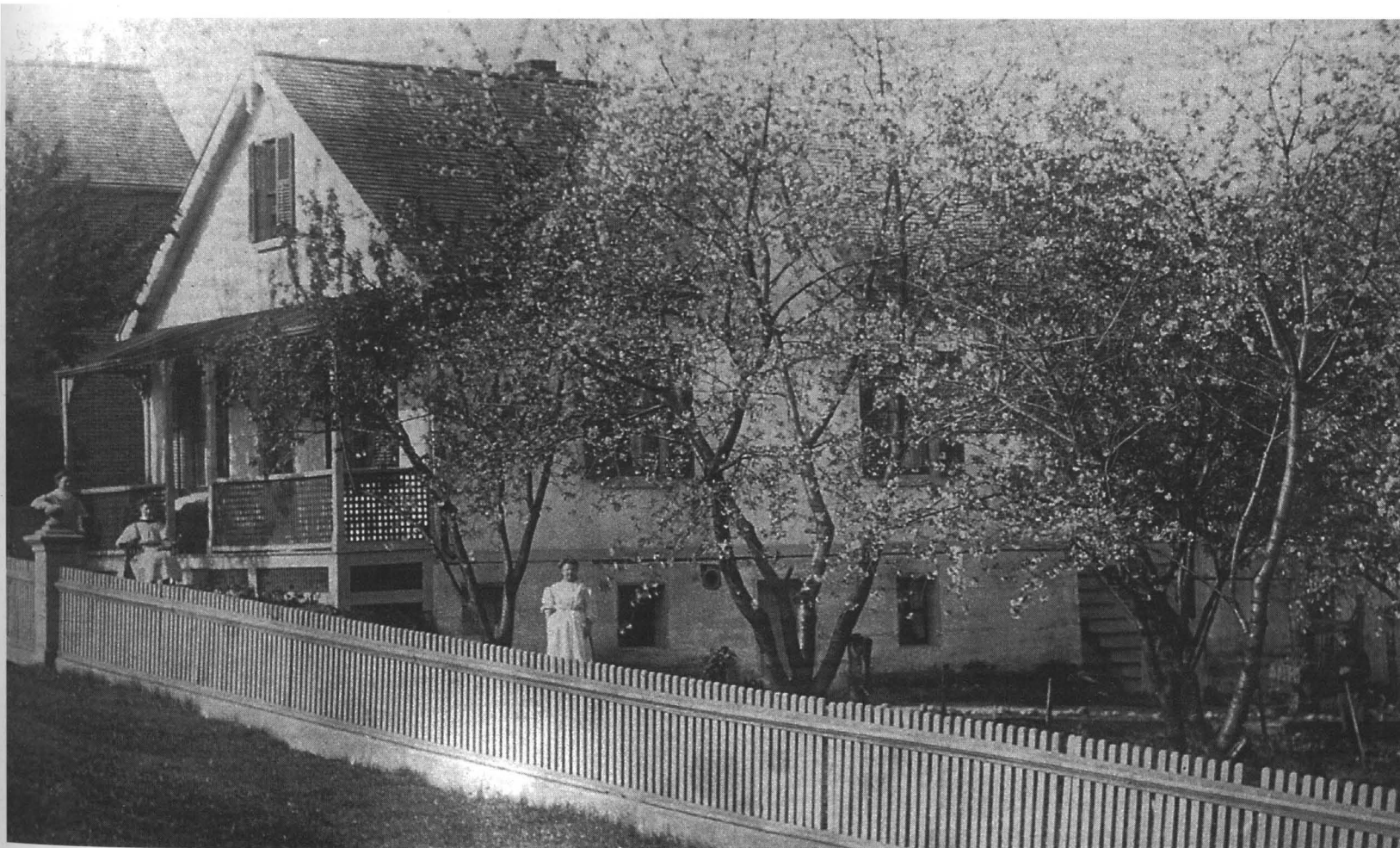
applied to York County Council to have their two communities combined as an incorporated village, to be called “Stanley” after Lord Stanley, Canada’s governor-general from 1888 to 1893.

The local group wanted “Stanley” to include the lands north of the CPR tracks, west to Elizabeth Street (Runnymede Road) - territory which West Toronto Junction Council thought belonged to it. A land dispute developed, and Junction Council opposed the incorporation of “Stanley”. It lobbied the County Council, which refused to incorporate the new village. Subsequently, a committee, composed of such prominent “Stanley” residents as Dr. J. T. Gilmour, William Pears, Peter Laughton, Allan Royce, John Alfred Bull, Francis Heydon, John Barnes, and George James Gilbert, approached West Toronto Junction Council, and proposed to have Carlton and Davenport join the Junction. By this time sentiment in the two older communities had shifted toward union.

Local historian A. B. Rice noted: “The advancing land prices, the increase in population, the hum of industry and throb of commerce on both sides of the railway track stemmed from the same source - the CPR - so why not have one big town instead of two little ones? Moreover, if a village of Stanley were incorporated, it would need a system of waterworks.”<sup>31</sup>

In late 1888, Carlton, Davenport, and the disputed territory north of the Credit Valley branch of the CPR were annexed to West Toronto Junction. The addition enlarged West Toronto Junction by about 58 acres and 1,200 people. Following annexation, two councillors retired voluntarily to make room for representatives from the annexed areas, Carlton businessmen William Pears and John Alfred Bull.

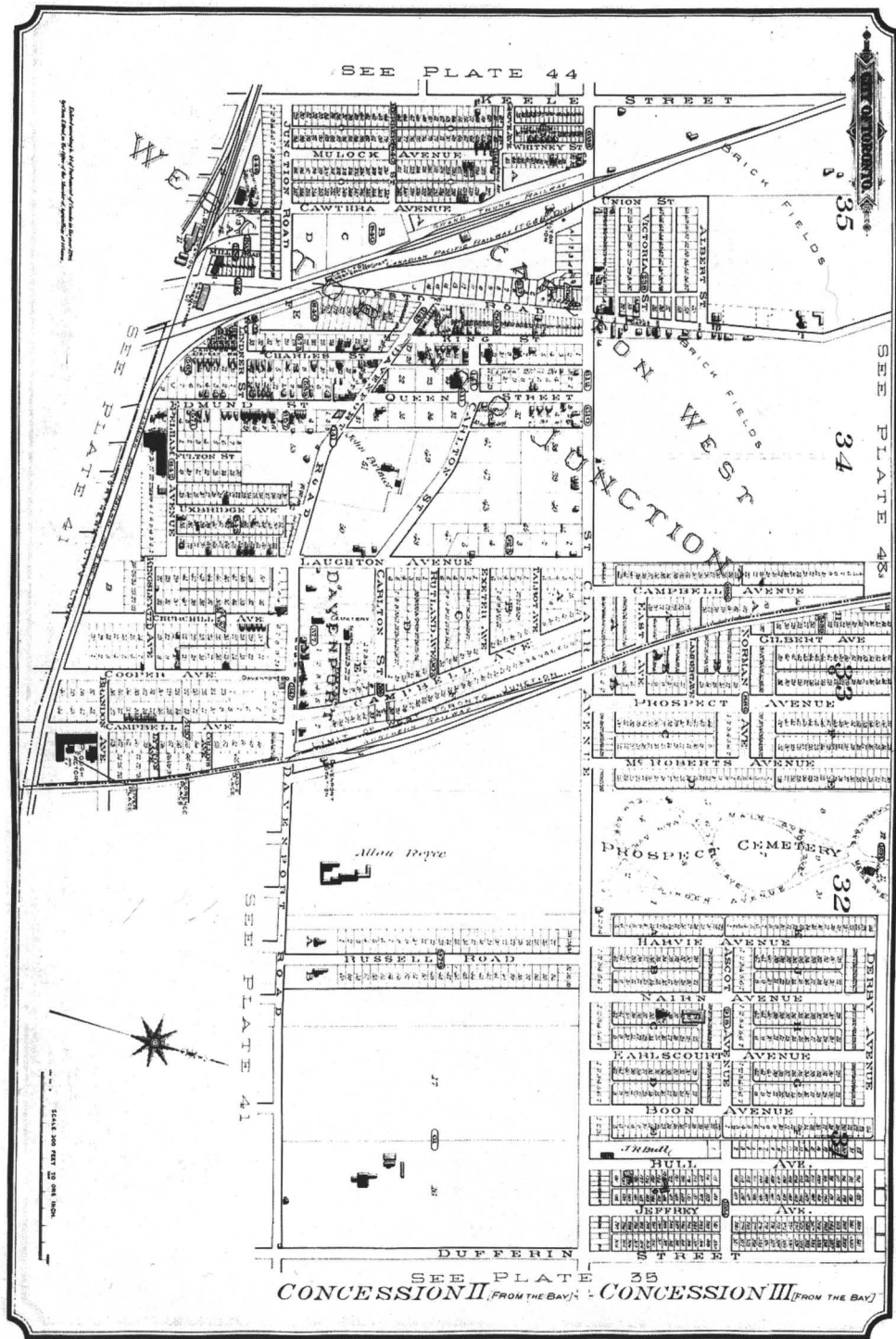
On March 23, 1889, the Town of West Toronto Junction was officially proclaimed. It was divided into five wards - two north of the railway tracks and three in the area that for 15 months had been the village of West Toronto Junction. In the April 1889 elections, Allan Royce and George James Gilbert were elected to the first town council to represent Ward 1 (Davenport), John Alfred Bull and Francis Heydon for Ward 2 (Carlton), and Carlton gardener Peter Laughton became deputy-reeve.



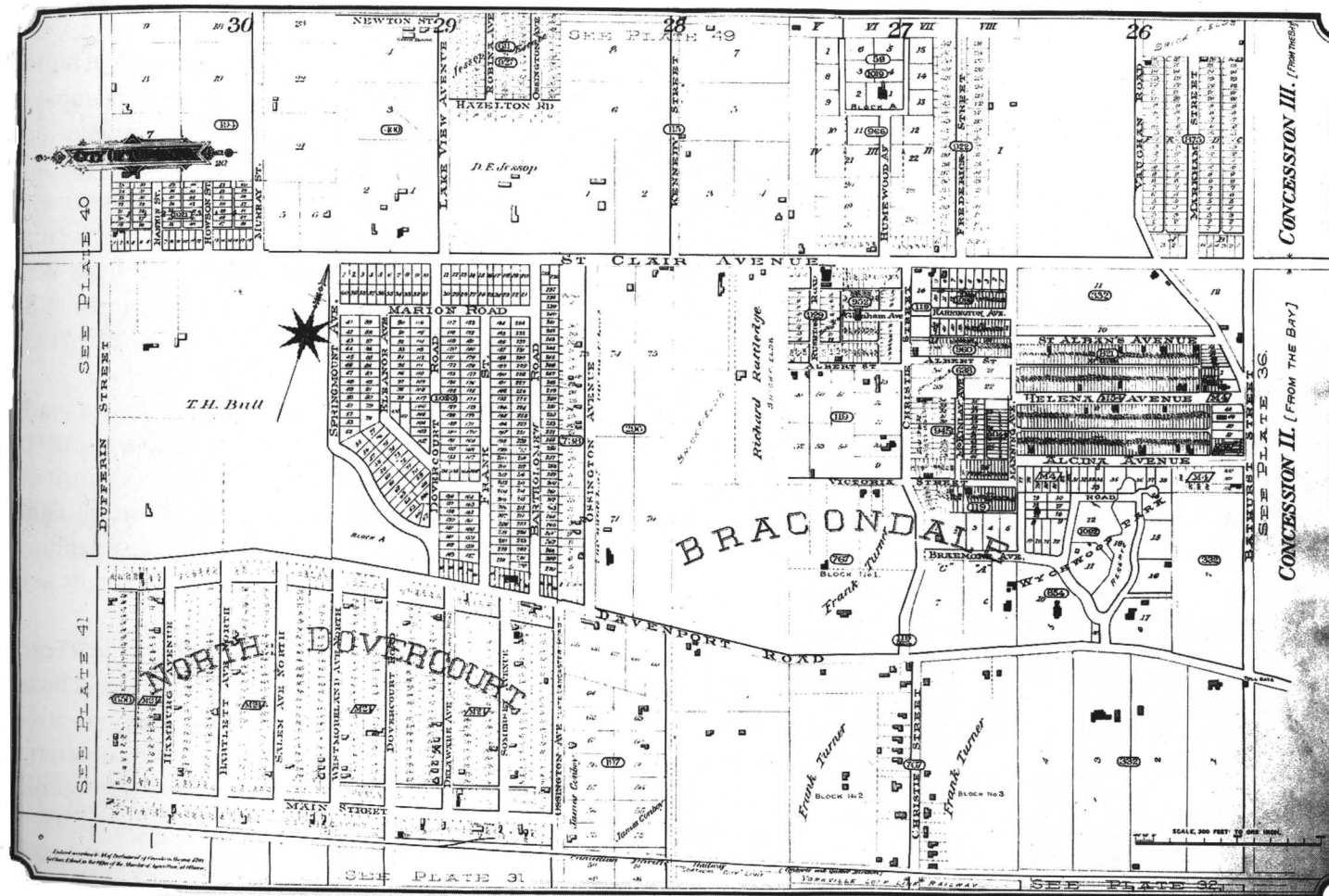
***Paxton House, about 1905.***

John Paxton Jr. and his wife, Margaret Hendrick, built this cottage on the west side of Ossington Avenue (now Winona Drive) in 1890. The property had once been part of a market garden owned by Margaret's parents, Myles and Mary Hendrick, who subdivided it into building lots. A branch of the Garrison Creek flowed through the back of the lots, and Mrs. Paxton raised ducks there. Later, she had the lots filled so they could be sold. Margaret Hendrick Paxton (in the foreground) and three of their four children are pictured here in about 1905. The house still stands at 150 Winona Drive. Members of the Paxton family lived there until the early 1950s.

John Martyn/TPLDU



District west of Dufferin Streets, 1890.  
Goad's Atlas of Toronto, 1890, plate 40



District east of Dufferin Streets, 1890.  
 Good's Atlas of Toronto, 1890, plate 35



## West Toronto Junction services Carlton and Davenport

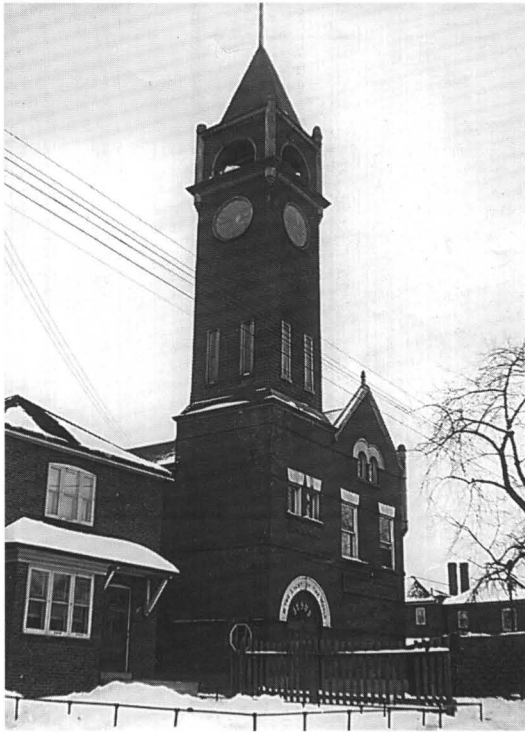
As soon as Carlton and Davenport became part of West Toronto Junction, the town provided services. In 1889, it instructed the Consumers Gas Company to place gas lamps on Weston and Davenport roads, and allocated more than \$1,800 for a park on Union Street.

A union school section was formed, composed of the town and parts of the former Township School Sections 13 and 22. In 1889, it replaced the school at Davenport with a larger school called Carlton, at the southwest corner of Carlton and Queen streets (now Connolly and Osler respectively). In 1890, the school board received \$6,000 from West Toronto Junction Council to build a new school on Dufferin Street. Located north of St. Clair Avenue, it was first known as Bracondale School, but soon was called Dufferin Street School.

In the early 1890s, Toronto Junction built miles of plank sidewalks and graded roads, and constructed a network of water mains and sewers to serve Carlton and Davenport. The municipality issued a \$15,000 debenture to provide electric light for the town in 1890. Soon arc lights replaced gas lamps on many local streets, and there was interior electric lighting as well. Telephone service at the Junction began in 1891, with the Bell Telephone Company charging businesses an annual rate of \$30 and private houses, \$25. Local calls were 10¢ each.

West Toronto Junction constructed fire hall no. 2 on the east side of King (now Ford) just north of Carlton (now Connolly) in 1890, and by 1893 several fire-alarm signal boxes were installed in the two villages. Each hall (no. 1 fire hall was on the west side of Keele Street just south of Dundas) had a hook and ladder wagon and a chemical rig.<sup>32</sup> In summer, rigs were also used to sprinkle the streets with water to keep the dust down, or to fill potholes with gravel. The Toronto brigade would be called in if the fire was serious.

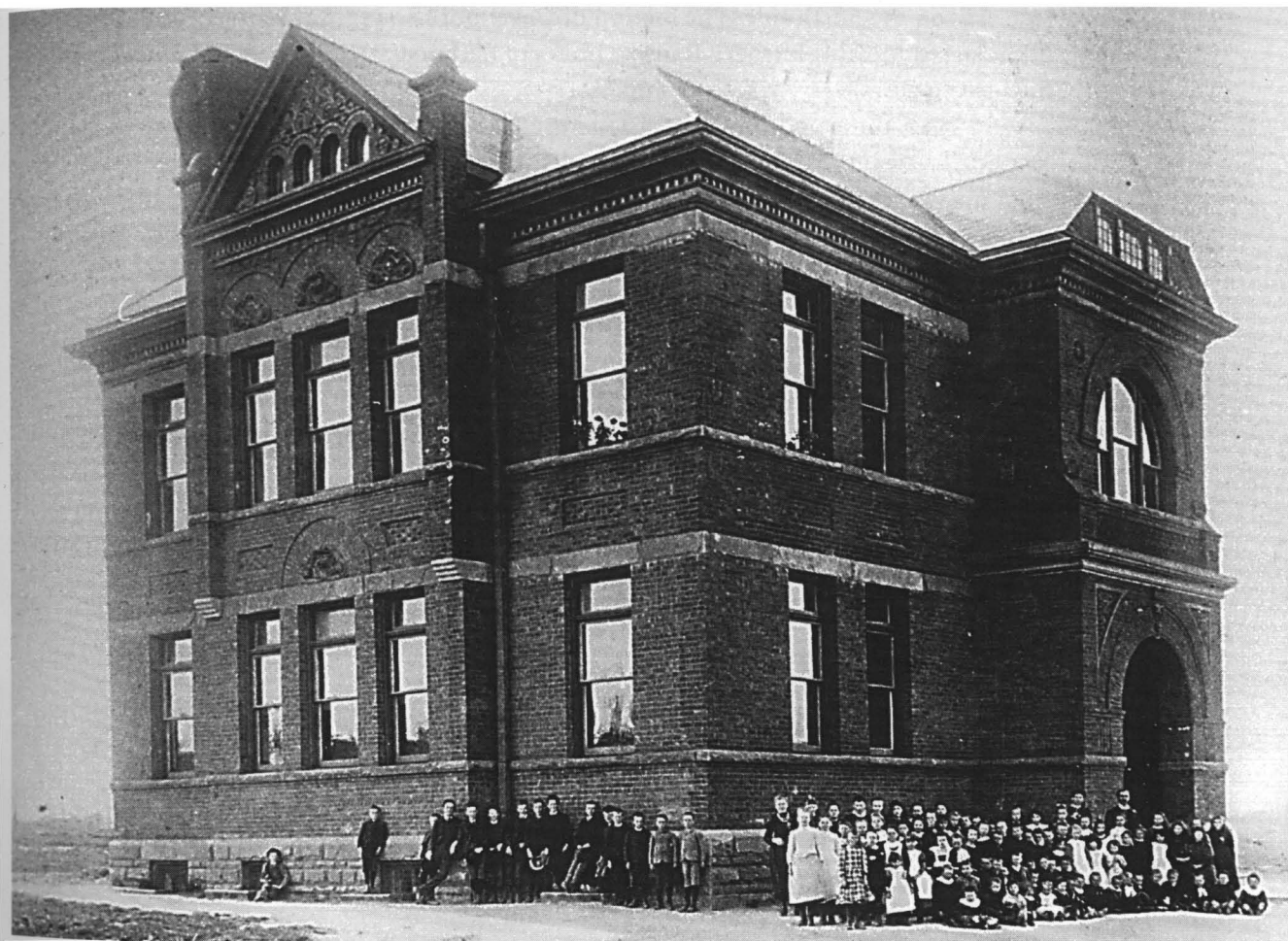
Road improvements continued. All toll gates in York County were abolished at the end of December 1896, but some local gates such as the one at St. Clair and (Old) Weston Road were gone before that. During the 1890s, the town widened its section of Weston Road, and also constructed a bridge over the CPR tracks at Weston Road. In 1890, the town bought for \$300 the section of Davenport Road that ran through the municipality from the Vaughan and Davenport Road Company, and agreed to widen the thoroughfare to 66 feet. In 1893, the town voted to macadamize its section of Davenport Road and place a



West Toronto Fire Hall No. 2 was constructed in 1890 on the east side of King (now Ford) Street just north of Carlton (now Connolly).

J. V. Salmon/MTRL S1-852





***Dufferin Street School, about 1907.***

Originally called Bracondale School, it opened in 1889. Located on the west side of Dufferin Street, north of St. Clair Avenue, the school consisted of two rooms, one up and one down. The school population rose steadily, and in 1907 four-rooms were added. In 1910, when Earls court was annexed to Toronto, the Toronto Board of Education changed the school's name to Earls court. The building, with numerous additions, was demolished in 1966, and a new school opened on the site.

TBE, Earls court, no. 11.

sidewalk on the north side. The section of Davenport Road from West Toronto Junction's boundary at the old Northern Railway tracks to Bathurst Street was also widened to 66 feet during the decade by York Township.

With these and other infrastructure programs, Toronto Junction's debt reached \$855,000 in 1895. The town's financial problems were compounded by the economic depression; many individuals and businesses were unable to pay their taxes. Council became so desperate for money that it set up a tax sale in 1896 to unload much of the land where taxes were owing. Only essential services were provided until about 1898 when the town's debt was settled, and the depression had started to lift.

### **Industrial growth, 1880 to 1900**

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In the late 1880s and early 1890s, a sizeable factory industry grew in the Carlton - Davenport area. West Toronto Junction not only offered industries excellent transportation facilities, but the local council also gave generous tax exemptions and reduced rates on water. It extended other services, such as road improvements and railroad sidings, to industries which would locate within its borders and agree that a certain percentage of their employees would be residents of the town. In 1891, the *Globe* reported "at the present time there are no less than fifteen factories employing an aggregate of 661 hands"<sup>33</sup> in the Junction. An additional 200 people worked at local brickyards.

The Canada Wire Mattress Company claimed to be the first factory to locate in the Junction. In 1887, it moved from Toronto to (Old) Weston Road and the CPR tracks where it constructed a three-storey 50- by 160-foot factory to manufacture "a full line of woven wire, hair, cotton, wool and sea grass mattresses, spring beds and cots . . . [and] iron beds for colleges, hospitals, etc."<sup>34</sup> In 1891, it employed 30 workers. Production ceased when the factory was destroyed by fire in 1895.

The Dodge Wood Split Pulley Company located on Pelham Avenue in 1888. The company employed "30 hands" in 1889 and 50 men in 1891. During the decade, reorganized as the Dodge Manufacturing Company, it also produced power equipment and grain elevator machinery.

George Wilkinson established the Wilkinson Plough Company (Ltd.) in Aurora in 1868. Twenty years later, business had increased dramatically, and officials decided to move to Toronto Junction, "where both the Canadian railways could be close at hand."<sup>35</sup>



***The Dodge Wood Split Pulley Company, about 1888.***

The company relocated its factory in 1888 from 89 Adelaide Street West in Toronto to Pelham Avenue, just north of the main CPR line and east of Edmund Street (now Osler Avenue). During the 1890s, it reorganized as the Dodge Manufacturing Company and before long, its buildings filled all of the vacant land shown here. Pelham Park Gardens, a Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority project, was built on the site in 1968.

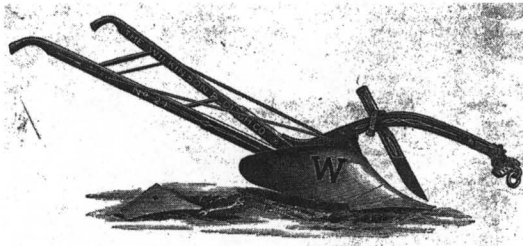
CTA SC 497 #289

A three-storey “splendidly equipped” brick factory 200 by 175 feet was constructed on a two-acre site at the southeast corner of Brandon and Campbell avenues (now Adrian and Wiltshire respectively) in 1889-90. Railway sidings for the CPR and the GTR ran through the ground floor of the factory, giving it an excellent shipping system. By 1892, The Wilkinson Plough Company had 60 to 70 workers, and was developing a large trade both in Canada and in New Zealand, Australia and South America.

The Auston Manufacturing Company Limited of Toronto erected a three-storey brick factory on the east side of Campbell (now Prescott) Avenue just north of St. Clair, and west of the GTR tracks in 1890. The 1891 Toronto directory listed Lucien E. Auston as manager, Jacob H. Hoover as president, and James T. Jackson as secretary. (The latter two men were Junction real estate dealers.) In 1891, the company employed 30 workers and produced braids, cords, laces for boots, shoes and corsets, as well as carpet warps, twines, and ropes for a Canada-wide market. By 1894-5, it was called the Worsted and Braid Company of Toronto, and James P. Murray was president. In 1897, it became the Laces and Braid Manufacturing Company.

One of the area’s largest manufacturers also began in this period. In the early 1890s, the Barnum Wire and Iron Company erected a brick factory at 207 (Old) Weston Road, north of St. Clair, but it never went into production. The H. A. Lozier Company of Toledo, Ohio, purchased the deserted site in 1895, and by 1896, it was manufacturing bicycles. In 1899, the Canada Cycle and Motor Company (CCM) merged H. A. Lozier and the other four leading Canadian bicycle manufacturing companies to contend with an anticipated flood of American-produced bicycles into Canada. With an annual production among the five members of 40,000 bicycles and a total employment of 1,700, the future looked promising. However, a glut in the market and the arrival of the automobile caused sales to decline drastically by the turn of the century. CCM diversified and produced ice skates and automobiles in the early 1900s.

All these factory operations paled, however, when compared with the CPR’s works at the Junction. Once incorporated, West Toronto Junction started a campaign to entice the CPR to relocate its shops from Parkdale. The municipality struck a special committee and met with railway executives in Toronto in the fall of 1889. CPR pledged to make West Toronto Junction the centre of its operations in Ontario and to move all its shops from Parkdale in spring 1890. Two hundred seventy-five men were transferred at once, reaching a total of 1,000



***Wilkinson Plough Company products, 1901.***

This business was established in Aurora in 1868, but moved to Toronto Junction in 1889-90, locating at the southeast corner of Brandon and Campbell avenues (now Adrian and Wiltshire). A few years later, the company boasted it could produce 30,000 ploughs a year. It manufactured a variety of other farm and garden implements. It guaranteed its ploughs to cut in any soil, and claimed it made the best road scraper.

*Tribune, Souvenir ed., 1901, 15.*

“at a very early date.”<sup>36</sup> In return, CPR asked the town for such concessions as exemption from general municipal taxes for 10 years; free water; a subway (underpass) at Keele Street; the closure of Weston Road at the O&QR right of way; and to be allowed to remove its tracks from the south to the north side of West Toronto Junction Station. Believing the benefits of having the railway in the town would far outweigh any costs (anticipated not to exceed \$150,000), Council agreed.

### **Beginning of street railway service, 1890s**

Although Toronto had a public transportation system from the 1860s, no streetcars served the area northwest of the city until the 1890s. By this time, the privately-owned Toronto Railway Company (TRC), which was granted a 30-year franchise by the City of Toronto in 1891, operated street railways. Under the terms of its charter, the TRC had only to extend its lines, as needed, within the city's boundaries of 1891 but not necessarily beyond.

Before long, other private railway companies serviced the outlying areas. The Town of West Toronto Junction granted the Davenport Street Railway Company (DSR) a 20-year franchise in 1891 to operate a street railway on Keele Street, St. Clair Avenue, and Davenport Road. Service began in September 1892 with electric streetcars running every 30 minutes from the heart of the Junction at Keele and Dundas streets along Davenport to the CPR level crossing on Bathurst Street just north of Dupont. This was a single track, centre-of-the-street operation. “During a storm or a shower,” James Salmon wrote, “the grab rails became charged very highly, giving some of the riders a severe jolt.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1891, West Toronto Junction granted City and Suburban Electric Railway Company Limited (C&SER) a franchise to operate a street railway service on any of the town's streets on which the DSR did not have prior rights. The C&SER's Crescent route service began in 1893, going west from Keele on Dundas Street, then south to Evelyn Crescent.

West Toronto Junction was particularly hard hit by the 1890's economic depression, and the two street railway companies also experienced financial difficulties. In February 1894, the Toronto Suburban Railway Company Limited (TSUR) took over the assets, franchises, and rights of both the DSR and C&SER. The TSUR continued the routes of the earlier companies, and extended service to Weston (1895), Lambton (1896), Woodbridge (1914) and

**HURRAH !**  
**STREET RAILWAY**  
Davenport Road.  
**A MEETING !**  
Will be held at  
**ST. MARK'S HALL,**  
ON  
**WEDNESDAY EVE. NEXT**  
The 8th of Feb. at 8 p.m.  
The Residents of this Section are specially requested to be present.  
Frank Turner, Sec., Pro Tem.

This poster was issued in 1888 to arouse public interest in the construction of a street railway along Davenport Road from Bathurst Street through the villages of Davenport and Carlton to West Toronto Junction. Frank Turner owned considerable property along Davenport Road and Christie Street in the community of Bracondale, named after his family's home, *Bracondale Hill*. He was the president of the Davenport Street Railway in 1891.<sup>37a</sup>

MTRL, Broadsides Collection, 888H1



Guelph (1916). A steam generator on the south side of St. Clair Avenue just west of (Old) Weston Road powered the lines until 1904 when hydroelectricity became available.

### **Toronto Belt Line Railway, 1889-94**

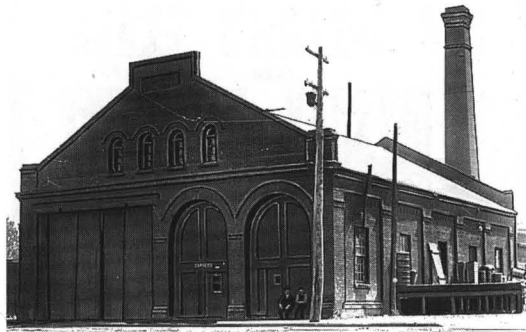
The lack of effective street railway service and the real estate boom led the Toronto Belt Line Railway Company (1889) to build a steam railway line around Toronto. Prominent businessmen on the board of directors included several local residents: Allan Henry Royce, William Pears, John R. Bull, and John Paxton. Many well-known Torontonians also bought stock.

The Toronto Belt Land Corporation Limited (1889) formed to develop, subdivide and sell building lots in Forest Hill, Fairbank, and other outlying areas. Promotional brochures described the healthful benefits of living in the “Highlands” of Toronto: “Those who have not witnessed the revolution in residential ideas resulting from rapid transit can scarcely imagine the effect. It will be a new era. It will lift toiling men and women for a little while at least each day, out of the grime and scent and smoke of the city. A cheap fare, a comfortable seat, a well-heated, well-lighted and well-ventilated car, a quick ride, and here on the Highlands, away from the bustle of the throng and beyond the clatter of the street, here, the balmy air and restful surroundings will win back bloom to the cheek and courage to the heart.”<sup>38</sup>

Construction began in 1890 with parts of the line running on existing Grand Trunk Railway tracks. However, the Toronto Belt Line Railway Company soon found itself in financial difficulties, brought on by excessive promotional expenses and a downturn in the real estate market. In 1892, the GTR leased the line, and completed the railway.

Service on the Toronto Belt Line Railway started in July 1892. Two loops encircled the city, and both had stops in the local area. The Yonge Street loop went up the Don Valley, around Moore Park and Forest Hill to Fairbank, just beyond today’s Caledonia Road north of Eglinton Avenue. Here it curved south, joining the Northern line of the GTR with a stop at “pretty Davenport” before continuing on to Union Station. The route was 16 miles long and took one hour and ten minutes to complete.

The Humber loop, two miles shorter, ran from Union Station along the main line of the GTR to Carlton where it stopped at Royce Avenue (now Dupont Street) and at the



***Toronto Suburban Railway's carhouse, 1920.***

Located at 1799 St. Clair Avenue just west of (Old) Weston Road, the TSuR used this property as a carhouse, a steam generating plant (until 1904 when hydroelectric power became available), and a freight terminal. Originally constructed in 1892, the structure was rebuilt in 1907 when a freight terminal was placed in the old powerhouse. It was sold in 1923, and demolished in the early 1950s.

TTC 17056



old Carlton Station south of St. Clair Avenue. North of St. Clair, it turned west, then south entering the Humber Valley and running through several miles of woodlands until it reached the main line of the GTR's southern division at Swansea. It then skirted the lake back of the city, the journey taking 55 minutes. A third loop north of St. Clair between the Yonge Street and Humber loops was proposed but never built.

Initially, Belt Line trains travelled six times daily in each direction but by 1893 service was reduced. A 5¢ fare was charged per station, with an extra fare levied at Union Station. In November 1894, all Belt Line service was abruptly terminated. The operation of the Toronto Belt Line Railway coincided with a serious economic depression, and people did not move to the suburbs as the investors had hoped. "It was one of the most remarkable instances of over-optimism in the history of Ontario railroading," summed up an editorial writer many years later. "It had little trains running no place with no one."<sup>39</sup>

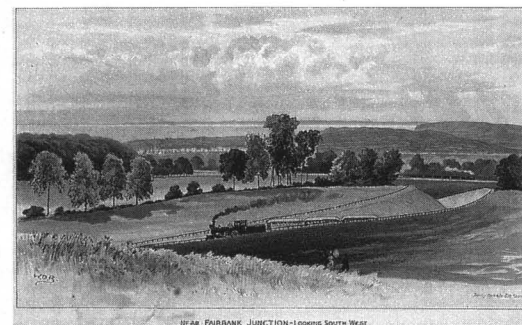
## Population

While most local residents were of English, Irish, or Scottish origins, a few Black families lived in the district. John and Mary Brown, escaped slaves from Maryland, lived for more than 50 years in a small cottage at the southwest corner of St. Clair and (Old) Weston Road. They worked as market gardeners and did odd jobs about town. The Browns, active members of Davenport Methodist Church, led Sunday prayer meetings. Joseph Green, who was in charge of both the train station and the post office at Davenport, was also Black. Aboriginals were also in the area, clearing bush on farms or selling handmade articles such as moccasins, pincushions, and baskets.<sup>39a</sup>

Most local residents were Protestant: Methodists congregated in Davenport and Anglicans in Carlton. A huge influx of Catholics came from Ireland to Canada in the 1840s, escaping the potato famine. Some settled locally, working as labourers on local farms or railway construction, later owning property and running businesses such as hotels.

## Nineteenth-century social life

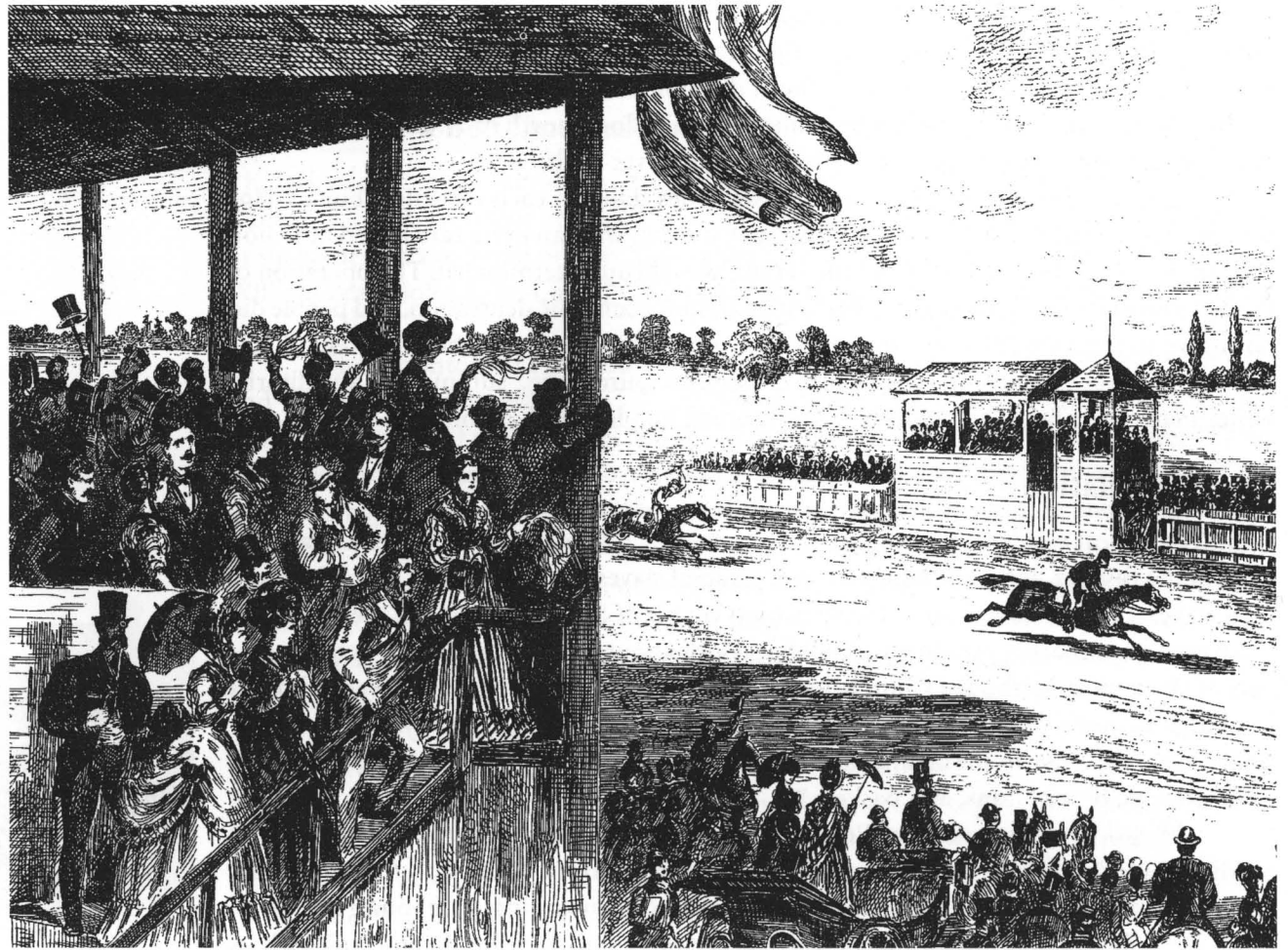
For many early inhabitants, social life centred around Wesleyan Methodist evening prayer meetings and services on Sunday. Camp meetings, lasting eight to ten days, were



***"On the Toronto Belt Line Railway near Fairbank Junction looking south west," 1891***

The Toronto Belt Line Railway Company was incorporated in 1889 to build a steam railway line around the outskirts of Toronto. This drawing appeared in a promotional brochure presented by the directors of the Toronto Belt Land Corporation in 1891.

Corley/Highlands, [31].



***Queen's Plate at Carlton Park, 1861.***

Carlton Park race track opened south of Dundas Street, just west of today's Keele Street in 1857. William Conroy Keele, an English-born lawyer, laid out the mile-long oval track on his property. The first four Queen's Plates, from 1860 to 1863, were held here. Horse races were held at Carlton until about 1876, the year after Woodbine Riding and Driving Club opened in Toronto's east end. A few years later, Carlton Park was subdivided into building lots and the race track facilities dismantled.

Cauz, 18.

regularly held in the late summer. Some were on Bartholomew Bull's farm, but the larger ones were more centrally located within the Methodist circuit. They were like a prolonged picnic as families brought their own food and camped in tents or under trees. Over 1,000 people might attend. The first service would take place at 5 a.m., another at 9 a.m, and so on to the evening meeting which was fervently evangelistic. By the 1870s, camp meetings were rare, but social life continued to revolve around the church with concerts, Sunday school soirees, box socials, and oyster suppers prepared and served by the men of the congregation.

Many Protestant farmers in the districts west of Toronto belonged to the Loyal Orange Lodge, according to William Perkins Bull. He also tells of Masonic lodges prospering, and a temperance lodge founded in Davenport in 1877/8. The Independent Order of Good Templars regularly met in Carlton at Lindner's Hall. By the late 1880s, the Davenport Lodge of the Independent Order of Foresters was meeting in Carlton at Heydon's hotel.

Dancing was also popular. Mrs. John Paxton recalled that in the 1880s open-air dancing parties were held along St. Clair Avenue on Saturday nights during the summer. Lanterns were hung and fiddlers invited for "an old fashioned shin-dig."<sup>40</sup> Waltzes and polkas were taboo in many Methodist homes, but square dances were acceptable. Other amusements included music and card playing. During long winter months, tobogganing, skating and shinny on frozen creeks and ponds provided outdoor recreation, while indoors spelling bees and parlour games such as Jacob and Rachel and blind man's bluff were fashionable.

Gambling was a popular pastime. Despite legal restrictions, cock-fights were held in the ballroom of the Heydon House (with people attending from as far away as Cleveland) and at Foster's Earls court estate. Carlton Park race track opened west of today's Keele Street just south of Dundas Street in 1857. George Cooper raced his horses there. The first four Queen's Plates, from 1860 to 1863, were held at Carlton Park.

Several district taverns catered to local residents, and heavy drinking was commonplace. George Cooper Campbell, a great nephew of George Cooper, recalled that one of his farm workers once denied coming home drunk, claiming "Oh no, I only had twelve glasses of whiskey."<sup>41</sup> The Peacock Tavern, the oldest local hotel, burned down in 1878 but was rebuilt by about 1880. Daniel Blea and his wife, Helen, ran the hotel, and wits of the



***Heydon House, 1927.***

Alexander Heydon commissioned Junction architect James A. Ellis to design this three-storey brick hotel, built in 1891, to replace an earlier inn which had stood on the site since the 1850s. The new hotel contained 25 guest rooms, as well as a tavern, a dining room, and Alexandra Hall, a ballroom on the second floor. The building still stands at the northwest corner of Old Weston Road and St. Clair Avenue West, although it has not been used as a hotel for many years. Heydon House was designated a heritage site by Toronto City Council in 1983.

CTA, Salmon 1110

day used to invite each other to go to “Helen Blea’s” for a round of drinks. Ture’s Hotel, across the road from the Peacock, also burned down.

Several hotels were on (Old) Weston Road in Carlton. The Carlton Hotel, at the northwest corner of St. Clair, was replaced in 1891 by a three-storey brick hotel, Heydon House. William O. Brown ran a ten-room inn on the west side of (Old) Weston Road about a hundred yards south of today’s Rowntree Avenue from 1889 until 1910. George McFarline’s hotel, the Stanley House, operated from 1889 until about 1898.

No tavern operated in Davenport, probably because its residents were strongly Methodist and pro-temperance. They considered Carlton to be particularly rough, and frowned on tales of fights and other boisterous behaviour, such as Orangemen painting the pigs of Roman Catholic farmers orange and blue on July 12. On one occasion a victimized Mrs. Murphy remarked that she “did not mind the boys having their fun, since all the pigs might as well celebrate the day together.”<sup>42</sup>

## Earlscourt and Other Communities Emerge, 1900 to 1910

During the first years of the 20th century, with a return of economic prosperity, the area grew as immigrants flowed into Toronto and the outlying areas. In 1911, 37% of Toronto’s 377,000 people were immigrants, mostly British, with significant numbers of Germans, Jews and Italians, and smaller groups of Greeks, Macedonians, Armenians and Syrians.

Most of the British immigrants, who arrived in Toronto from 1897 on, came from a highly urbanized and industrialized homeland. J. M. S. Careless notes, “They moved with little noticeable disruption into factories, stores, services and dwellings across the city, although many did tend to settle in newer-developing neighbourhoods . . . extending districts beyond the older, built-up core.”<sup>43</sup>

New communities that centred on St. Clair Avenue, rather than on the older Davenport and Weston roads, emerged in the district. The area west of Dufferin became known as Earlscourt, while east of Dufferin to about the present Winona Drive became Oakwood. East of Oakwood near Bathurst Street were the communities of Bracondale and Wychwood. North Earlscourt and Fairbank were farther north on Dufferin Street.

## Land subdivisions and newcomers

In 1900, the Globe Land Company sold lots north of St. Clair at Prospect Avenue (now Caledonia Road) for \$2 a foot. Farther up the hill, the British Canadian Loan and Investment Company offered 36- by 134-foot lots in Prospect Park at \$100.

In 1904, John Robinson Bull and a prominent land developer, Wilfrid Servington Dinnick, president of the Dovercourt Land, Building and Savings Company, issued a new plan for Bull's land on the northwest corner of St. Clair and Dufferin (Lot 31, 3rd Concession). The plan retained all the streets of the earlier 1890 plan: Ascot, Derby (now Hope), Bull (now St. Clair Gardens), Boon, St. Leger (now Morrison) and Jeffrey avenues (never built). Lots on back and side streets sold for as low as \$1.50 per foot.

In 1907, the Dovercourt Land, Building and Savings Company laid out the property west of this, between Boon and Harvie avenues (Lots 31 and 32, 3rd Concession). The plan encompassed the north part of the old Nairn estate, setting out lots north of today's Hope Street and creating Morrison and Teignmouth avenues. In June 1907, the *Globe* reported the 350 lots were "selling rapidly."<sup>44</sup> The Dovercourt Company also established the Parsons Estate on the west side of Dufferin, north of Eversfield Road to Eglinton. By 1910, "over seven hundred satisfied happy families" were living there, according to a pamphlet issued by the company.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the old estates south of St. Clair were also divided during the decade. In 1906, Major Foster's *Earlscourt* property on the west side of Dufferin between Davenport and St. Clair was subdivided into 201 building lots by the Robins Realty Company. Hertel (now Ashburnham), Highland (now Peterborough), Auburn, Bird (now Rosemount), Norwood (now Mackay) and Elmwood (now Via Italia) avenues were laid out. A large block at the northwest corner of Dufferin and Davenport, where the *Earlscourt* mansion stood, was left intact. In 1910, it too was subdivided, with McFarland Avenue created on the old carriage drive leading up to the house, and Ashburnham and Peterborough extended east. Allan Royce divided a small property west of that in 1909, extending Auburn and Hertel avenues west to the newly-created Greenlaw Avenue.

The district's location made it attractive to newcomers. The Dovercourt Company's brochure described some of the advantages of the "healthful district, delightfully situated in the northern part of the city. It is not far from the cars, has stores, a splendid school





***Dovercourt Land Building and Savings Company's office and store of William Dorward, Parsons Estate subdivision, 1910.***

This land development company produced a pamphlet in 1910 to promote sales in the Parsons Estate, its subdivision on the west side of Dufferin Street between Eversfield Road and Eglinton Avenue.

AO Dinnick Family Papers MU919, 23

and a popular church.” Echoing the claims of the Toronto Belt Land Corporation 20 years earlier, the pamphlet declared: “It is just the right sort of place for a man with a family to bring up his children. Children, as well as grown people, thrive better on the air that sweeps fresh and free over the meadows and woods of the country. . . . Besides that, there are open fields where children can roam and play in safety, and where they can work out their boundless spirits without harm or mischief. Such environment makes them grow up strong, sturdy and happy. Freedom from contamination and vice that is inevitable in the more densely populated city helps them to grow up to be useful and high-standing citizens.”<sup>46</sup>

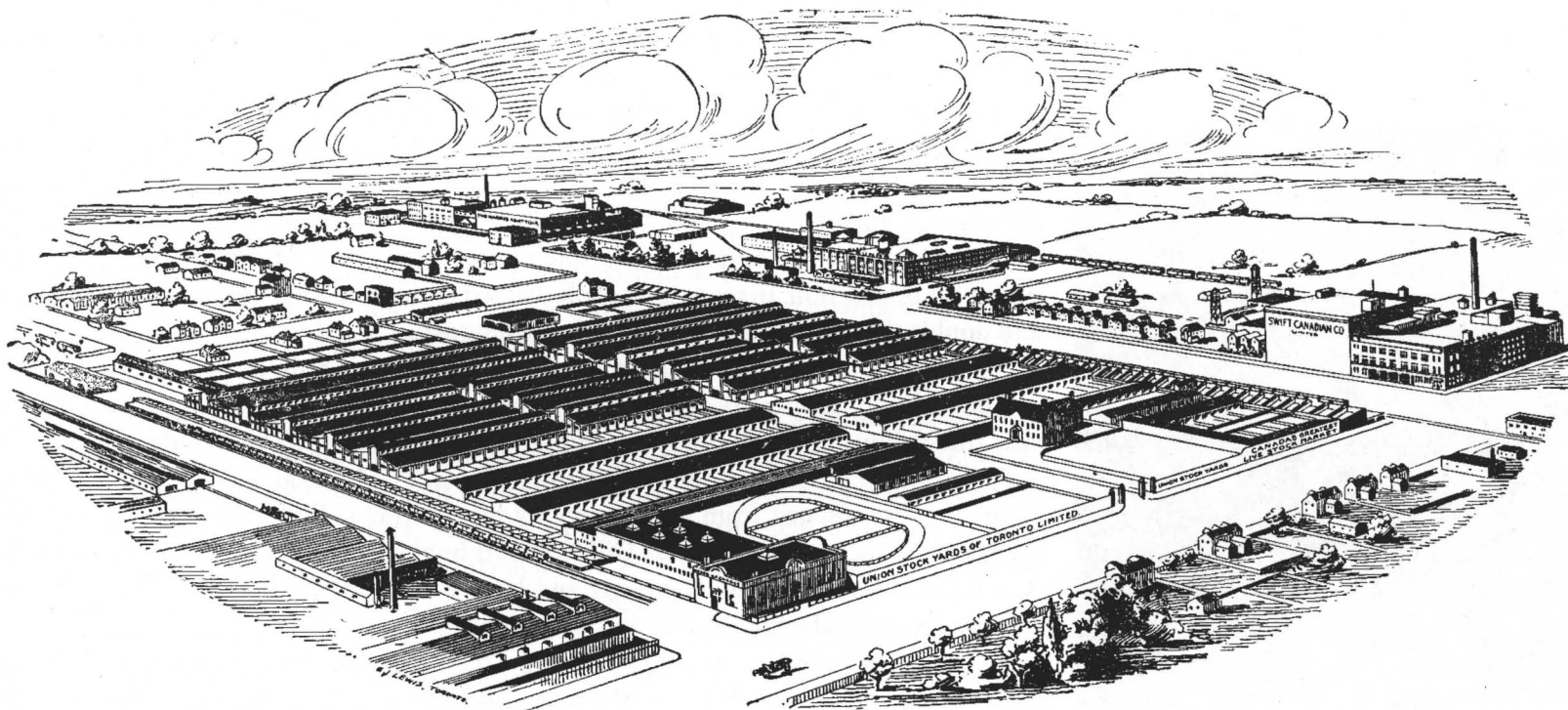
Most of the newcomers were working-class immigrants. Peter Bryce, a Methodist minister who arrived at the Boon Avenue Methodist Mission in 1907, recalled that “at that time most of our people came from the Old Country.”<sup>47</sup> The majority were from the Britain Isles, and the whole area from Earls court north to Fairbank was known as “Little Britain.”

As well, a group of Polish immigrants lived south of Davenport Road on Uxbridge, Pelham, Perth, Franklin and Kingsley avenues. Ukrainians and Macedonians also settled in the area before 1909. A small number of Italians located in the Dufferin Street - Davenport Road area. Railway labourers and construction workers were the earliest migrants to the new Italian neighbourhood; others soon found work at the Canada Foundry.

### **Industrial growth in the early 1900s**

Work could be found at many large industries around the district. Canadian General Electric constructed plants in 1901-2 for its subsidiary, Canada Foundry Company, on over 40 acres of the old Cooper/Royce farm at the southwest corner of Lansdowne Avenue and Davenport Road. In this “city of industries”, a wide variety of metal products were manufactured ranging from small screws, nuts and bolts to large locomotives and bridges, and from utilitarian boilers and cast-iron pipes to elaborate wrought ironwork and bronze sculpture castings.<sup>48</sup>

The Union Stock Yards opened in 1903 on a 35-acre site on Keele Street at St. Clair Avenue, just north of the CPR shops and terminals. Private investors modelled the \$250,000 complex on Chicago’s Union Stock Yard; it replaced the cramped, city-owned quarters near



Union Stock Yards opened in 1903 on a 35-acre site on Keele Street at St. Clair Avenue, just north of the CPR shops and terminals. The private investors modelled the modern complex on Chicago's Union Stock Yard. In 1944, the Ontario government took over the operation, renaming it the Ontario Stock Yards. It closed at the end of 1993.

Toronto Municipal Year Book 1920, 114

Bathurst and King streets. Before long, several slaughterhouses were adjacent including Levack's (later Swift's) in 1905, Gunn's in 1907, Swift's in 1911, and the Harris Abattoir Company (later Canada Packers) in 1912.

After the disastrous sales years of 1900-01, CCM consolidated, diversified and expanded its operations. All bicycle manufacturing was concentrated at the old Lozier factory at Toronto Junction; other factories and many retail outlets were closed and sold. CCM developed a new superior type of ice skate to sell during winter months.

After experimenting with gas-powered tricycles and quadricycles, the steam locomobile and the electric *Ivanhoe*, the company produced a two-cylinder engine automobile in 1905. The sturdy handsome little car was called the *Russell*, after Thomas Alexander Russell (1877-1940), CCM's general manager and later its president. Its price was \$1,300. Other vehicles followed including the Model B, advertised as "the thoroughly Canadian car," police cars, fire engines, and delivery trucks. The Russell Motor Car Company formed to concentrate on the automobile end of the business and CCM extended its (Old) Weston Road plant for motor car production. In 1906, 300 people worked in the auto industry in Toronto Junction and double that number depended on it for support.

The Dodge Manufacturing Company spent \$40,000 building additional factories and office buildings in 1901, and planned to expand its work force from 200 to 500. In that year, the Wilkinson Plough Company employed 125 skilled workers to manufacture ploughs and a variety of other farm and garden implements. The Laces and Braid Manufacturing Company was rescued from bankruptcy by the wealthy Gillies family. Alfred J. Gillies managed the factory and Miss Ida Gillies was its bookkeeper. Eventually, it was called the A. J. Gillies Manufacturing Company and by the 1940s, it was the sole survivor of the companies established in the area in the 1890s.<sup>49</sup>

Brick manufacturing continued in the district for some time. A 1906 government survey, "Clay and the Clay Industry of Ontario," discussed 13 brickyards having Carlton West as a post office. Seven were situated a little west of Toronto Junction, and the annual output at each varied from one to three million bricks. Six smaller yards were located close to West Toronto Station on the Grand Trunk Railway, with an output of one million bricks per year, some white and some red.

Sand and gravel became indispensable ingredients in road building in the early part of the 20th century. New labour-saving devices also made operations more profitable.



**First public display of the Russell Model A at Toronto City Hall, 1905.**

CCM introduced the first Russell automobile, the Model A, in 1905. Sturdy, powerful and handsome, it met with instant success.

MTRL 966-1-6

From 1905 to 1913, Alexander Heydon operated a gravel pit on his property at the north side of Davenport Road midway between Laughton Avenue and Queen Street (now Osler). He profited from the construction boom at that time, and according to his great-grandson, "the demand for gravel was so great there was always an unbroken line of wagons arriving and leaving the quarry."<sup>50</sup> Heydon eventually moved his house closer to the road in order to get at the gravel under it as well. For some time after the construction of the new Carlton School on the northwest corner of Davenport Road and Osler Street in 1914, children played in the gravel pit (now the school yard) between the old and new schools.

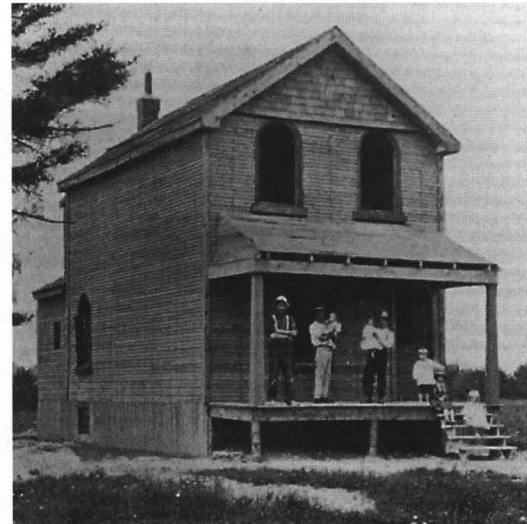
### **Housing in the early 1900s, shacktown**

Many British immigrants located to the suburbs because they had to: inner city rents were high and vacancies rare. But outlying areas such as Earls court also represented home ownership, beyond their means in most cities back home. Not only was the land cheaper, but building restrictions and permits were almost non-existent in York Township, allowing self building. In the words of one observer, "for the most part, their occupants-to-be united in their persons architect and builder and landscape architect."<sup>51</sup>

The Parson's Estate promotional pamphlet, *Who Gets Your Wages? You or the Landlord?*, encouraged workers to quit renting, buy a lot, and build a house themselves. It explained how others had done it. "They gave up the houses they were renting, some providing themselves with tents while their houses were building, and others having previously erected temporary shelter for their families, worked on permanent dwellings in spare time. . . . They bought materials, a quantity at a time, each week or month with the money they had left after providing for the small payment on their lots."<sup>52</sup>

Most building was done on weekends, as nine- or ten-hour work days were common. The Lord's Day Alliance protested this house building on Sundays: "Hammering and whistling disturbed the peace." About a dozen local men were taken to court, accused of labouring on the Sabbath Day, and Earls court pioneer Bill Carter later recalled: "Questioning the men as to their various occupations the Judge discovered that they worked as moulders, boiler-makers, stokers, etc. Not one of them claimed carpentering as his trade. And - as the Law referred only to those engaged "in their daily occupations", the case was closed."<sup>53</sup>

Some enterprising residents used old horse-drawn streetcars, being sold off by the



**William Adams house, Hatherley Road, Parsons Estate subdivision, 1910.**

This picture appeared in a promotional pamphlet for the Parsons Estate. A typical lot in the subdivision was 25 by 125 feet and the price was \$4 to \$12 per foot.

AO Dinnick Family Papers MU 919, 5





***Shacks in Earls court, 1916.***

The first house for many early Earls court residents was a crude shack covered with tarpaper, sheet-iron, or weathered boards.

John Boyd/NAC/PA-69935



Toronto Railway Company for \$24 each, as first homes. They hauled the old cars on to their lots, removed the wheels, shoved a chimney stack through the roof, and settled in. The interiors of these dwellings were modest. Writer Augustus Bridle tells of “newspapers on the walls and scarcely even mats on the new floors; three in a bed very often, and no cots or cradles for the children.”<sup>54</sup>

Few houses had lawns as almost everyone cultivated vegetable gardens. The pamphlet on the Parsons Estate explained the practice: “In a good garden, . . . one can grow as many vegetables as the family will consume during the whole summer, and the money saved in this way may be added to the fund that is to provide the new home.”<sup>55</sup> Many residents also had chicken houses, raised rabbits to eat, and kept pigs and goats which also took care of the garbage.

Writers of the day were intrigued by shacktowns, as one called “that aggregation of queer little houses” that dotted the outskirts of the city. They stressed that shacktown residents were hardworking, thrifty, optimistic and neighbourly, and that for most, living in shacks was only a transitional phase on the road to better things. Alice Randle commented in *Saturday Night* in 1914: “It was quite remarkable the degree of neatness and of cleanliness which these new Canadians were able to maintain.”<sup>56</sup>

During the winter of 1907-1908, hundreds of families in the district suffered real hardships. For some, this was their first Canadian winter and it proved to be one of the coldest on record. Their shacks more appropriate to the English climate, were inadequate for the Canadian environment. There was also widespread unemployment that winter. Hundreds of suburban families in “Little Britain” were saved from freezing and starvation only by a fund run by the *Globe*.

Most of the area east of Dufferin did not have shacktowns. It was largely subdivided and developed after the area was annexed to the city when building restrictions were more stringently enforced.

### **Expansion of services: schools, churches and health care**

To deal with the increasing number of children, York Township erected a school in 1905 on the east side of Bartlett Avenue, north of the present Geary Avenue. Around that time, the primary class at Dufferin Street School had “over one hundred children, some bare-footed



**Former Bartlett Avenue/Pyne Public School, 1955**

Opened in 1905 on the east side of Bartlett Avenue, north of the present Geary Avenue, Bartlett Avenue School was renamed Pyne in 1910, after Dr. R. A. Pyne, chairman of the Toronto Board of Education in 1888. After the school closed in 1939, the building at 331 Bartlett Avenue was used as a factory; it is now an apartment.

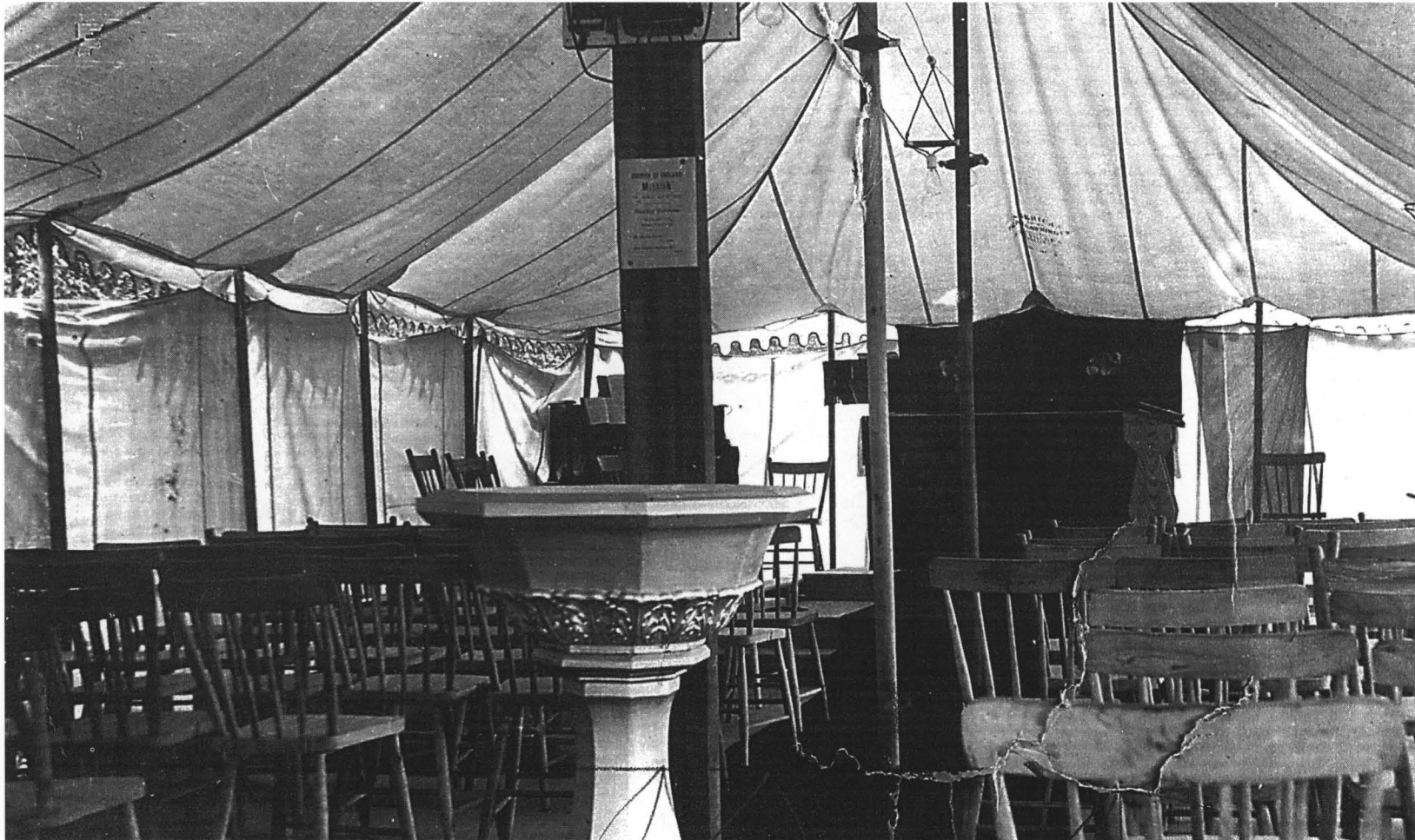
J. V. Salmon/MTRL T 33717



***A street in Earls Court, about 1910.***

When Globe reporter B. B. Cooke visited the shackland in Toronto's northwest suburbs in 1907, he noted it was without plan, the streets were unpaved, uncurbed, and without ditches, and that no two shacks were alike, rather each had its own personality. These dwellings were unable to withstand cold weather. Jack Sylvester recalled, "We could look between the cracks in the boards at the people coming across the field. Every night we would huddle into bed with the oven plate wrapped in newspaper to keep the bed clothes warm."<sup>56a</sup>

CTA James 7274



***St. Chad's Tent Church, 1909.***

St. Chad's Anglican Church began as a mission of St. Mark's, Carlton. Rev. Richard Seaborn conducted the first service on Sunday, in 1909 in a tent pitched on the west side of Dufferin just north of St. Clair. The tent was equipped with a simple wooden altar, a baptismal font, a harmonium, and chairs. Electric lights were strung between the support pillars. Within the year, a frame church was constructed on a lot given by Peter Laughton, a warden of St. Mark's, on the east side of Dufferin just north of St. Clair.

St. Chad's Anglican Church

and ill clad” according to teacher May Shand. She later recalled that she “divided them into two separate classes. Eventually a board partition and door were erected dividing the one room into two parts.”<sup>57</sup> In 1907, the Township placed a four-room addition on the school, and also enlarged Bartlett Avenue School.

Several new churches appeared in the area during the decade, including Davenport Road Presbyterian at the southwest corner of Delaware Avenue and Davenport Road (1905); Royce Avenue Presbyterian Church at the southwest corner of Royce Avenue (now Dupont Street) and Perth Avenue (1906); St. Edmund’s Anglican Church at the southeast corner of Dovercourt and Davenport roads (1907); St. David’s Presbyterian Church on the south side of St. Clair opposite McRoberts Avenue (1908); and Earls court Baptist Church at the northeast corner of Earls court and St. Clair avenues (1907). St. Chad’s Anglican Church, a mission of St. Mark’s, Carlton, started in a tent in 1909, but within the year had constructed a building on the east side of Dufferin just north of St. Clair.

Methodism continued to be the dominant religion. In 1900-1, Davenport Methodist Church at Davenport Road and Perth Avenue was almost totally rebuilt. Two new Methodist missions opened in 1906: Boon Avenue at the northwest corner of Boon and Ascot, and Prospect which started in an old streetcar placed at Norman and McRoberts avenues, soon replaced by a small frame building.

Providing medical services for the area was difficult: roads were unpaved, mud was everywhere in wet weather, there were few telephones, and ambulance service was questionable. Many homes kept a big medical book for reference. A number of doctors were remembered affectionately. Doctors Page, William James Corrigan and Cameron Warren lived along St. Clair east of Christie, while Doctors Gordon McCormack and J. R. Gibson practised right in Earls court. Dr. McCormack travelled by bicycle (he claimed it could be easily carried through the mud); Dr. Corrigan by horse and buggy, and Dr. Gibson made house calls in a jaunty Russell motorcar.

Dr. McCormack arrived in Earls court in 1909, and set up practice at 110 Boon Avenue. Alan Shaw, a long-time Boon Avenue resident, remembers him as a gruff, no-nonsense doctor who refused to treat patients who didn’t follow his advice. Dr. Gibson also came in 1909, and later acquired John Robinson Bull’s house at the northwest corner of St. Clair and St. Clair Gardens. (Eventually, he erected apartments and stores on the site. In 1997, the Gibson Block was still standing.)



*Ideal Bread wagon in the Earls court mud, 1909.*  
Sometimes trapped horses had to be destroyed.  
CTA James 31





***Dr. William James Corrigan and family, about 1908.***

Shown here holding the horse, Dr. Corrigan (1872-1961), was a physician in the area. He operated his own outpatients' clinic on St. Clair Avenue West for 12 years from 1907, and was associated with Toronto Western Hospital for 50 years. This photograph was taken beside the Corrigan house, which stood on the north side of St. Clair, west of Vaughan Road.

Source: MTRL 974-12-2



Many babies were born at home with doctors or midwives in attendance. Medical services were costly and there was no medical insurance, so doctors were often paid in kind or labour.

### **Toronto Junction goes dry, 1904**

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In the early 1900s, the new economic prosperity led to an explosion of business at Junction hotels. The taverns were always full, even on Sundays, and drunken brawls and rowdiness were common. In 1903, the *Toronto Star* reported: "It was not unusual to find a dozen men lying drunk in the snow covered ground, when the other men were heading for work in the morning."<sup>58</sup> Gambling and prostitution were also encouraged, it was claimed by Reverend T. E. E. Shore, the new pastor at Annette Street Methodist Church and a leader of the prohibition movement in Toronto Junction, who described hotels as "cesspools of harlotry, vice and iniquity."<sup>59</sup>

In the January 1904 municipal elections, 869 of 1,549 Toronto Junction voters agreed to rid the town of its licensed hotels and liquor stores. After April 30, 1904, liquor was no longer sold legitimately. On that last day, crowds flocked to the six Junction hotels. The day after, most of the hotels boarded up their windows and locked their doors.

The 1,600-acre territory of the former municipality remained dry for the next 90 years. In plebiscites held in 1966, 1972, and 1984, the "wets" failed to take 60% of the vote, the minimum required to change the existing situation. However, in 1988 special legislation divided the old City of West Toronto into three geographic areas, and enabled each area to seek changes to liquor sales and licensing within its own area in accordance with the Liquor Licence Act.<sup>60</sup>

In 1994, more than 60% of voters in part of Toronto's Ward 12 voted to repeal the prohibition bylaw. Voters living in the area bounded roughly by Runnymede Road, the CPR tracks north of Dundas, the city limits, and the CNR tracks next to Caledonia agreed to allow the sale of spirits, beer and wine in government stores and the consumption of alcohol in licensed premises.<sup>61</sup> Residents living in the former municipality south and west of that area, then parts of Toronto's Ward 1 and Ward 11, voted in a separate plebiscite in November 1997. Ward 1 went wet with 60% plus one vote agreeing to licensed premises, while Ward 11 (which included the Dundas commercial strip east of Keele) stayed dry by 24 votes, with 59% voting yes. Two-thirds of the voters in both areas agreed to have liquor stores.

## Annexations to Toronto, 1909 to 1920

### West Toronto, Earlscourt and Dovercourt join the city, 1909-10

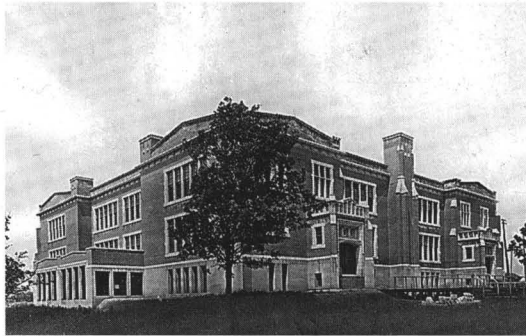
Toronto had much to gain from annexing West Toronto (formerly called Toronto Junction), a city since April 1908. At the time of its annexation in May 1909, West Toronto had nearly 12,000 citizens and 1600 acres. West Toronto residents also favoured annexation, mostly as a way of gaining more paved streets and cement sidewalks, an extended sewer system, an improved water supply with increased pressure, better streetcar service to and from Toronto, lower telephone rates, and other civic amenities, and also because their municipality lacked financial credit.

Earlscourt had less to offer Toronto. When it, and the Dovercourt community to the south, were annexed in January 1910, the *Telegram* reported that the area north of Davenport Road west of Dufferin Street contained 650 acres but had only a population of 5,000 people and an assessment value of \$1 million.<sup>62</sup> As well, the Earlscourt area had never been incorporated, and had minimal police and fire protection, and only a few street lights, sidewalks, paved streets, and houses with indoor toilets and running water.

Despite this, the City wanted to annex the territory for several reasons. Toronto always had concerns about sanitary conditions in outlying districts, and the threat of a typhoid outbreak in nearby Bracondale due to poor drinking water and sewage disposal increased their fears. The City felt it could control health conditions only by bringing the area under its authority. By this time, Earlscourt and Dovercourt were surrounded by Toronto on three sides. The 575-acre Wychwood and Bracondale districts, had been annexed to the City in February 1909, just three months before West Toronto. Until Earlscourt and Dovercourt were annexed there would be a gap between parts of the City.

Rivalry with Montreal was also a factor. An increased area and population, providing a larger market and appropriate industrial locations, would mean that Toronto could compete effectively with its rival. Earlscourt and Dovercourt, with proximity to major railway lines, were suitable areas for further industrial development.

Earlscourt residents were anxious to receive City services such as sewers and water, better fire and police protection, and an expanded street railway system, but feared higher taxation - a prospect new homeowners especially could not afford. Ratepayer groups from Earlscourt and Dovercourt petitioned Toronto City Council in February 1909 for annex-



**Oakwood High School, 1912**

Opened at the southwest corner of St. Clair and Oakwood avenues in September 1911, it contained 18 class rooms, an assembly room with a seating capacity of 700, assorted other rooms, and a gymnasium in basement.

Toronto

ation on the condition that the City guarantee a five-year fixed assessment on unimproved properties which remained in the hands of the original owners. In November 1909, the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board accepted the proposal, paving the way for annexation. Joseph Thorne, a McRoberts Avenue resident, recalled his first City tax bill after annexation in 1910 was \$2.90. The following year his bill was \$2.95.

Toronto City Council minutes in 1909 describe the limits of the annexed area: "Commencing at the north-easterly limit of the former City of West Toronto (now Ward No. 7 of the City of Toronto), and continuing easterly to a point 200 feet east of Dufferin Street, thence southerly to a point 200 feet north of St. Clair Avenue, and thence easterly to a junction with the present City limits at Kennedy [now Atlas] Avenue."<sup>63</sup> The amalgamated areas of Dovercourt and Earls court were called "North Dovercourt Annex" by the City.

### **Earls court and St. Clair Avenue at annexation, 1910-11**

When Earls court and Oakwood were annexed to Toronto, the area was still quite rural. Greenhouses dotted the landscape, and smoke from their high chimneys spewed over the neighbourhood. Some land was still under cultivation. W. A. Kimber remembered that when his family moved to Nairn Avenue in 1910, the east side of Dufferin north of St. Clair contained orchards and greenhouses, and west of Dufferin near Harvie was Mr. Fettes's farm where he grew corn and other vegetables.

There was still bush - south of St. Clair on the west side of Dufferin, for instance - and the woods, fields and streams of York Township were close by. In swampy areas were ferns, marsh marigolds and bulrushes. On higher ground, trillium grew in profusion along with dogtooth, purple and white violets, and many other wildflowers. English hawthorn grew all over the Silverthorn district and poplars along St. Clair.

The wildness of the area made it a paradise for local children. In summer, there was berry picking: wild raspberries, blackberries, gooseberries and black currants, and swimming in Black Creek and other local streams. The area's hills created good up draughts for flying kites crafted from sticks and newspapers. As Frank Fuller recalled. "I'm not exaggerating when I say we could put them practically out of sight."<sup>64</sup>

In winter, various spots along St. Clair were flooded for skating rinks. Kids and their parents tobogganed down the many hills. The "dip," that great swoop down and up extend-

ing north of Teignmouth to Eglinton between Harvie and Earls court avenues, had creeks and many shade trees. It was a favourite ravine for winter sports - where the youngsters enjoyed sleigh riding and snow-ball fights.

Development along St. Clair Avenue West was sparse at the time of annexation. Listings for St. Clair from Ossington Avenue (now Winona Drive) to (Old) Weston Road took up less than one column in the 1911 Toronto Directory. Only five people were listed as living on St. Clair east of Dufferin, all on the north side, and only 45 were listed west of Dufferin. The greatest concentration was around (Old) Weston Road in the old village of Carlton. Many blocks had no buildings at all.

Among the businesses were three grocery stores, two barbers, a florist, a shoe store, and a confectionary. W. Pidgeon's store, on the north side of St. Clair at Nairn, had opened in the early 1900s, as had Cooper's General Store on the east side of McRoberts near Norman. (Mr. Cooper kept cows to supply fresh milk, milking the cow right into the customer's pail.) St. Clair Avenue also had two churches (St. David's Presbyterian and Earls court Baptist), a school (St. Clare), a cemetery (Prospect), a marble works (Creber and Sons), two market gardeners (James Morton and John Greenwood), two brick manufacturers (William Bushell, Titley and Frost), and the Toronto Suburban Railway's power house.

### **Growth of Earls court and Oakwood, and local services**

With annexation, Earls court and Oakwood developed rapidly. Even with the interruption of the First World War, building continued and the population of the district more than doubled during the decade. W. A. Kimber recalled that around 1910, "houses in Earls court were far apart - one here and another there - but it did not take many years to fill up the empty property."<sup>65</sup> Land values along St. Clair increased substantially. Mr. Kimber's father regretted ignoring the advice of real estate agent William Pidgeon, who urged him to buy land on St. Clair rather than on Nairn, correctly predicting he could more than double his money in a short time.

In 1913, George Locke of Toronto Public Library summarized the "rapid and wonderful" growth of the Earls court district: "The shacks of "Shacktown" have given place to neat cottages and substantial brick residences. Stores dotted along the streets are doing a brisk business. The conveniences of the electric light, gas service, sewerage and pavements, though they have come with lagging steps, are coming to increase the comfort and



***St. Clair Avenue West, looking west from Boon Avenue, 1911.***

Development along St. Clair was very sparse at the time of annexation. The white frame building in the centre is Earls court Baptist Church, erected in 1907 at the northeast corner of St. Clair and Earls court Avenues. When St. Clair was widened for the Toronto Civic Railways in 1911-12, the church, renamed Boon Avenue Baptist Church, moved to the southeast corner of Boon and Ascot avenues. Although St. Clair was unpaved, there were wooden sidewalks along the north side and fire hydrants.

CTA Salmon 1741



***Baby show, Infant Clinic Earls court, 1918.***

Reverend Peter Bryce credited the public health department's programs and the area's location on a hill above the City, with causing an improvement in health and a low infant mortality rate. He noted in a 1912 letter to Dr. Helen MacMurchy that of the 800 children under the age of four in the district, only 13 had died that year, mainly from tuberculosis, pneumonia, and dysentery.

CTA/DPW 32-580



improve the environment of the people.”<sup>66</sup>

Services improved dramatically with annexation. Through the Earls court Branch of the British Imperial Association and the Earls court Ratepayers’ Association, residents peppered City Council with requests to provide sidewalks, street crossings, paved streets, a park, fire hydrants and sewers. These petitions became insistent in 1912, and in the following few years, most of the area received piped water, sewers, and police and fire protection.

The Toronto Fire Department took over West Toronto’s no. 2 fire hall on Ford Street in 1909. It became fire hall no. 21. Fire hall no. 27 opened on the northwest corner of Ascot and Earls court avenues in 1915. Volunteers continued to be used, especially as many homes were still heated by woodstoves and constructed of tarpaper. W. A. Kimber recalled, “when there was a fire, we all grabbed a bucket and ran like hell.”<sup>67</sup>

Police protection came from Toronto Police Department’s no. 9 station at Keele and Dundas and no. 7 station on the west side of Ossington Avenue north of Bloor.

The City’s Health Department also extended its services to Earls court. An infant clinic was organized, and health inspectors enforced minimum standards for housing and sewerage. In December 1913, Toronto Public Library established a small branch called Earls court in Bryce Hall, the old Methodist church at the northwest corner of Boon and Ascot avenues.

Some improvements took longer. Public parks and playgrounds were not considered essential as many open spaces and ravines were closeby. To eliminate the district’s muddy streets, Toronto City Council passed bylaws in 1912 and 1913 to pave sections of St. Clair Avenue - part with brick block and part with asphalt - but the work was not done for several more years. Most side streets were paved even later. Funds to build a concrete walk on part of the south side of St. Clair were allocated in 1913. Most sidewalks though, were cinder at first, then wood, and, finally, cement.

Peter Bryce, minister of Earls court Methodist Church, was a dedicated social activist and tireless advocate of the Earls court district. He established the Earls court Children’s Home on Dufferin Street north of St. Clair in 1913, as a local day-care centre. Within a few years, it provided residential care for needy children throughout the City.



**No. 27 Fire Station, 106 Ascot Avenue, about 1975**

The Toronto Fire Department opened this fire station at the northwest corner of Ascot and Earls court avenues in 1915. It continues to serve the area today.

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*Staff and children at the Earls court Children's Home, about 1915.*

In 1913, the Earls court Children's Home opened as a day care centre in a rented, eight-room house at 1729 Dufferin Street, north of St. Clair. In 1915, it began providing residential care for children unable to remain home due to family circumstances. A larger house at 46 St. Clair Gardens was acquired in 1918. Hattie Inkpen, seated on the right holding the child, was the first superintendent. She remained in that position for 35 years, from 1913 until her retirement in 1948. The home was renamed the Earls court Child and Family Centre in 1979. By 1993, 45 employees were serving more than 425 children with disruptive behaviour disorders and their families in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

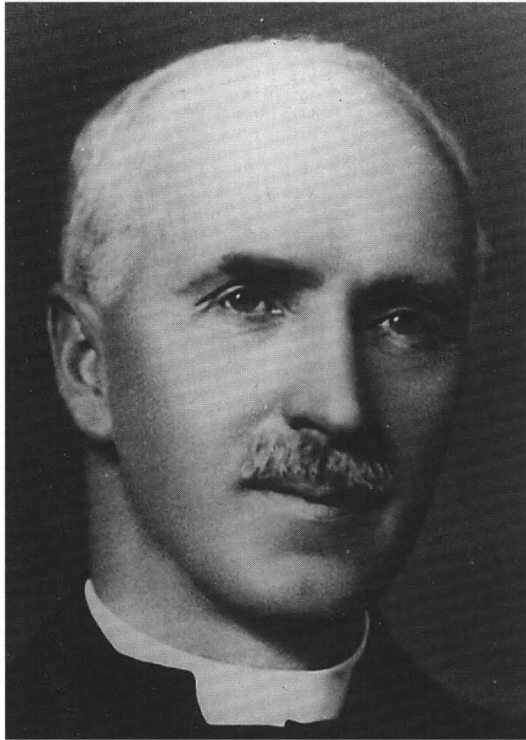
Earls court Child and Family Centre



***Earls Court Branch of the Toronto Public Library, 1914.***

The branch, located in Peter Bryce Hall, Earls Court Methodist Church's original 1906 building at the northwest corner of Boon and Ascot avenues, opened in 1913 with a collection of about 1,000 books. The library and reading room were open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 13.5 hours a week. The photograph also shows one of the few playgrounds that existed in the district at that time.

CTA Health Dept. 302



Peter Bryce (1877-1950) became the minister at the Boon Avenue Methodist Mission in March 1907. A proponent of the social gospel, this charismatic, dynamic native of Low Blantyre, Scotland had a profound influence on his fledgling church and on the district. He established programs, raised money, distributed goods, wrote countless letters, and even helped build houses on behalf of the area's residents. AUCC P703

In 1918, the Home purchased a larger house at 46 St. Clair Gardens, which it remodelled and enlarged to accommodate 50 children.

In 1917, Bryce called for a permanent public library in Earls court, and requested assistance from the Carnegie Corporation of New York with a vivid description of the district's residents and its progress: "Earls court is a suburb in the north western section of the city of Toronto. Ten years ago it had a population of a few hundred; today it has a population of over twenty thousand, largely made up of immigrants from the United Kingdom. The people are of the artisan class, industrious and self respecting. They have, in most cases, attempted to purchase a small lot and build a house thereupon. They have, amid many difficulties, done splendidly, and the district is recognized in the city as one of the most progressive working man's communities."<sup>68</sup>

During the 1910s, a number of community organizations were started, including several ratepayers' organizations, a British Imperial Association (1911) and the Oakwood-St. Clair Business Men's Association (about 1919). The district got its own newspaper in 1913 - *The Weekly Times* established by John Walshe - which was still being published 25 years later. With the end of the First World War, the area was booming. In 1919, the *Toronto Star* noted a "Big Building Boom in Earls court District."<sup>69</sup> Seventeen stores were under construction on St. Clair Avenue from Oakwood to Lansdowne avenues; and the total value of the residential and commercial buildings was estimated at \$810,000.

In 1920, the City directory devoted more than three columns to St. Clair between Ossington Avenue (now Winona Drive) and (Old) Weston Road. Stores and services were dramatically more numerous and more specialized. Most stores were individually-owned. Several shopkeepers were Jewish and most fruit market proprietors were Italian - from Sicily according to historian John E. Zucchi. Joseph Calderone at Oakwood was one of the first fruit traders in the district.

The only chain stores were a United Cigar Store, a Consumers Boot Company outlet, and a branch of the Dominion Bank. Services included three Chinese laundries, two doctors, dentists, tinsmiths, barbers, and restaurants, as well as an undertaker, a photographer, an optician, an electrician, and a movie theatre: the Belmont (originally called the Picture Palace) on the south side, west of Dufferin. Eight real estate offices located along the thoroughfare reflected the land boom. The north side of St. Clair, with its longer sunlight hours, was more developed than the south side.

## **Schools**

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Schools also saw changes with annexation. In 1910, Bartlett Avenue School was renamed Pyne, after Dr. R. A. Pyne, chairman of the Toronto Board of Education in 1888, and Dufferin Street School became Earlscourt. (Many local streets also were renamed to avoid confusion with identically-named City streets.)

Several new schools opened, and existing schools expanded as both the public and separate school boards tried to cope with ever-increasing enrolments. McMurrich School, on the present Winona Drive, opened in 1912 as did Hughes School at the south-east corner of Caledonia Road and Innes Avenue. To ease overcrowding at Pyne School, Regal Road School began on the brow of Davenport Hill in 1913, and a few years later writer W. A. Craick proclaimed its “superiority of location, appearance and equipment” to any school in the city.<sup>70</sup> The 1889 Carlton School was replaced in 1914 with a 24-room building at the northwest corner of Davenport and Osler; and several additions increased Earlscourt School to 32 rooms by 1923.

The first separate school in Earlscourt, St. Clare, opened in 1910 in a four-room brick and stone building at the northwest corner of St. Clair and Renhold Avenue (now Northcliffe Boulevard). It was followed by a second separate school, St. Clement, which began in one room near Dufferin and Davenport in 1915.

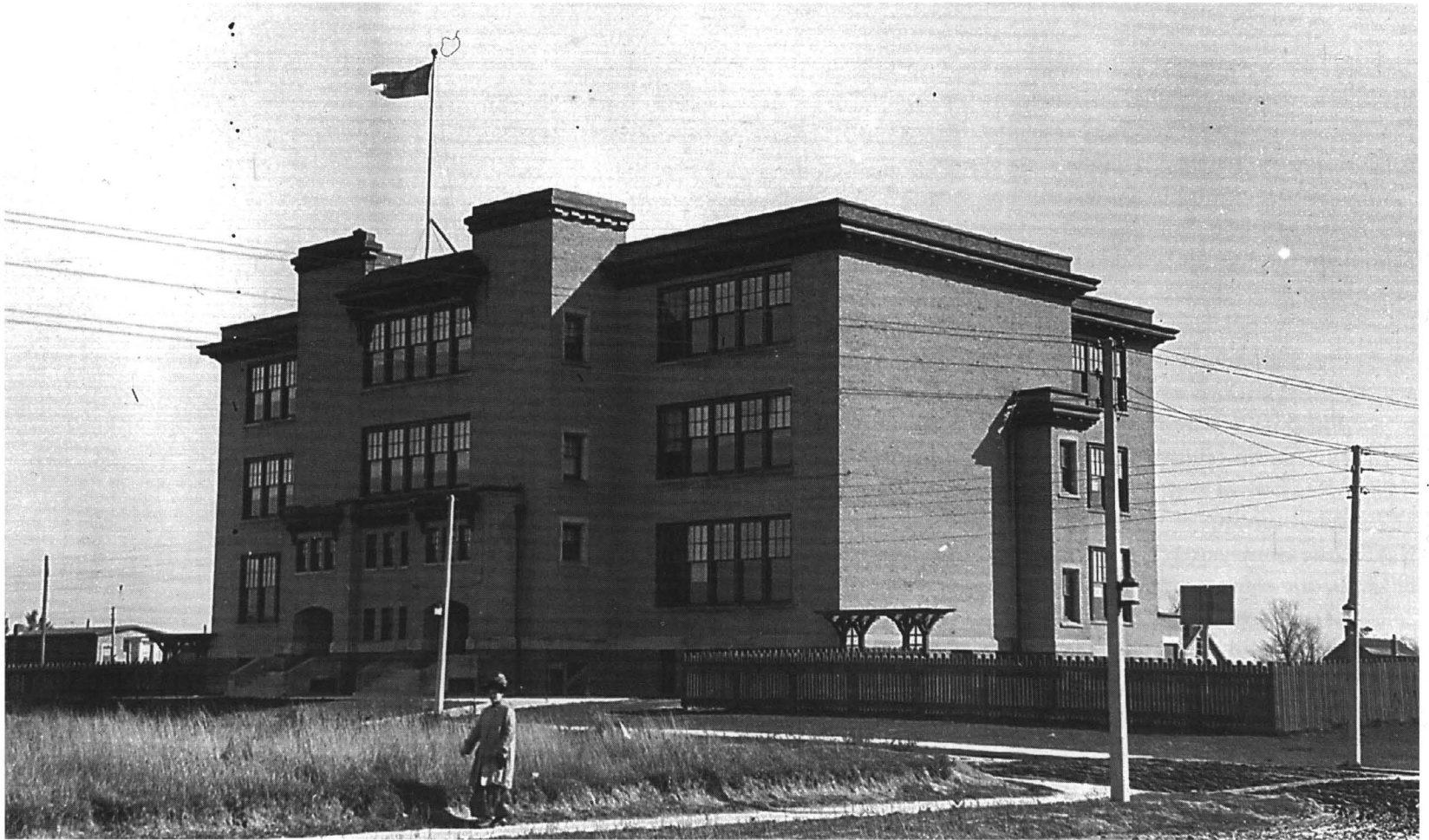
Oakwood High School, established in 1908 in the Bathurst-College area as North West High School, relocated in 1911 to a five-acre field on the old Bull farm at the southwest corner of St. Clair and Oakwood avenues. Oakwood quickly acquired a reputation for excellence and in 1914 was elevated to a collegiate institute. Though the school was on the outskirts of the City, teacher Jessie Reade commented at the school’s 75th anniversary in 1983, “we were certainly not on the outskirts of culture.”<sup>71</sup>

## **Churches**

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Churches also continued to be founded and grow during the 1910s. St. Clare Roman Catholic Church held its first service in August 1910 in an upper room at St. Clare School. Three years later, the cornerstone was laid for the impressive church that opened in 1914 at the northeast corner of St. Clair and Ravensden (now Westmount) avenues. The Earlscourt Citadel of the Salvation Army acquired a hall on the southwest corner of St. Clair



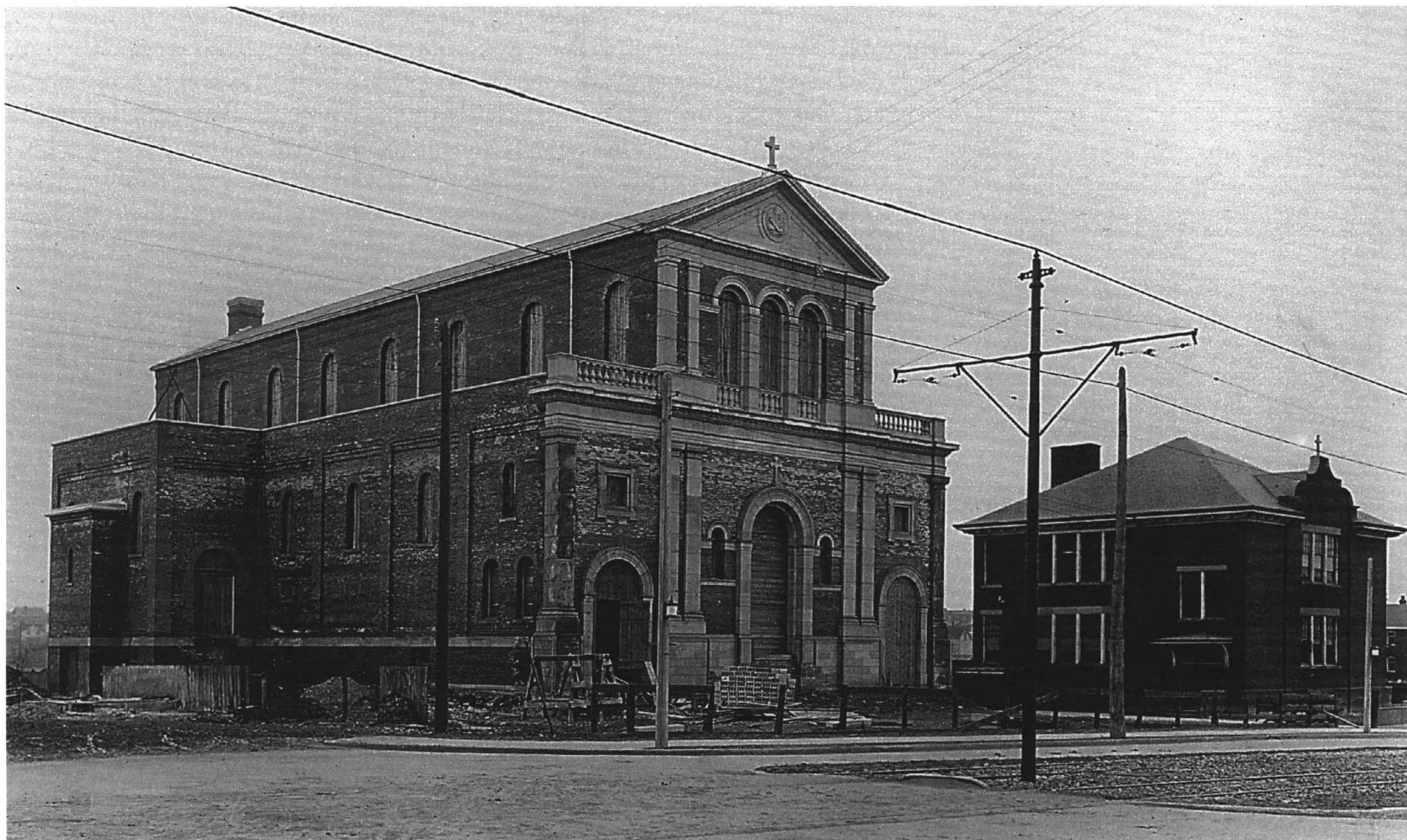


***Hughes Public School, 1916.***

Hughes Public School opened in 1912 at the southeast corner of Caledonia Road and Innes Avenue, with 286 pupils enrolled. The school was named after James Laughlin Hughes (1846-1935), inspector of schools in Toronto from 1874 to 1913. Hughes raised educational standards in City schools and introduced programs such as kindergarten, domestic science and manual training classes. A supporter of women's suffrage, he wrote a number of educational books and several volumes of verse. He was a popular public speaker.

John Boyd/NAC 69936





***St. Clare Roman Catholic Church and School, 1913/14.***

Architect Arthur W. Holmes designed this church at the northeast corner of St. Clair and Ravensden (now Westmount) in the Romanesque style, modelling it after Santa Susanna in Rome. Before it opened in 1914, church services were conducted at St. Clare School, on the right, opened in 1910 at the northwest corner of St. Clair and Renhold Avenue (now Northcliffe Boulevard). Both the church and the school were named after St. Clare (1194-1255), the foundress of the second order of St. Francis of Assisi, known as the Poor Clares. St. Clare Church remains a prominent local landmark: it was listed on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1992. The school was demolished in the early 1980s.

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Avenue and Dufferin Street in 1910, having “opened fire” in the district the previous year. Earls court Methodist Church, as Boon Avenue Methodist Mission was renamed, in 1911, dedicated a new building on Ascot Avenue. The following year, it established missions at Fairbank, Oakwood, North Earls court, Silverthorn, and Caledonia, along with the mission already at Prospect Park, and became known as Earls court Central Church.

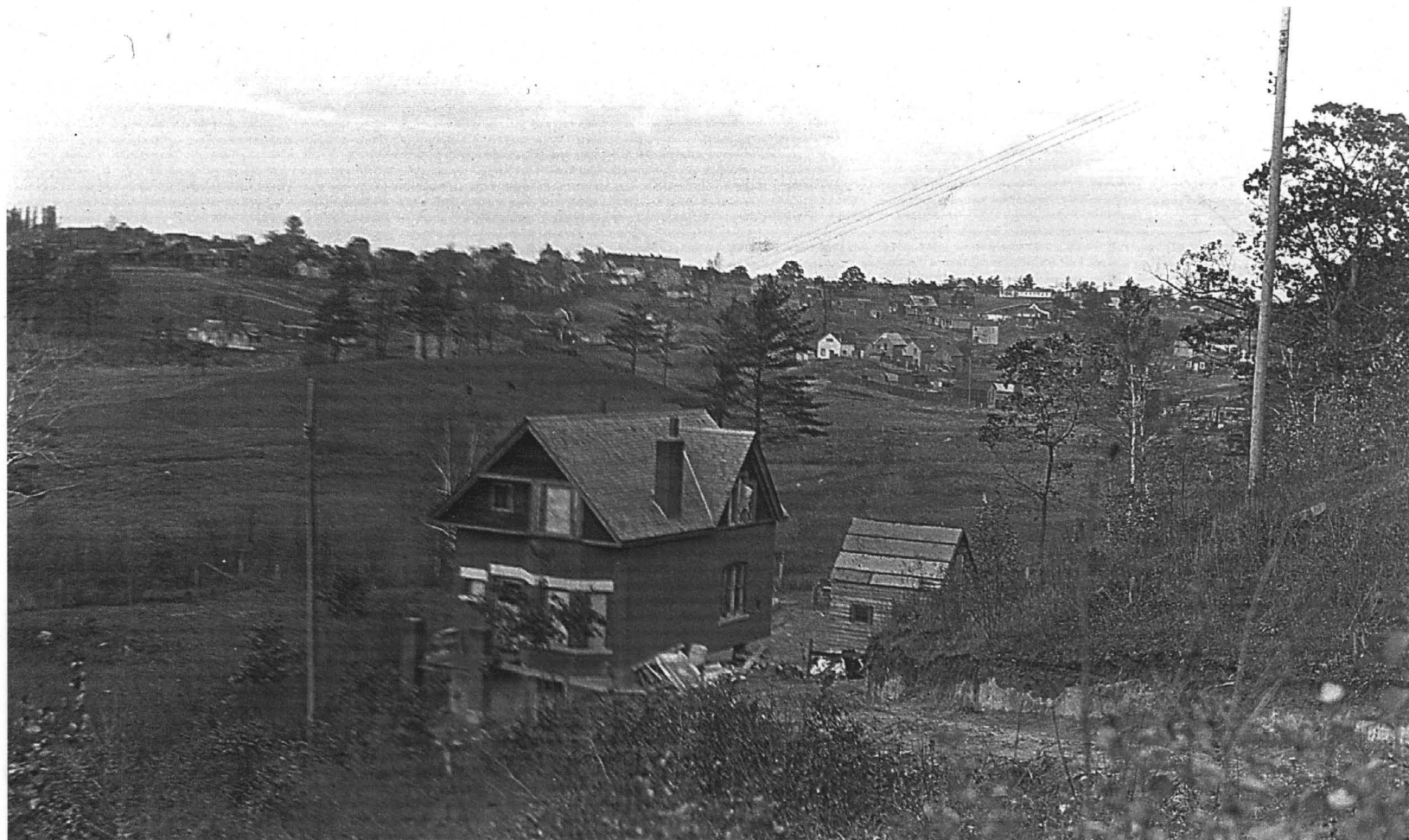
During the 1910s, both the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches offered special services to the area’s Italian-speaking population. In 1914, the Dufferin Street Italian Methodist Mission was built at 1467 Dufferin Street, just south of Davenport Road. In 1915, the Roman Catholic Church established a mission, St. Clement, on Dufferin Street south of Davenport Road; only the basement of the church was finished at this time. St. Clement was a national parish; membership was based on ethnicity rather than residence. Italian-speaking people living north of Bloor Street and west of Spadina Avenue were under its jurisdiction.

Other ethnic groups also established churches. *Braemar*, an old estate house on Davenport Road, was purchased in 1913 as a rectory for Polish priests. Two years later, St. Mary’s Polish Catholic Church was established when a humble one-storey brick church was built on the property.

### **Housing changes and land subdivisions after annexation**

Housing in Earls court changed significantly after annexation, according to geographer Richard Harris in a 1991 study. Builders in the area now had to reckon with the City’s inspectors and obtain permits. Regulations permitted frame construction with clapboard or shingle siding, but ruled out tarpaper shacks. Until 1912, development was scattered. Modest homes with varied setbacks were irregularly interspersed with vacant lots. Most homes were self-built, frame, and easily flammable. As late as 1913, the average assessed value of dwellings in Earls court was \$206. In 1914, purchasers of lots in Silverthorn Grove, “men who will build their homes,” received free house plans for several different styles, along with cost estimates and a complete list of the materials needed.<sup>72</sup>

The two-storey attached brick home replaced the detached frame bungalow as the predominant house type. The average assessed value of homes jumped seven times, to \$1,444. Regulations made life very difficult for the owner-builder. Victor Lewis, in his 1920 thesis on Earls court, observed that “Incorporation [i.e. annexation] within the city . . . meant



***Half-finished house in Earls Court, 1916.***

As local homeowners prospered, they built more substantial houses. The original shack was removed or, as this picture shows, remained as a shed for garden tools or a stable for the family horse.

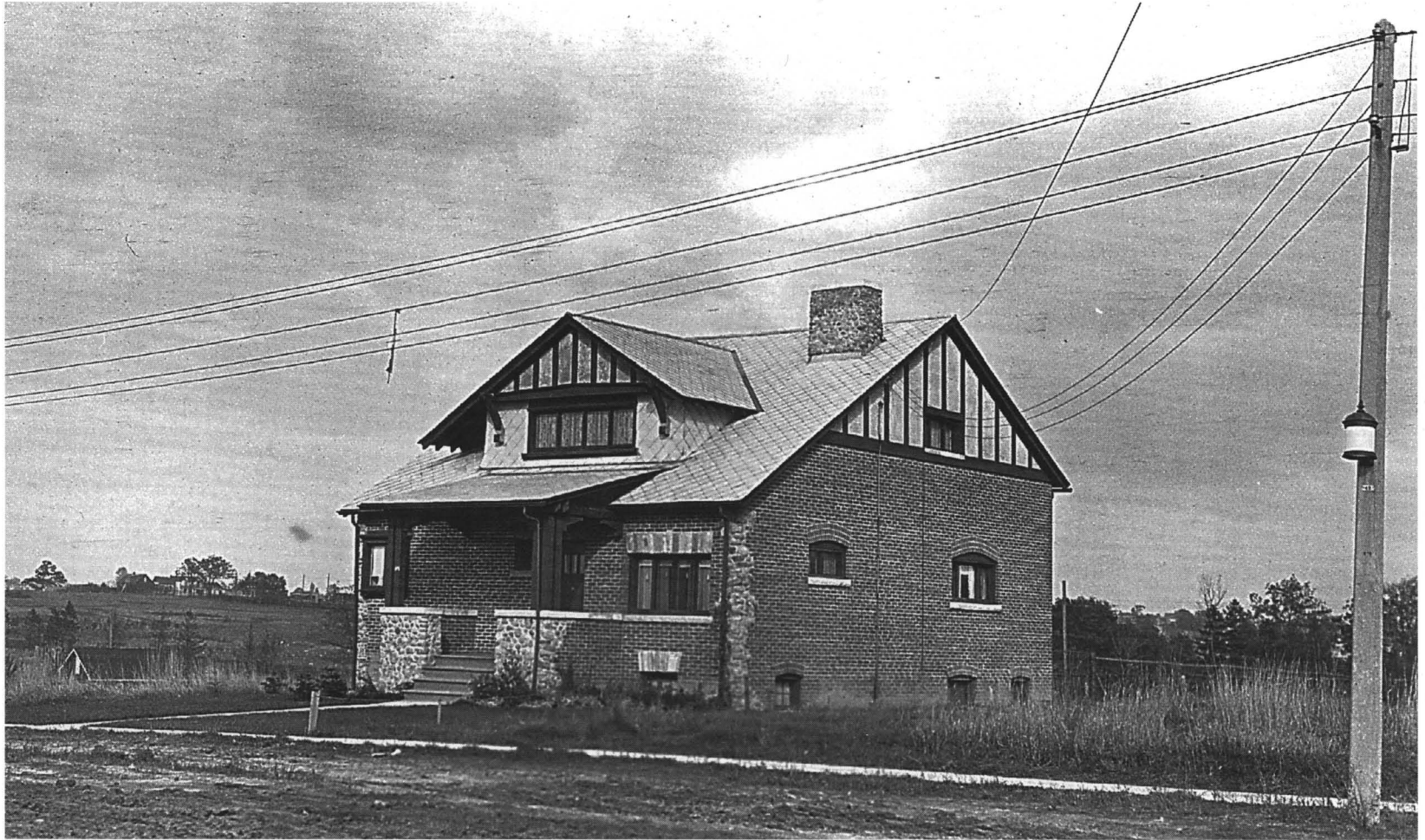
John Boyd/NAC/PA-192725

building restrictions and thus a workman became handicapped in acquiring a home of his own. He could no longer build a shack and add a little to his home from time to time as his means permitted. He must either pay rent or run the risk of mortgaging the future.”<sup>73</sup>

Land subdivisions continued. The old brickyard properties north of St. Clair and east of (Old) Weston Road (Lot 34, 3rd Concession) were subdivided in 1911 and 1912 creating Rockwell, Blackthorn, Silverthorn, Rountree (now Rowntree), Prescott, Howick, Rosethorn, Pryor, Cloverdale, Turnberry, and Chambers avenues. The area directly north of this subdivision was settled at this time. Silverthorn Grove was advertised in 1914 as “The Workingman’s Rosedale - the finest place for the building of cozy, comfortable little homes.” The advertisement noted that 150 houses had already been built on the property and “358 lots sold in 10 days in March.”<sup>74</sup>

Several new plans were registered for the old Bull farm on Lots 29 and 30, 2nd Concession, east of Dufferin to Bartholomew Avenue (now Alberta Avenue), from St. Clair Avenue to Davenport Road. Owner Richard Pugh Powell laid out the most easterly part in 1909 (redividing the Bulls’ 1890 plan); the Northcliffe Land Development Co. Limited subdivided the middle section in 1913; and Toronto real estate dealers James Armstrong and John J. Cook the westernmost area in 1912. Among the new streets were Westmount, Northcliffe, Lauder, Glenholme, Springmount, Dovercourt (now Oakwood), Regal, Mount Royal, Rosemount, Burlington, Northern (now Biggar), Thom, and Eleanor (now Highview). The future sites of Oakwood Collegiate and Regal Road School were redivided several times before being sold as blocks to the Toronto Board of Education.

This section, which became known as Oakwood (and is now sometimes called Regal Heights), became a middle-class enclave. Houses were larger and more impressive than in most other parts of the district. Much of Oakwood followed the garden suburb model, with several winding streets, and houses and gardens designed to fit harmoniously with their surroundings. Regal Road was laid out along the crest of Davenport Hill, and properties on the south side had a spectacular view over the City. It was one of only a few streets in the area where the lots were laid out to take advantage of the hilltop site. Some of the new houses were designed in the California Bungalow style, others in the English Country style. A fine example of the latter is the Marshall G. Galloway house at 70 Regal Road (1915), attributed to architect J. Hartley Galloway and listed by the Toronto Historical Board as a heritage property in 1990.

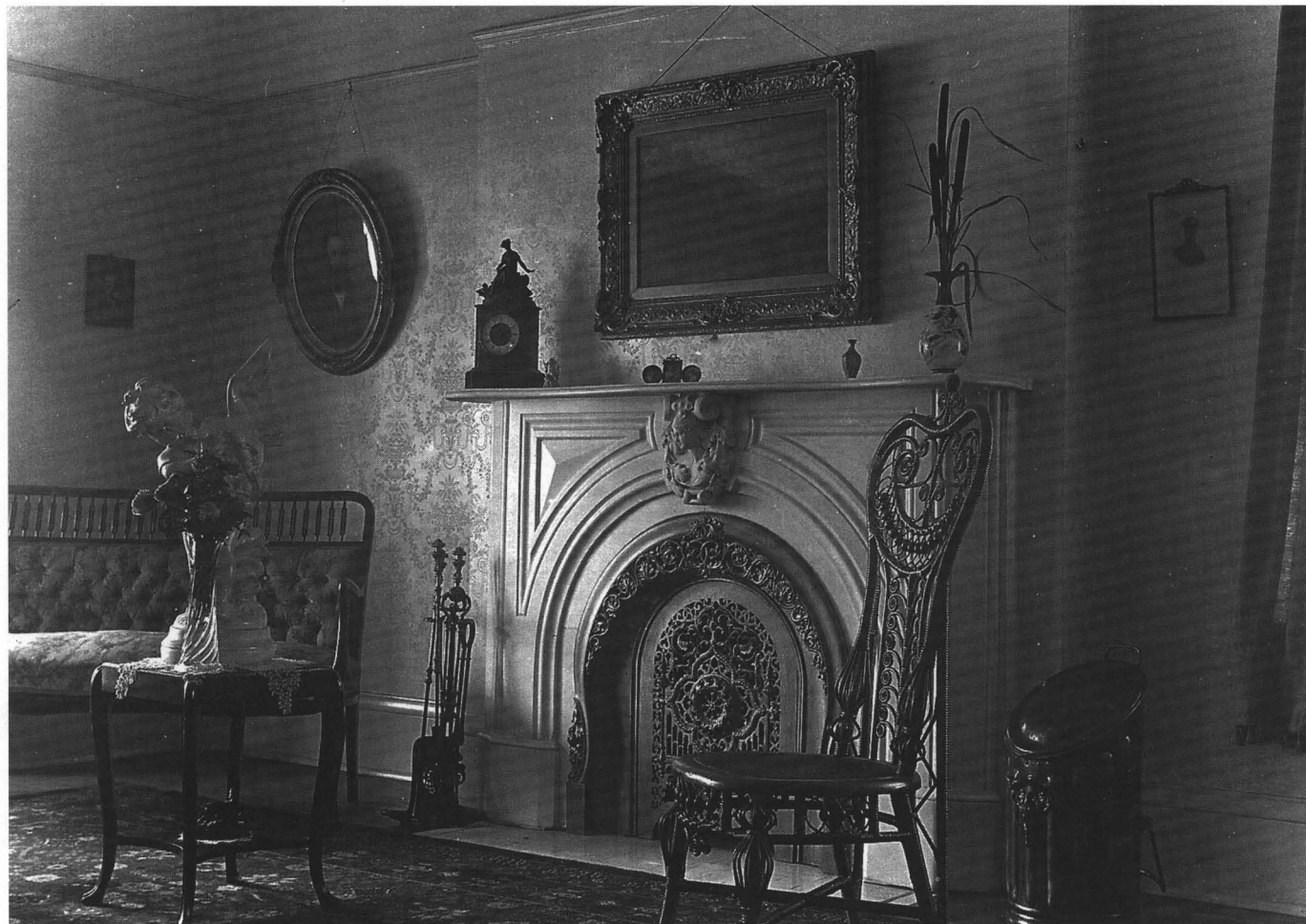


***Residence on Caledonia Road, 1916.***

Bungalows dominated home construction in Toronto after the First World War, although the two-storey, attached brick home was the most common type of housing in Earls court in the 1910s.

John Boyd/NAC/PA192724





***Interior of the Shapter home, 83 Oakwood Avenue, 1916.***

In 1909, Frank Shapter, a wood worker, acquired the lot at the northeast corner of Oakwood Avenue and Burlington Crescent. In 1910, he constructed a three-storey brick house on the property, which had many oak trees and a stream in the backyard. This was the first house on Oakwood Avenue between Davenport Road and St. Clair Avenue. The new house had two marble fireplaces with cast-iron inserts from his old home on Anne Street in downtown Toronto. This picture is taken from a leather-bound book of photographs, given at Christmas 1916 "to Edith Ellen Shapter by her Mother so that in after years she might refresh her memories of Home."

Margaret Kelk



As in other parts of the district, many of the lots in Oakwood were quickly occupied. One person recalled that “The first modern home to be built in Oakwood, was erected on Highview Cres. and given by the old *Toronto World* newspaper as a prize in a subscription drive. This was the beginning of the Oakwood boom.”<sup>75</sup> In 1912, *Goad’s Atlas* showed three houses near Dufferin and Regal Road, and 22 houses east of Oakwood Avenue. Four years later, *Goad’s Atlas* showed the area between Glenholme and Dufferin to be about 20% developed (83 houses), Highview and Oakwood almost fully developed, and about 70% of the lots built upon between Oakwood and Winona.<sup>76</sup>

### **Industrial growth**

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The district continued to be an important manufacturing centre. A 1914 advertisement for the Silverthorn Grove subdivision listed “32 of the largest industrial plants in the city” that were located within walking distance and gave “steady work for the people who live” there.<sup>77</sup> Highlighted were the Dominion Radiator Co., Canada Foundry Co., and Union Stock Yards.

Canadian General Electric, which owned Canada Foundry, built a new plant for the Architectural Bronze and Iron works on Royce Avenue (now Dupont Street) in 1912. It became profitable, producing many notable pieces including the bronze castings for the Sir Adam Beck statue on University Avenue.

In 1911, CCM became the Russell Motor Car Company Ltd. with Russell as first vice-president. In 1915, Russell joined with a Toledo, Ohio firm, Willys-Overland, which took over the manufacture of automobiles at the West Toronto plant. Production of the Russell models ended. The CCM name was retained for a branch of the new company which produced bicycles, skates and accessories. It relocated to a new factory at Weston in 1916-7.

### **Public transportation improvements: the Toronto Civic Railways**

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Improved public transportation was perhaps the most significant benefit to come with annexation. Despite the number of communities bordering St. Clair Avenue, public transit along the thoroughfare was non-existent because the Toronto Railway Company refused to extend its single-fares, build new lines, or buy additional cars to service the area beyond the City limits of 1891, the year of its contract.



***St. Clair Avenue West, looking west from Ossington Avenue (now Winona Drive), 1911.***

This view shows the progress of the Civic Car line construction and the undeveloped state of St. Clair Avenue. The newly-opened Oakwood High School can be seen as evidence of Garrison Creek.

CTA Salmon 1736

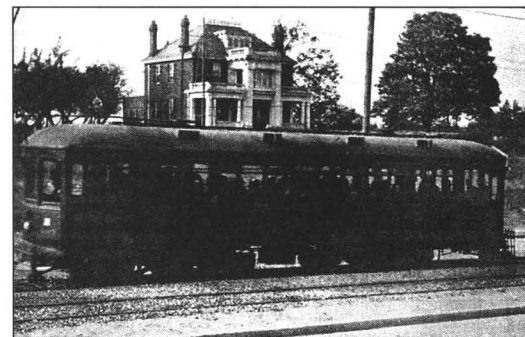
Hoping to stimulate development in the outlying districts, as well as to meet demands from local residents for better transit service, the City launched its own public transportation system in 1911, the Toronto Civic Railways (TCR).

Construction of the St. Clair Avenue route, the second of five lines to be built, began in September 1911. It ran from the junction of Yonge Street and St. Clair Avenue, west along St. Clair to the GTR tracks at Station (now Caledonia) Road, a distance of three miles. St. Clair, though a concession road, was little more than a dirt track at that time. But being one of the few crosstown streets, City Council felt it should be widened beyond the standard 66 feet. The built-up part between Yonge Street and Avenue Road was made 86 feet wide. The balance to the GTR tracks was widened to about 100 feet, which meant that the trees lining St. Clair had to be removed.

The Civic Railway created a central boulevard of 33 feet along St. Clair on which the tracks were laid. Many local residents fought against the central boulevard, which they felt was expensive and would slow down St. Clair's progress. Bill Carter recalled in 1938, "How we fought against building a central boulevard - and it had to be removed in later years at tremendous expense."<sup>78</sup> (Between 1928 and 1935, the Toronto Transportation Commission, which took over the TCR in 1921, removed the boulevard from Yonge to Caledonia and converted it to paved trackage.)

St. Clair's undulating character required a great deal of cut and fill, especially in the valleys at Ossington (now Winona Drive) and Lauder avenues, where two branches of the Garrison Creek flowed, and at the Nordheimer Ravine east of Bathurst Street. Service on the St. Clair line began in August 1913 - without fanfare as civic officials were relieved that the line was finally operational! The St. Clair Civic Car Line was an immediate success. Fares were 2¢ for adults (six tickets for 10¢) and 1¢ for children under nine, with infants in arms travelling free.

Lansdowne, the other Civic Line in this area, was the last TCR route to be built. Service began on 16 January 1917. The Lansdowne route extended just half a mile from where the TCR service ended at the CPR tracks north of Royce Avenue (now Dupont Street), up Lansdowne to St. Clair, the only point on the Civic system where free transfers between two lines were issued. Unlike other TCR lines, which went through undeveloped areas, this line travelled along Lansdowne Avenue, built up with heavy industry below Davenport Road and with houses above.



**First streetcar along St. Clair Avenue, 25 August 1913**

In the background is *Oakwood House*, built by Dudley Jessopp in 1893 and still standing at 15 Robina Avenue. James Crang Sr., who lived here from about 1906 to the 1920s, gave the house to the YMCA; it is now privately owned.

Crang, 30



*Lansdowne Avenue hill on the Civic Car line, looking south to Davenport Road, 1931.*

This picture shows the extreme reverse curve at the crest of the Lansdowne hill, the steepest hill on which Civic cars operated. Signals or semaphores and derail switches were installed for safety. The Davenport Works of Canadian General Electric are in the right background.

TTC 8319

Residents living north of St. Clair to Eglinton Avenue sometimes used automobiles to connect with the TCR vehicles. Enterprising operators provided the service on several main streets including Oakwood, Vaughan, Dufferin and Silverthorn. The fare was 5¢ and usually five or six passengers were carried in the cars at once. Since money was scarce, many people continued to walk to St. Clair.

### **First World War, 1914-18, patriotism and service**

The First World War had a huge effect on the district. Not only did it interrupt the stream of immigrants and the pace of settlement, but local residents joined up en masse. Earlscourt is reputed to have sent a greater proportion of its men to the war than any other district in the country. Recent immigrants from the Britain Isles were especially loyal to the old country, even though they had chosen to leave it. The impoverished condition of many also made military service attractive. Both the Hughes and the Silverthorn school districts claimed to have the largest per capita enlistments in Canada. In 1918, the *Toronto Star* reported that St. David's Presbyterian Church had sent 41 members of one Sunday School class and all 15 members of the Boys' Brigade to fight; and about 75% (325 people) of the Men's Own Brotherhood of Earlscourt Methodist Church were overseas.

Some people remained behind. Dr. McCormack's services were in such demand, for example, that Earlscourt mothers took up a petition to keep him in the district during the war. The home front was also very active. About 300 women of the district enlisted in the Home Guard and trained at Dundurn Heights, John McNab's estate on the north side of St. Clair between Atlas and Oakwood. Jessie McNab, his youngest daughter, was a leader and organizer of the Guard. The women wore khaki uniforms and were trained in physical drills, marches, and target shooting to aid the men in the trenches if the call came.

During the first winter of the war, widespread unemployment and shortages of food caused much suffering. Peter Bryce and his assistants delivered bags of potatoes and other foods to local families. In many cases, the cost came from their own meagre incomes. During the winter of 1918, Bryce also coordinated a coal drive to distribute fuel among destitute families in the district. One incident in the district displayed the more xenophobic aspects of the war. Freda Held, a teacher at Carlton School of German parentage, was forced to resign for perceived, but unfounded, pro-German sentiments.<sup>79</sup>

The Royal Flying Corps took over the old Heydon House for its headquarters,



***Girls with a basket of papers for the Red Cross, 1916.***

The home front was active in the district during the First World War. School children supported the troops, as did several organizations including the Earlscourt Branch of the Great War Veterans' Association, and the Earlscourt Trench Comforts League, the Earlscourt Branch of the British Imperial Association, and the Independent Women Workers Association of Earlscourt, who wrote letters and sent "comforts" to the soldiers.

John Boyd/NAC 69938





*Earlscourt mothers at the Warriors' Day Parade, 1920.*  
CTA James 727



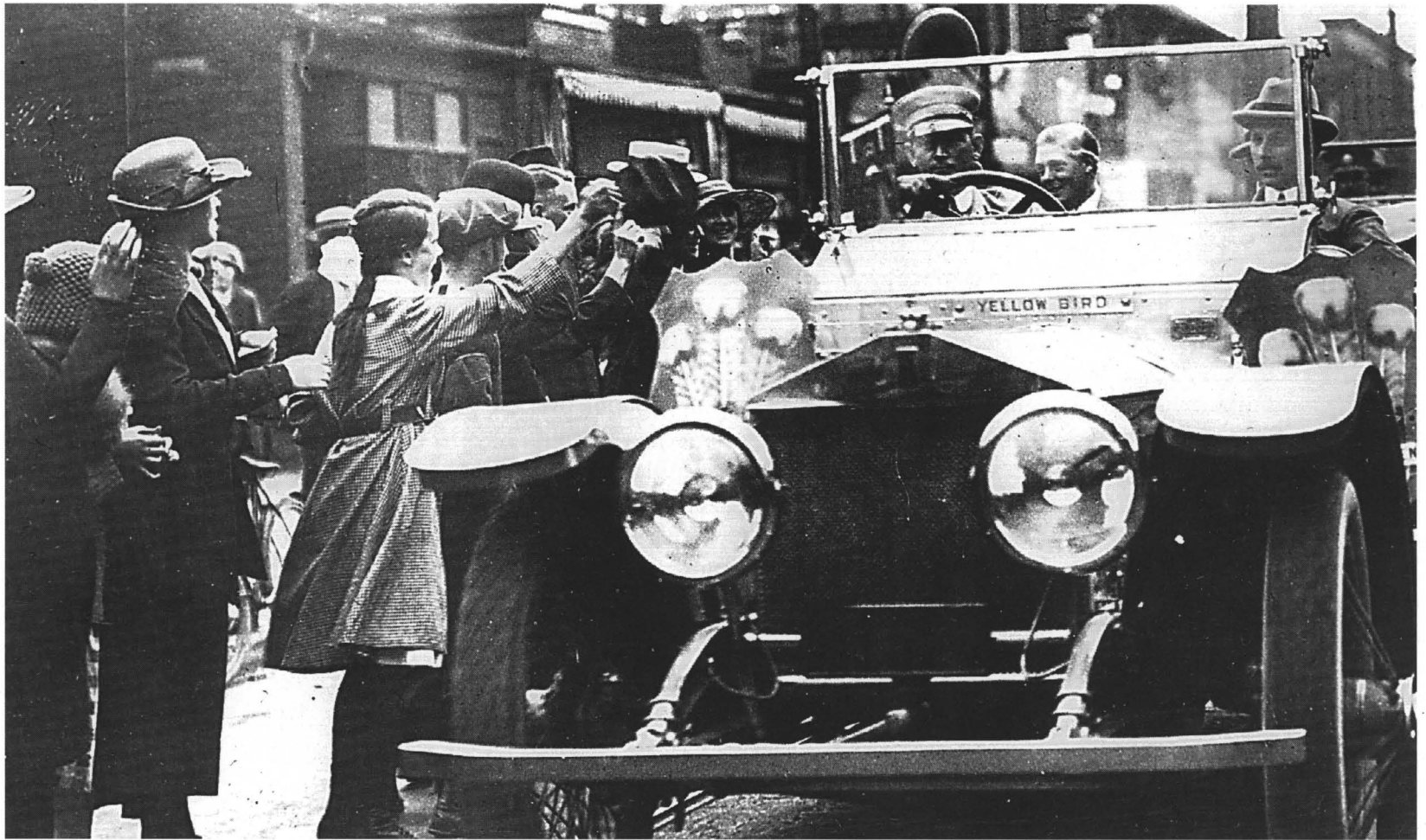
barracks and depot, and stationed hundreds of airmen there. Temporary barracks were also built on (Old) Weston Road adjacent to the hotel. The facility included a barbershop, stores, and maintenance shops. The Queen's Rangers were posted at the Kodak plant, which was built just before the war at Eglinton and Weston Road. They conducted their manoeuvres and sham battles in the fields of the Rowntree estate and near the Russell Motor Car Company near (Old) Weston Road and Keele Street.

In 1919, the year after the war ended, the Military Orthopedic Hospital (renamed Christie Street Veterans Hospital in 1936) opened slightly east of the district near the northwest corner of Christie and Dupont streets. It was the country's principal treatment centre for veterans.

Local industries also participated in the war effort. In 1915, the Canadian government contracted the Russell Motor Car Company to produce 40 armoured cars, eight support trucks and an armoured scout car. After Willys-Overland Limited took over the company in late 1915, production continued to concentrate on war work. During 1918 automobile manufacturing was suspended, and the factory produced airplane engines for the British government until February 1919.<sup>80</sup>

A royal visit to Toronto after the war provided an emotional display of patriotism. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, spent four days in Toronto in August 1919. One afternoon he paid his respects to the war dead buried in Prospect Cemetery. The Prince insisted on visiting Earlscourt after being told about the huge contribution the district had made to the war effort.

After planting a silver maple tree at Prospect Cemetery, the Prince received a welcome address by Alderman Brook Sykes, who informed his Royal Highness "that Earlscourt has earned for itself an undying name for patriotism and loyalty to the Mother Country during the recent war, by having sent more soldiers to the world conflict than any other section of Canada, compared to its area."<sup>81</sup> The reporter for the *Daily Star* observed that "the Prince has seen large and imposing ceremonies and listened to many addresses . . . But he will never receive a heartier, more whole-souled out-from-the-shoulder greeting than was accorded him last night in Earlscourt and along St. Clair avenue."<sup>82</sup>



***Prince of Wales in Toronto, August 1919.***

Because of its huge contribution to the First World War, The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, visited the district to honour the war dead at a ceremony in Prospect Park. The community was welcoming: a decorative archway was placed across St. Clair at Dufferin, and hundreds of people turned out.

CTA James 1017



***Opening ceremony of streetcar service to Township of York, 1924.***

There was great rejoicing when the Toronto Transportation Commission extended streetcar service north of St. Clair into the Township of York. Two routes went from Oakwood and St. Clair: one to Eglinton and Caledonia and the other along Rogers Road to Bicknell. A bus route along Oakwood between Davenport and St. Clair started in 1926. This picture looks south on Oakwood Avenue to St. Clair. The Oakwood Theatre is on the east side of the street just north of St. Clair Avenue. The theatre operated until about 1962 but is no longer standing.

TTC 3527

## Boom, Depression and War, 1920 to 1945

### Boom time, 1920s

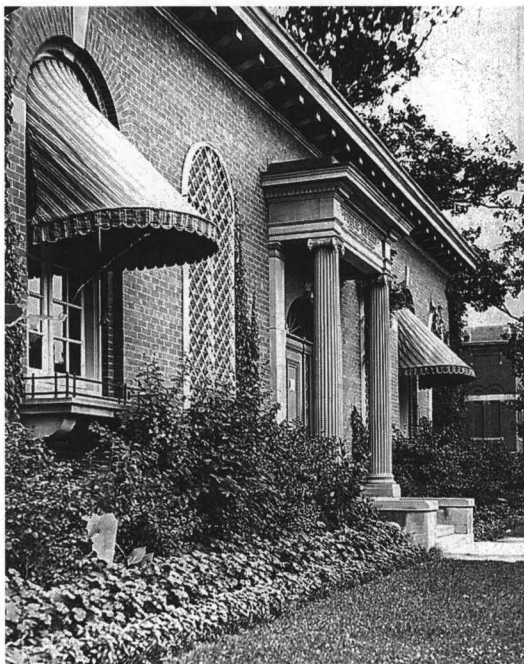
By the 1920s, most of the land in the vicinity of St. Clair Avenue had been subdivided, but a few plans were registered in adjacent areas of York Township. The old Rowntree farm was subdivided in a development called Rowntree Estates Limited in the early 1920s. At the formal opening, a house was built in a day and auctioned off that evening. The Crang family subdivided land north of St. Clair in the vicinity of Oakwood Avenue creating Roseneath Gardens, Robina, Crang, and Glenhurst avenues. The building boom continued in the 20s.

Several movie houses opened in Earlscourt after the First World War. Allen's St. Clair (known simply as the St. Clair by 1923), on the north side of St. Clair between Westmount and Dufferin, was one of ten similar buildings the chain constructed in Toronto shortly following the war. The Oakwood, built in 1918 by James Crang Jr. on Oakwood Avenue just north of St. Clair, claimed to be Toronto's largest suburban theatre, with 1,200 seats. The Major, on the north side of St. Clair between Cloverdale and (Old) Weston Road, opened by 1926. The Paramount started on the south side of St. Clair between Lauder and Glenholme in the 1930s. By 1922, the Belmont Theatre, between Dufferin and Elmwood (now Via Italia) had changed its name to the Royal George.

Other recreational and cultural facilities were also established in the 1920s. The 32-acre Earlscourt Park officially opened on the former Cooper-Royce farm on 23 October 1920. Jethro Crang built Oakwood Park Skating Rink and Athletic Ground and the Oakwood Swimming Club on the north side of St. Clair Avenue between Winona and Oakwood. The complex included Oakwood Stadium, a covered grandstand seating 4,000 people, which was used mostly for high school football games and track meets until 1950 when the property was sold and became a stock car track.

During the decade, a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association was located on the north side of St. Clair at 15 Robina Avenue in the magnificent brick residence that Dudley Jessopp had constructed on the family farm in 1893. In 1921, Toronto Public Library opened a new Earlscourt Branch on the west side of Dufferin Street just south of St. Clair.

By 1930, St. Clair Avenue between Winona Drive and (Old) Weston Road filled more than nine columns in the Toronto directory. A notable feature was the increased number of chain stores along the thoroughfare. Reflecting the increased use of automobiles, the street



**Front entrance of Earlscourt Branch, Toronto Public Library, 1927**

Officially opened in its own building on Dufferin Street in 1921, Earlscourt Library was awarded a silver cup in October 1924 by the St. Clair Horticultural Society "for the best kept large grounds in the district."

James & Son/TPLA





***St. Clair Avenue West, looking east from east of Dufferin Street, 1928.***

St. Clair Avenue was built up with stores, restaurants, and movie theatres to well beyond Dufferin by the 1920s. The St. Clair Theatre, located near the northeast corner of St. Clair and Dufferin, can be seen on the left. Beyond it is St. Clare School.

TTC 6240



now had two car dealers, one gas station, and a few automobile repair shops. The outstanding addition to the St. Clair scene was the number of apartments, mostly small buildings of 11 to 22 units.

### Economic depression, 1930s

Building virtually stopped with the Depression, although many of the cheapest homes continued to be improved. Unemployment was massive. Many families were unable to maintain their payments of rents, taxes and mortgages, and lost their homes. Evicted owners and tenants made tent and shack colonies in Fairbank Park north on Dufferin Street, in an open field around Keele and Eglinton (now Coronation Square), or in the undeveloped section of Prospect Cemetery between Kitchener and Eglinton Avenues. Water lines were hooked to hydrants and privies dug in the ground. Locals devised nicknames for some of the spots. The tent city at Keele and Eglinton in York Township was called "Red Square," Reg Walmsley recalled in 1994. During the summer of 1933, it was "a hotbed for socialist rallies," sometimes led by Communist leader Tim Buck who lived nearby on Oakwood Avenue.<sup>83</sup> So many unemployed frequented Earls Court Park, that it became known as "Pogey Park."

But not everyone was without work. Ernest Malton had a steady job as an apprentice boiler maker with CPR in west Toronto. In 1987, he recalled, "The pay was 17¢ an hour with a raise of 2¢ every six months for three years - if I showed progress." After serving his apprentice, Mr. Malton got a job at Willys-Overland. "I was chosen ahead of 300 other guys for a job rivetting running boards to car frames. . . . I earned \$5 for a 10-hour day."<sup>84</sup> Willys-Overland ceased production of cars at its Toronto plant in 1933, leaving hundreds of local workers without jobs. The site was bought by another CCM affiliate, the Acme Screw and Gear Company which became Russell Industries in 1938.

Jim Mills worked at Canada Packers in 1933 at 20¢ an hour. He recalled in 1989: "At Christmas, I unloaded turkeys from boxcars from 7 a.m. to midnight six days a week. That made for a 100-hour week - for 20 bucks."<sup>85</sup> Other local jobs were even less well-paid. In May 1989, Cec Rowe told the *Toronto Star* about the job he got in 1935 at age 15 delivering for a fruit store on St. Clair near Dufferin. "The day started at 8 a.m. and ended at midnight. The pay was \$1. One night I worked until 2 a.m. the owner told me I'd done a good job - and slipped me an extra dime."<sup>86</sup>



#### Willys-Overland advertisement, 1922.

Willys-Overland Limited manufactured automobiles at the old Russell Motor Car Company plant on Weston Road from 1915 to 1933. The Willys lineup included the Overland, the Willys-Knight, and the Whippet.

Durnford, 225

Some children didn't finish their education because they had to help support their families. "Most young people went to work if not before they were 16 then certainly after that. . . to help out your family," recalled long-time resident Jack Hughes in 1986. "People were losing their homes and young people could get a job for \$5 or \$6 a week where older men just couldn't buy a job. Most of us had to go to work before our time . . . there were very few people that got through the schooling system all the way especially university unless your parents were wealthy."<sup>87</sup>

Entertainer and writer Don Harron was another local teenager working during the Depression. He was then living in the family home at 51 Crang Avenue, "not a hotbed of prosperity in the 1930s and '40s." He reminisced to the *Toronto Star* in 1987: "I used to peddle the Mail and Empire at the corner of St. Clair and Oakwood every morning. I would also collect discarded fruit baskets, to sell for a penny."<sup>88</sup> John Juniper recalled delivering newspapers at 5:30 a.m., having breakfast and then going to school. He didn't participate in school sports because he delivered papers after school as well. Often, the Depression was remembered with black humour. Crawford Milne quipped in 1986 "I did everything but rob banks - I would have done that too but they didn't have any money either."<sup>89</sup>

### **Life in Earlscourt between the wars**

Many local residents have fond and happy memories of life in the district in the years between the two World Wars: daily milk and bread delivery, a dozen eggs for 12¢, double- and triple-dip ice cream cones for 5¢ at the Good Humour Store (later called St. Clair Ice Cream) on St. Clair opposite St. Clarens, and Saturday movie matinees for 10¢. Royce Park, as Earlscourt Park was locally known, and Crang's swimming pool and skating rink were favourite places for children and teenagers.

Holidays beyond Toronto were a luxury. "If you got out of the city at all you were quite lucky,"<sup>90</sup> Jack Hughes remembered. But there were excursions to Centre Island, Hanlan's Point, Maple Leaf baseball games, the Exhibition, and Sunnyside, which was especially popular because streetcars rides there were sometimes free, and streetcar expeditions downtown to Eaton's or Simpson's.

Even Sundays, with three trips to church and no playing, were remembered nostalgically since no work was done that day: "Sunday was Sunday in those days," Jack Hughes recollected. "If you wanted to play cards, you'd pull the blinds." Filmmaker Harry



**Royal George Theatre, March 1954**

Established by 1915 as the Picture Palace, then called the Belmont from about 1917 to 1922, the movie theatre on the south side of St. Clair between Dufferin and Elmwood (now Via Italia) was best known as the Royal George. During the 1950s, it became the Continental Theatre. The building is now used for a discount department store.

Harvey R. Naylor



***CNR St. Clair Station and Subway, about 1932***

Seeing local population and traffic shift from Davenport Road to St. Clair Avenue, the CNR built this new station north of St. Clair Avenue, just west of Caledonia Road, to replace the old Davenport Station (1857). St. Clair Station went into service at midnight, 10 January 1932, and trains continued to stop there until 1986. The federal government designated it as a heritage railway station in 1994, calling it "an elegant, if small"<sup>90a</sup> example of Beaux-Arts design. A fire on 20 February 1997 caused major damage to the structure, and the station was demolished on 30 June 1997. In the centre background of this picture is the A. J. Gillies Manufacturing Company, established in the area in the 1890s; the building was converted into loft apartments in the 1990s.

CN Photo 36935

Rasky, who lived along St. Clair from the time of his birth in 1928 until university, tells an amusing anecdote about Sundays in Earlscourt in his autobiography, *Nobody Swings on Sunday*: "Fear of the Lord was Everywhere. At the Earlscourt Park there were tennis courts; no nets could be hung. There were sandboxes and swings; the swings were padlocked. Padlocked! Once, when I found one free and began swinging, a policeman in his bobby hat grabbed my shoulder. His words have never left me: "Nobody swings on Sunday!" Amen."<sup>91</sup>

## Schools

During the early 1920s, school enrolments rose, and innovative methods were used to cope with overcrowded schools. At Carlton School, the swimming pool was drained and set up with desks for a classroom. Hughes School, with an enrolment of nearly 1,000 pupils in 1923, held classes in morning and afternoon shifts.

Gradually, the boards of education constructed new schools, or replaced, or put additions on existing buildings. In 1923, contracts were awarded for "Silverthorne School" on Turnberry Avenue, a 4.5-acre site that had once been a brickyard operated by the Crang family. (Most local brickyards were out of business by the 1930s because of the Depression and diminishing supplies of clay.) The school opened in 1924 with two classes from Hughes School, and the new name of General Mercer, after Malcolm Smith Mercer, a Canadian commander killed during the First World War.

Enrolment at Pyne Public School decreased dramatically, once Regal Road School was established, and it closed in 1939. (The building on Bartlett Avenue was still standing in 1997, being used as an apartment dwelling.)

## Earlscourt and the Second World War

The Second World War brought profound changes to the area as had the First World War. Once again the district's enlistment was extremely high. Tom McDonald, a Second World War veteran and Earlscourt Legion member, claimed that two of every three houses in the area had a family member in the Forces. The Salvation Army Earlscourt Corps band enlisted as a body to become the regimental band of "A" Corps, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. "A lot of fellows joined up basically to get three meals a day. There weren't many jobs around," recalled Jack Hughes, who joined the Navy in 1941 as soon as he was old enough.<sup>92</sup>



**Regal Road School, 1921**

Regal Road School began in two portable rooms on Davenport Hill in September 1913. The following year, the new three-storey school opened with 568 pupils. The school was designed by architect F. E. Belfrey, and in 1985 Toronto City Council placed it on *The City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties*.

TBE, Regal Road, no. 1

The home front was also busy. As they had in the First World War, school children did their bit. For example, the boys of Earls court School made cribbage and checker boards for the Navy League and splints for the Red Cross in their manual training classes. Women went to work, many local women in munitions factories.

Italy's declaration of war against the Allies in June 1940 had a devastating effect on the local Italian community. Over 200 Torontonians of Italian origin, including some from the local area, were sent to internment camps for up to three years because of suspected Fascist leanings, largely unfounded. Others of Italian origin in the neighbourhood saw their businesses shunned.

## Transformation, 1945 to 1995

### Ethnic diversification

The Canadian census of 1951 showed that the community was still predominately British: 70% of the neighbourhood's 40,000 residents were of British origin. Italians and Jews made up the second and third largest groups, 7.5% and 5% respectively. (The census counted Jews both as an ethnic group and as a religion.) Most Jewish residents lived in the Oakwood area; during the 1940s and 1950s, approximately one-third of the students at Oakwood Collegiate were Jewish. Polish, Ukrainian, and other Europeans made up the next largest groups.

During the 1950s, about 90,000 immigrants from Italy settled in Toronto, and Italians became a strong force in the entire district, vastly changing its character and services. In the early 1950s, Italians lived mostly around Dufferin and Davenport at the bottom of the hill around St. Mary of the Angels Church, as St. Clement church and school were renamed in 1936 when the cornerstone for a new church building was laid.

By 1961, Italians had replaced Jews as Toronto's largest non-British ethnic group, and the St. Clair Little Italy was twice as big as the older College Street colony. In 1961, the census documents that of the area's 46,000 residents, some 20,000 people, or 42%, were of Italian origin. Those of British origin had declined to 15,500 people, or about one-third of the district's population. Polish, Ukrainian and other Europeans made up the next largest groups. The Jewish population in the St. Clair neighbourhood had declined to about 1,600



***Puppet show at Dufferin/St. Clair Library, 1974***

The ethnic composition of the neighbourhood changed dramatically from the 1950s to the 1990s, shifting from being predominately British to Italian to a multicultural mixture.

TPLDU





***St. Clair looking east from Lauder Avenue, 1953.***

The Paramount Theatre, on the right, was one of several motion picture theatres that operated in the area. Located on the south side of St. Clair between Lauder and Glenholme, the Paramount opened in the 1930s. All the local movie theatres ceased to operate after the 1960s. With the exception of the Oakwood, all the buildings were still standing in 1997. The Paramount became a ballet school, and is now a bar.

J. V. Salmon/MTRL S1-1204

residents, or 3.5% of the population.

By the mid-1980s, St. Clair Avenue's ethnic mix was changing once again. Some people of Italian ethnic origin had moved away to outlying suburbs such as Woodbridge (a pattern that had started in the late 1950s). In the 1991 census, the population of the area from Oakwood Avenue to the CN tracks between Davenport Road/CP tracks north to the City limits was 33,000. While Italians were still the area's single largest ethnic group in 1991 with 8,300 people, 26% of the local population, their proportion had declined substantially in 30 years.

The St. Clair Little Italy had increasingly become home to other new Canadians. The largest of these other groups in 1991 were 6,500 people of Portuguese ethnic origin, 20% of the local population. There were smaller, but significant numbers of Blacks (5%), Spanish (4%), and Vietnamese (2%). Some Anglo-Canadians from other parts of Toronto had also re-settled in the area, but those declaring British ethnic origin were only 8% of the community in 1991.

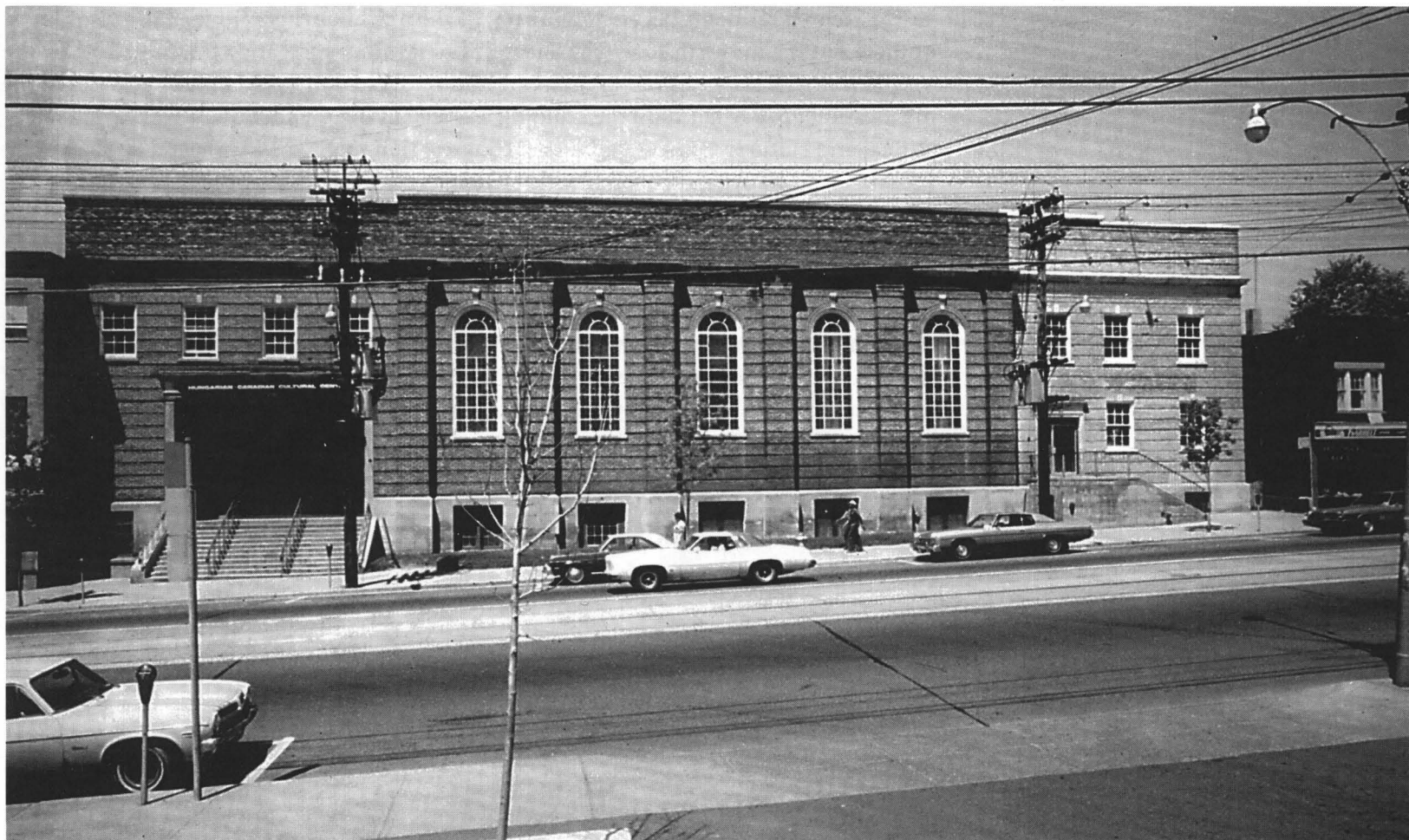
The St. Clair area was still a major immigrant reception area in 1991, with immigrants comprising 54% of the population. The great majority of the immigrants (67%) had come from European countries other than the United Kingdom. Another 24% had been born in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Asian countries other than India. More than half had come to Canada since the 1970s.

## **Religion**

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The changing ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood had a dramatic effect on local religious organizations. During the 1950s, there were still a strong number of Protestants; several denominations constructed replacement buildings and a few opened new churches. As congregations dwindled in the 1960s and 1970s, many local Protestant churches either amalgamated, shared their buildings (often with ethnic congregations), or sold their properties and moved out of the neighbourhood. In 1991, Protestant groups comprised only 15% of the area's population.

A Jewish society, the Brothers of Jacob, was established on MacKay Avenue by 1921. This was the beginnings of Beth Israel Synagogue. In 1931, a number from this congregation broke away, took the name Shaarei Shomayim in 1934, and began building a synagogue on the north side of St. Clair just east of Winona. It was dedicated in 1949.



***Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre, formerly Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 1975.***

The Shaarei Shomayim congregation acquired land on the north side of St. Clair east of Winona Drive, and built the basement part of its synagogue in 1936. The upper storey was not completed until after the Second World War. The congregation built a new synagogue at 470 Glencairn Avenue in 1966, but continued services at the St. Clair building until it was sold in 1970. It has been the Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre since 1974.

OJA

Jewish residents began moving out of the neighbourhood in the mid-1950s, most of them settling in North York. The Shaarei Shomayim congregation purchased a new site on Glencairn Avenue east of Bathurst Street in 1962, but continued to hold services in the old location on St. Clair until the building was sold in 1970. (It became a Hungarian recreational and cultural centre.) Beth Israel congregation merged with Shaarei Shomayim in the late 1970s. Its synagogue on MacKay Avenue was taken over by the Hungarian United Church in the mid-1980s. In 1991, the local Jewish population was very small with 100 to 200 people, less than 1% of the population.

Reflecting the large numbers of Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, Roman Catholics became the area's single largest religious group, comprising 66% of the local population in 1991. A second Italian national church, St. John Bosco, opened in 1961 at 402 Westmount Avenue, in the northern fringe of the district. St. Nicholas of Bari took over the Church of the Nazarene (established 1935) at 1277 St. Clair Avenue West, and opened the renovated building as an Italian parish church in 1967.

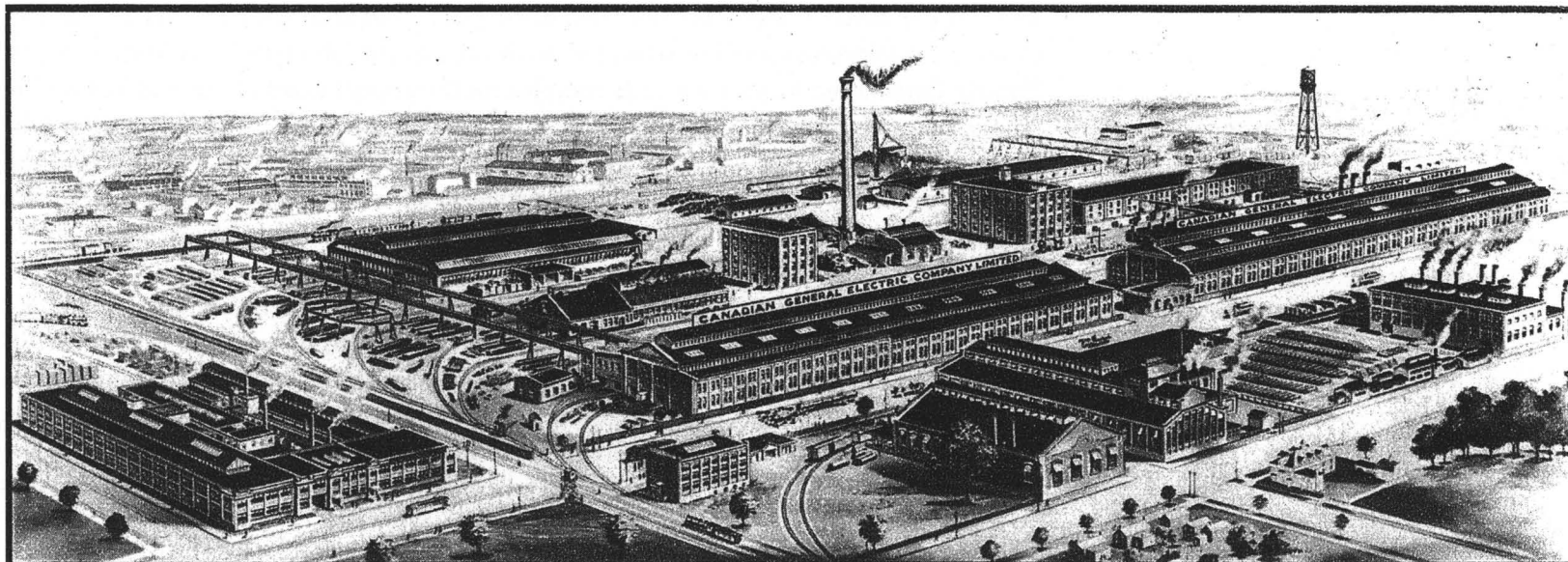
In 1991, other religious groups including Orthodox, Islam, and Hindu comprised 10% of the neighbourhood's population. An equal proportion declared "No Religious Affiliation."

## Schools

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Several new separate schools opened, reflecting the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nature of the community. Initially, some of the new schools were in portables or church basements; others shared accommodation with existing separate schools, or with public schools whose enrolments were declining.

St. Clare School opened new buildings in 1958 and 1963. Richard W. Scott School, named for the father of the Separate School Act of 1863, opened on Rosemount Avenue in 1969. St. Nicholas of Bari School was established in 1973 and shared space with Hughes School until opening its own building at 363 Rogers Road in 1978. Pope Paul School opened at 270 Laughton Avenue in 1980, having started in the original St. Clare school building a few years before. The old school was demolished, and a park, Piazza Santa Chiara, opened on the site in 1983. Brother Edmund Rice High School began in 1978 at 55 Pelham Avenue. Stella Maris School started in 1973, sharing space and eventually occupying the new Earls court Public School, which had opened in 1966.



***Davenport Works of the Canadian General Electric Co. Ltd., 1930s.***

CGE constructed plants for the Canada Foundry Company in 1901-2 on more than 40 acres at the southwest corner of Davenport Road and Lansdowne. A wide variety of metal products were manufactured at the Davenport Works. In 1921, CGE relocated some of its electrical manufacturing (transformers) to the Davenport plant. A new plant for the Architectural Bronze and Iron Works (1912), an additional building for glyptal resins (1944) and a carboloy factory (1950s) were added. CGE (renamed GE Canada in 1987) sold the Davenport Works in the mid-1980s, and moved out of the neighbourhood.

*Toronto an illustrated tour through its highways and byways*



Meanwhile Earls court Public School relocated to a new addition in 1979. In 1960, Oakwood Collegiate opened a complete renovation and addition. In that year, McMurrich Senior School began, housed in an addition to the original school. In 1963, the senior school was renamed Winona Drive. The junior school retained the name McMurrich, given in 1910 to honour John McMurrich (1804-83) and his sons who had served as school trustees for many years. Osler Senior School was built in 1962 on Osler Street. In 1988, it was twinned with Davenport Road Public School and the two schools were called Carleton Village Public School - the only school in Toronto divided by a street.

### **Industrial decline, 1980s and 1990s**

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The area's industrial base was devastated during the 1980s and 1990s as several large factories and businesses closed or relocated, with subsequent job losses. CGE (now General Electric Canada Inc.) closed its huge complex on Davenport Road in the mid-1980s. The removal of waste materials, especially PCBs, from the site caused considerable neighbourhood concern. By 1997, the community had approved a process for removing the waste. Some of the old industrial buildings had been taken over by new businesses. Others had been demolished for housing, with a development under construction in 1997 on the east side of Lansdowne.

For years, the Ontario Stock Yards (so named in 1944 when they were taken over by the Ontario government) was Canada's largest stock yard and ranked fifth in North America. In the 1980s, the packing and feeding industry shifted to Western Canada. The 15-hectare site was closed on December 31, 1993, and leased to private investors.<sup>93</sup> Subsequently, buildings were demolished to make way for redevelopment. By 1997, a few retailers had opened "big box" stores on the former stockyards, and some new housing was further along St. Clair in the vicinity of Runnymede Avenue.

## PART II: HIGHLIGHTS

### The Bull Family

In 1819, four brothers - Thomas, Bartholomew, John, and Edward Bull - petitioned the Colonial Office to emigrate to Canada, along with their families (three wives and six children) and 53 other Protestant-Irish families from North Tipperary, Ireland.<sup>1</sup> After their arrival in Canada, the Bulls formed an important extended family colony in the area of York Township that is now the northwest part of Toronto. Only Thomas (1786-1851) did not settle here.

#### **Bartholomew Bull family**

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Bartholomew Bull (1791-1878) was the first brother to locate in this area, paying in 1824, £175 for the northern 100 acres of Lot 30, 2nd Concession. The lot ran east from present day Dufferin Street south of today's St. Clair Avenue. Bull erected a log cabin, established a farm, and in 1830 constructed the first brick house in York Township, *Springmount*. In 1833-34, he purchased the adjoining 200-acre Lot 29, 2nd Concession. This property extended west from present day Alberta Avenue between today's Bloor Street and St. Clair.

Bartley Bull, as he was popularly called, became a leading citizen of the community, widely-known "as a man of character, industry and integrity."<sup>2</sup> Quiet, steady, and wise, the self-taught Bull tried to educate all the children in the neighbourhood, personally financing their education until there were publicly-supported schools. In 1842, he was school commissioner. Considered the founder of Davenport Methodist Church, Bull was a lay preacher for more than 40 years. Like most ardent Methodists, he did not drink, smoke or dance.

Bartholomew and his wife, Elizabeth Boake (1792-1871), had four daughters and five sons. Except for Mary, who died in childhood, all received college educations, unusual in those days, especially for women and farmers. Three of their sons remained connected with the area.

John Perkins Bull (1822-1902) settled on a farm called *Downsview* (Lot 8, 4th Concession) in York Township about three miles north of the main Bull settlement. The Dufferin-Lawrence area is still known as Downsview. Bull, a justice of the peace for 35 years,

held court in his house, and had the jail in the basement. Like all Bulls, he was a staunch supporter of the Methodist Church and held many positions, including president of the Bible Society for 30 years. He was a member of York Township Council from 1871 to 1876. In 1877, he retired from farming, and moved back to Davenport in the mid-1880s where he lived in the second *Springmount* on Dufferin Street.

Bartholomew Bull II (1826-1871) farmed with his father. He was active in politics, serving on York Township Council between 1858 and 1870, and its reeve from 1865 until the year before his death.

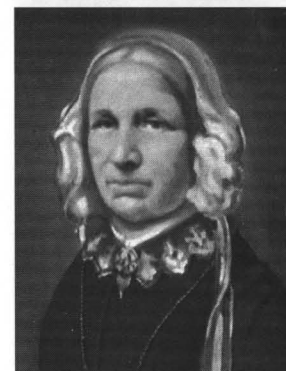
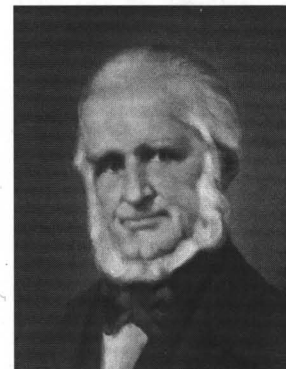
Thomas Henry Bull (1834-1912) was Clerk of the Peace for York County and solicitor for York Township for many years. The 1890 *Goad's Atlas* names him on the Bull farm at the southeast corner of Dufferin and St. Clair.

In 1890, Bartholomew Bull's three surviving sons - John Perkins, Edward, and Thomas Henry - subdivided the section of Lot 29 from Davenport Road north to St. Clair, west from Bartholomew Avenue (now Alberta Avenue) to Springmount Avenue, into building lots. Plan 1020 laid out a number of streets named for the Bull family and their property, including Springmount, Eleanor, Dovercourt, Frank, Bartholomew, and Marion. The plan coincided with the collapse of the real estate market, and was not implemented.

### **John Bull family**

In 1854, John Bull (1794-1871), and his wife, Sahra, received the patent for a 50-acre crown grant at the southeast corner of Lot 31, 3rd Concession, although they had probably settled here earlier. Their oldest son, William (1820-1883), operated one of the early wagon-works in Carlton Village. In 1846, he purchased a 12,000 sq. ft. property at the northeast corner of (Old) Weston Road and today's St. Clair Avenue for £15. His sons, John Alfred Bull (1844-1899) and Joseph R. Bull (1857-1921), carried on the business. J. A. Bull was a councillor on West Toronto Junction Council for six years, in 1889, 1891, and 1894-8.

The second son of John and Sahra Bull, John Robinson Bull (1825-1923), acquired his father's property at the northwest corner of today's Dufferin Street and St. Clair Avenue in 1858, and developed a fine farm. In 1889, he and his wife, Margaret, sold the property for \$40,000 to land speculators Daniel Webster Clendenan and J. M. Laws. They subdivided the southeast section of Lot 31 into narrow building lots, each 36 by 100 feet, and created



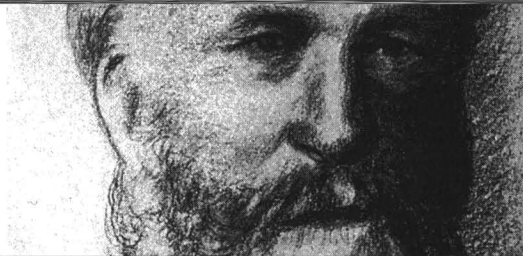
**Bartholomew Bull, 1791-1878. Elizabeth Boake Bull, 1792-1871.**

Bartholomew Bull and his wife, Elizabeth Boake, both natives of County Tipperary, Ireland, were the earliest European settlers in the district. Their 300-acre property, acquired in 1824 and 1833-34, encompassed the area now bounded by Davenport Road north to St. Clair Avenue West, between today's Dufferin Street and Alberta Avenue.

*Spadunk*, 69, 75

several streets. Bull reserved a 100-foot section on St. Clair Avenue, which ran north almost 700 feet to Ascot Avenue, on which he built a fine new home in 1889.

With the collapse of the real estate market in the 1890s, and Clendenan's disappearance from the area, the plan was not realized. Bull held a \$30,000 mortgage and repossessed the property. In 1904, he and W. S. Dinnick, president of the Dovercourt Land Building & Savings Company and the Standard Loan Company, re-surveyed the property (plan 1273), and sold the lots for \$390-\$590 per acre. At his death in June 1923 at age 98, the *Toronto Telegram* called John Robinson Bull one of the "fathers of Toronto."<sup>3</sup>



#### **John Robinson Bull (1825-1923)**

Known as the "Father of Earlscourt," Bull's 50-acre farm at the northwest corner of Dufferin and St. Clair, bought in 1858, became the foundation of the Earlscourt district. He subdivided the property in 1890, but when the land boom burst, Bull redivided it into market-garden plots of five acres each. He subdivided it again in 1904, creating the present streets of Ascot, Hope, Boon, Morrison, and St. Clair Gardens.

*Spadunk, 246*

#### **Edward Bull**

The fourth Bull son, Edward (1798-1876), carried on a shoemaking business in York. In 1832, he cleared a farm near Weston (Lot 7, 4th Concession), and in his later years bought land on Davenport Road.

### **George Cooper and His Family**

George Cooper was born in 1707 in Rutlandshire, England. He and his older brother William

and George married his widow, Mary Gilbert (1798-1888), originally of County Tyrone, Ireland.

In 1831, Cooper paid £800 for Lot 33, 2nd Concession, York Township. He bought the 200-acre property from the Honourable John McGill, a Queen's Rangers veteran and a retired minister of the Upper Canada government, who had received it as a crown grant in 1809. Cooper established a farm there, 400 yards northeast of today's Bloor and Dundas streets and constructed a large log house, plastered and clapboarded to give it a finer appearance. Extensive barns, stables, and pigeon houses surrounded the house.

In 1838, Cooper acquired an additional 200 acres in the area when he paid £5 an acre to the Honourable George Crookshank, a brother-in-law of John McGill, for the adjoining Lot 32, 2nd Concession. The two properties ran between the modern Bloor Street and St. Clair Avenue, and centred approximately at the present Lansdowne Avenue. They possessed fine stands of elms and four varieties of oaks, which Cooper cut and sold for shipbuilding. They also had sufficient deposits of clay for making bricks.

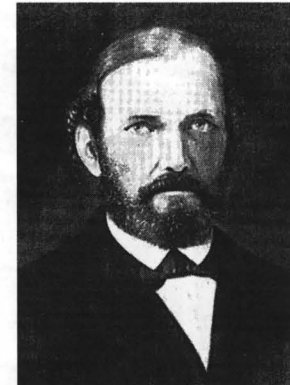
Cooper possessed immense perseverance, enormous energy, and great executive ability. By the 1850s, he was wealthy from his lumber and farm operations and other business interests. In about 1854, he sold off his lands to the south of Davenport Road, and relocated to Lot 32, 2nd Concession. There he built a handsome house along Davenport Road. Situated on Davenport Hill, overlooking the city and just east of the Northern Railway's Davenport Station, the house was named *Preston Villa*, after Preston in Rutlandshire, George Cooper's birthplace. *Preston Villa* was built of red bricks manufactured from clay on the property. The hand-hewn timbers were also from the estate. The sandstone used at the corners of the house was imported, as were some of the interior trimmings. Colonel George Cooper Royce, Cooper's nephew, remembered the massive woodwork inside the house, and that many rooms had fireplaces with black-and-white Italian marble mantles.

Cooper was a larger-than-life figure both in personality and physique. William Perkins Bull assessed his neighbour's character: "He had the temperament and ideas of a squire of the old school as resolute as he was kind, as strong-willed as he was generous."<sup>4</sup> Standing 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighing 200 lbs., he had the broad shoulders and strength of a prize fighter. It was said that he could take the kitchen table in his teeth and lift it off the floor. In his later years, he would chop, split, and pile a cord of wood before breakfast, and call it just a little light exercise to work up an appetite.

Horses were his passion; the stables at *Preston Villa* could accommodate more than 50 horses. Cooper was a skilful horse breeder, trainer, rider and driver, and frequently entered his horses in local agricultural fairs and at race tracks such as the Carlton. One old-timer recalled that "He was as much a sportsman as he was a farmer. . . . On a bet he rode on horseback into a Yonge Street hotel, took a drink at the bar and rode out again without dismounting."<sup>5</sup>

George Cooper was also community-minded. He built the first church in the area in 1844, on a half-acre site he had purchased near the northwest corner of Dundas Street and today's Bloor Street (Lot 34, 2nd Concession). He could be considered the father of the Davenport community which grew around his home. The Davenport railway station, Methodist church, and school were built in the 1850s through his energy and generosity, and probably with bricks made on his property.

Cooper and his wife gave small plots of land, about one-third of an acre each, to their most competent and diligent employees. They insisted that they build cabins, raise



**George Cooper, 1797-1884.**  
**Mary Gilbert Cooper, 1798-1888.**

George Cooper and Mary Gilbert Cooper were the driving forces of the Davenport community. In the 1830s, their farm properties encompassed 400 acres in this area.  
 Spadunk, 139, 140





***Preston Villa, 1955.***

George Cooper's house stood for about one hundred years on the north side of Davenport Road, between today's Lansdowne Avenue and Caledonia Park Road. The house was occupied by the Cooper family and later their relations, the Royces, from about 1854 until 1920. After the City of Toronto established Earlscourt Park, it became a community clubhouse and the park superintendent's residence. The house was closed in 1955 and subsequently demolished.

J. V. Salmon/MTRL T34052

their own fruit and vegetables, and keep pigs and chickens. The couple had no children, but surrounded themselves with a large extended family of Gilberts, Royces, and Campbells. Some lived at *Preston Villa*, while others were set up on their own farms in the area.

The Royces inherited most of the Cooper estate after the death of George Cooper in 1884 and of Mary Gilbert in 1888. Allan Royce (1835-1902), a cousin of George Cooper and related to the Royces of Rolls-Royce car fame, had come from England to manage *Preston Villa*. He was a devoted member of Davenport Methodist Church, and in 1874 was school trustee for school section 13, Davenport.

Allan Royce married Mary Gilbert's niece, Sarah Jane Gilbert (1840-1927), in 1863. Two of their five sons were closely connected with the area. George Cooper Royce (1865-1942) was manager of the Toronto Suburban Railway from 1894 to 1924. A member of the Queen's Own Rifles, he served in Canada and England during the First World War, achieving the rank of colonel. In 1920, Colonel Royce sold the remaining 32 acres of the Cooper-Royce estate to the City of Toronto for \$330,000 for a public park (now Earlscourt Park). Allan Henry Royce (1867-1918) was a corporate lawyer with the Toronto firm of Royce, Henderson and Boyd. He was president of the Toronto Suburban Railway from 1894 until 1911.

### ***Earlscourt: The Estate of John Ross and Edward Henry Foster***

Since the early days of York, Davenport Hill has been a choice site for some of Toronto's finest residences. Samuel Bickerton Harman, a Toronto barrister and mayor in 1869-70, saw the marketability of hillside properties. In 1853, he subdivided part of Lot 31, 2nd Concession into 17 lots. Plan 61 encompassed land between present-day Bloor Street and St. Clair Avenue on the west side of today's Dufferin Street. John Ross (1818-71) purchased lots 16 and 17, the largest and choicest parcels, in 1854/55. Ross's 50 acres lay at the northwest corner of Davenport Road and today's Dufferin Street, extending west to today's Greenlaw Avenue and north to the present St. Clair Avenue.

Ross was a lawyer, politician, and businessman, who was reaching the pinnacle of a remarkable career. Born in County Antrim, Ireland on 10 March 1818, he was brought to Canada as an infant, and educated in the Johnston District (Leeds and Grenville Counties) and Brockville. Called to the bar in 1839, he practised law in Belleville, gradually increasing his finan-



***The Honourable John Ross, 1818-71***

The first owner and builder of the 50-acre estate at the northwest corner of Davenport Road and today's Dufferin Street, was a prominent lawyer, businessman, and politician, who was "feared, respected, and loved"<sup>5a</sup> by his associates.

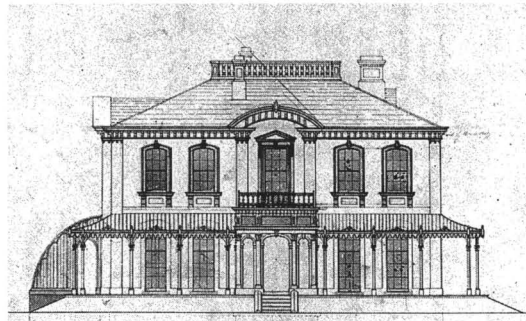
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cial, legal, and political contacts. In 1848, Ross was appointed to the Legislative Council of Canada. An able administrator and an astute politician, Ross held a number of important government positions from the “Upper House:” solicitor-general for Canada West (1851-6), attorney-general for Canada West (1853-4), speaker of the Legislative Council (1854-6), receiver-general (1858), president of the Executive Council, and minister of agriculture (1858-62). He was appointed a government director of the projected Grand Trunk Railway in 1852, and was its president from 1853 to 1862. From 1862 until his death, Ross concentrated on his legal practice and business affairs, although he remained a member of the Legislative Council. He was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1867, and in 1869 became its speaker.<sup>5b</sup>

Ross was a close associate of Robert Baldwin, the prominent reform politician, and a frequent guest at *Spadina*, Baldwin’s hillside home less than two miles east of Ross’s property. Ross’s second marriage in 1851 was to Baldwin’s daughter, Augusta Elizabeth (Eliza, 1831-1905). The couple lived in Belleville for a few years, but after the United Parliament moved to Toronto in 1855, they settled on the Davenport property. Architects Cumberland and Storm designed an Italianate home on the brow of the hill to accommodate the growing Ross family. John and Eliza had seven children, the first five being born in Canada: Maria-Louise, in 1852, died in infancy; the first Robert Baldwin, 1854, died three days after his second birthday; Mary-Jane, 1855; John, 1859; Alexander Galt, 1860; Maria-Elizabeth and Robert Baldwin were born in Tours, France in 1867 and 1869.

Contemporary directories list the Ross home as being on Davenport Road. The gatehouse was on the north side of Davenport just west of Dufferin Street, and a long driveway (now McFarland Avenue) wound up to the main house at the northwest corner of today’s McFarland and Ashburnham avenues. The estate became one of Sir John A. Macdonald’s favourite retreats. Local legend says it also had a royal connection. Ross occasionally acted as trouble shooter for the Canadian government in Washington and London. He had an audience with Queen Victoria in 1858 when he suggested a royal visit to Canada. This led to the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, touring the colony in 1860, when he met Ross and may have visited his estate while at Toronto.

In 1866, John Ross took his wife and young family to the Loire Valley, “on account of the ill health of Mrs. Ross,”<sup>5c</sup> where they lived for most of next four years. Returning to Canada in 1870 when France was plunged into war with Prussia, Ross discovered that his business partner had embezzled thousands of dollars from clients’ accounts. The effort to repay the debts



***“Dwelling house for the Hnble John Ross . . .  
Cumberland & Storm Architects, August 1855.  
East Elevation.”***

This white-brick house featured a centre hall and about 20 rooms, including two or three parlours. It incorporated many Italianate design features, as well as carryovers from the Regency style, such as French doors and a wraparound verandah.

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proved too much for him, and John Ross died at his Davenport Road residence on 31 January 1871.<sup>5d</sup> He left directions that his children were to be educated in England.<sup>5e</sup> In 1872, Eliza Ross sold the Davenport property, and moved the family to London, where they settled.

Little is known about the new owner, Edward Henry Foster, except that he was of English origin and had served in the military. He and his wife took an active role in local life. In the early 1880s, "Major E. H. Foster, M. A."<sup>6</sup> sometimes took the second service at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Carlton, and was a trustee of school section 13, Davenport. Mrs. Foster, or "Lady Foster" as some locals called her because of her aristocratic airs, ran the Sunday school at St. Mark's. She also made regular, though usually unannounced, inspections of Davenport School, much to the chagrin of the teachers.

During the Fosters's occupancy, *Earlscourt* was the scene for parties of Toronto's social set. Cockfights were also held there in the 1890s and early 1900s. A vivid description of the *Earlscourt* estate during the Foster years is provided by Ethel Martyn, who lived at its gatehouse for about five years at the turn of the century when her father, John Paxton Jr., was the gardener.

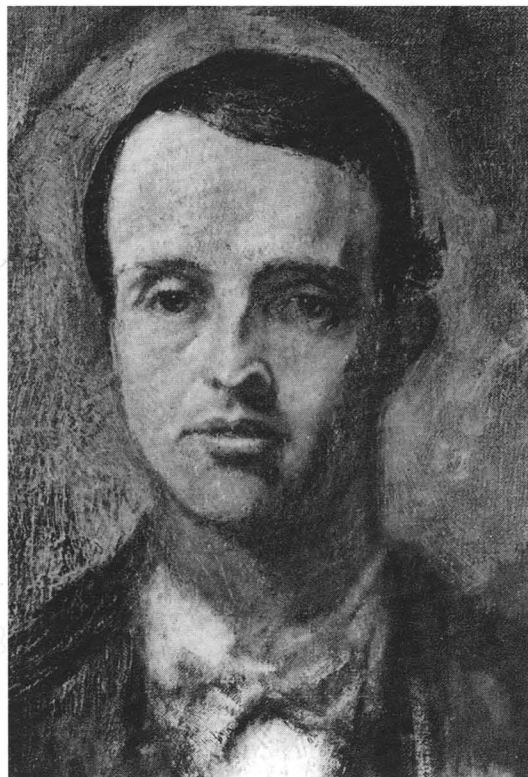
It being located on a high elevation with terraces sloping to a spacious and beautifully kept lawn, which ran down hill to the frog pond, into which a tiny stream of fresh spring water trickled. It was dotted here and there with pond lilies, under which darling fish revelled in quiet waters, in company with a few old croaking frogs. Beyond this, a flag stoned path studded with pine trees on either side, led down to the top of the Davenport hill, where a rustic summerhouse reposed and from which location, one was offered a very commanding view of the city and on a clear day the lake was visible, being at an elevation of about 80 feet. These paths wound their way mysteriously hither and thither around the estate with little rustic seats here and there. One of these parks led into a real English kitchen garden, completely surrounded with a cedar hedge, which was beautiful to behold. At the end of the garden were the greenhouses and conservatories, where all the flowers were grown for outside planting in the spring, beyond this was the beautiful orchard paddock and spacious pasture field, which extended to St. Clair Avenue, the northern portion being a thickly wooded grove of pine trees.<sup>7</sup>



**Augusta Elizabeth (Eliza) Baldwin Ross, 1831-1905**

This daguerreotype portrait was taken when Eliza Baldwin was 18 years old, two years before her marriage in 1851 to the Honourable John Ross, a Belleville lawyer and a rising politician. Named for her mother, she was the third of four children born to Robert and Augusta Elizabeth Baldwin. Eliza Ross died on 14 March 1905 at Campden Hill, London, England.  
NAC PA120584





**Robert Baldwin Ross (1869-1918)**

The youngest child of John and Eliza Ross became a writer, art critic, and artistic administrator. He is best remembered as being Oscar Wilde's "most constant and loyal friend,"<sup>9a</sup> supporting him during his trial, imprisonment, and exile for homosexual practices. Ross was Wilde's literary executor; his ashes are in Wilde's tomb in Paris. Portrait by Sir William Rothensten/Ross, frontispiece

Major and Mrs. Foster were still living at Earls court as late as 1906. However, "on account of objectionable smoke from a neighbouring manufactory"<sup>8</sup> (likely the Canada Foundry to the south), that year they allowed the Robins Realty Company to subdivide the "Earls court" property (as it was named on Plan 1360) into 201 generously-sized building lots. Bertram Noll Foster held the mortgage. Tarpaper shacks soon dotted the streets laid out on the plan - Hertel (now Ashburnham), Highland (now Peterborough), Auburn, Bird (now Rosemount), Norwood (now Mackay) and Elmwood (now Via Italia). A ten-acre block at the northwest corner of Dufferin Street and Davenport Road, where the *Earls court* mansion stood, was left intact. In 1910, that section was subdivided as "Foster Park," with Foster (now McFarland) Avenue created on the old carriage drive leading up to the house.

By 1909, the Foster home was vacant; apparently the couple had moved owing to Major Foster's ill-health (and probably the unpleasant new developments). For a few years, the servant quarters remained occupied, but before long the house was demolished. Writer Helen Merrill Egerton later lamented the demise of *Earls court*, "with its picturesque lodge by the roadside, its magnificent Norway spruces, its flowers and its fountain," and regretted that "In 1916 no vestige remained to indicate that such a paradise ever had existed."<sup>9</sup>

## Prospect Cemetery

In 1887, the Toronto General Burying Grounds Trustees paid \$29,000 to the estate of William E. Shields for his 106-acre farm bordering the north side of St. Clair Avenue (Lot 32, 3rd Concession) to establish Prospect Cemetery. The trustees already operated two other cemeteries, the Necropolis and Mount Pleasant, where they provided non-sectarian, non-consecrated burying grounds to anyone regardless of social standing or religious persuasion.

The City's rapid growth westward in the 1880s demanded another cemetery. Prospect Cemetery stretched to the 4th Concession Road (now Eglinton Avenue) between the modern streets of McRoberts and Harvie avenues. It was named *Prospect* because of its picturesque views of Lake Ontario and the Humber River, as well as of beautiful woods and surrounding countryside.

In 1889, the cemetery trustees commissioned Joseph Earnshaw of Cincinnati, Ohio to lay out the grounds and offered him \$2,000 upon completion of a planting plan. Earnshaw (1831-1906), a civil engineer and surveyor, was an experienced designer of burial grounds. His plan for Prospect Cemetery specified the species and placement of 47 types of deciduous and conifer-





***Davidge funeral at Prospect Park, about 1918.***  
Ethel Davidge is the child pictured on the left.  
Ethel Davidge/TPLAN



**Remembrance Day Service at Prospect Park showing the Cross of Sacrifice.**

The Veterans' Plot was laid aside in Prospect Cemetery during the First World War. The Imperial War Graves Commission erected a Cross of Sacrifice in the five-acre plot.  
Earls court Branch, Royal Canadian Legion

ous trees, and also drew up and named the system of winding drives, which remain remarkably intact although the names are no longer used. Earnshaw's plan also called for a small wooded valley called the "dingle" where there was to be a lake with islands, bridges and swans. The idea was never carried out and the area has since been filled in.<sup>10</sup> Originally, Prospect Cemetery had no City street running through it. Rogers Road and Kitchener Avenue were not completed across the cemetery until the late 1920s.

Architect William George Storm of Toronto designed the mortuary, completed in time for the opening of the cemetery in 1890. He also designed the handsome brick and stone receiving vault. It became obsolete with the introduction of grave digging machinery and was demolished in the 1970s to make room for additional plots. An office and the superintendent's apartment were added in the 1920s, a crematorium in 1967, and mausoleums in 1980 and 1986.

Many of the west end's most prominent citizens were buried at Prospect Cemetery. The first internment was that of Elizabeth Shields, daughter of William Shields, on May 17, 1890. Three of Bartholomew Bull's sons purchased Lot 12, and in 1894, 11 bodies, including those of Bartholomew and his wife, were moved to Prospect Cemetery from the cemetery at Davenport Methodist Church. Twenty-seven members of the extended Cooper family, including Royce and Campbell members, followed in 1907. David Rowntree, patriarch of the Rowntree clan; his son, William Rowntree, Davenport grocer and postmaster; local brickmaker George Stogdale Townsley, and painter J. E. H. MacDonald (1873-1932), an original member of the Group of Seven, are also interred there.

A special part of Prospect Cemetery is the Veterans' Plot, a five-acre garden laid aside during the First World War by the Imperial War Graves Commission. Another plot for veterans of the Second World War and other wars was established.

Prospect Cemetery has also served the local community in other ways. In the 1910s, children attending Hughes School and living east of the cemetery were allowed to use a narrow foot path with a stile at each end. During the Depression, homeless people lived in shacks or tents in the undeveloped section of the cemetery between Kitchener and Eglinton Avenues. People had allotment gardens as well. Local children often played at the cemetery, which they called "the Cem."

## Earls court - Dufferin/St. Clair Library

"They want a library," proclaimed the Toronto *Evening Telegram* in a 1913 article about the two-year struggle of Earls court residents to establish a public library in their community.<sup>11</sup>



**G. A. Reid murals at Earlsclourt Branch of Toronto Public Library, 1926.**

During 1926, George A. Reid and his assistants painted panels on four walls of Earlsclourt Branch library. The paintings represented various aspects of "Community Life": "The Family" (east wall); "The Story Hour" (west wall); "The Community" in three panels on the south wall - "Reading," "Nature Study," and "Philosophy;" and "A Sylvan Woodland Scene" (north wall). The murals were covered when the library was "modernized" in 1964.

MTRL 31030

Since 1911, delegations from the recently-annexed suburb had urged the Toronto Public Library Board (TPL) and the City Council to take action, and in January 1912 the Board agreed.

Earlscourt Methodist Church leased rooms for the library in its original church, a modest frame building at the northwest corner of Ascot and Boon avenues, and on the evening of December 19, 1913, TPL's 13th branch officially opened. Toronto Mayor Horatio Hocken and other dignitaries "delivered appropriate addresses." The new branch was called Earlscourt. George Locke, the chief librarian, said at the opening ceremonies: "It has been our custom in naming our Branch Libraries to preserve the names of the districts in which they have been placed."<sup>12</sup>

The branch's small collection was well used, and the community quickly outgrew the rental space. In 1919, Toronto City Council provided funds "by a special appropriation of \$100,000 for the purchase of sites and the erection of library buildings for the districts of Earlscourt and East Toronto."<sup>13</sup>

Land for the former was acquired on the east side of Dufferin Street in the first block south of St. Clair Avenue West. George Locke and architect Charles J. Gibson drew up plans for "a library suitable to the needs of the loyal and patriotic people of Earlscourt."<sup>14</sup> Construction began in 1920, and the library officially opened on January 27, 1921.

The total cost of the library, including site, building, and equipment, was almost \$79,000. The branch was built in a modified colonial style with a central hallway separating the adults' and the children's departments, and with three open fireplaces. In its first year of operation in the new building, Earlscourt Branch circulated 126,000 volumes, 70% more than in 1920.

Earlscourt Branch soon became a local landmark. In 1924, the St. Clair Horticultural Society awarded it a silver cup "for the best kept large grounds in the district."<sup>15</sup> Before long, the branch's interior was even more distinguished. In 1925, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts announced a competition for mural decoration schemes for public buildings. Painter George A. Reid (1860-1947), principal of the Ontario College of Art, captured first place for his design for the adult reading room of Earlscourt Library. In November 1926, the paintings, which represented various aspects of community life, were presented to the Library Board and the public was invited to view them.

Reid's former students painted other murals: Lorna Claire in the entrance hall in 1928 and Doris McCarthy in the children's club room in 1932. McCarthy illustrated "scenes

in heroic rendering from “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Jack the Giant Killer,” and other such children’s stories.”<sup>16</sup> She recalled in her autobiography, “The caretaker considered the weeks I put in on the job excessive since he had seen a man paint a whole billboard in a single day, but he was my only critic.”<sup>17</sup> Incredibly, all the murals were covered when the branch was “modernized” in 1964.

Other changes reflect changing neighbourhood needs. Books in Italian were added in the 1950s, and in 1962 an Italian librarian, Dr. Angela D. Lattanzi of Palermo, Sicily, worked at the branch for a year. Subsequently, an Italian-speaking person was appointed to the staff. In 1973, the name was changed to Dufferin/St. Clair to give the area’s many newcomers an accurate idea of the library’s location. In 1978-9, architect George Baird, assisted by Barry Sampson, designed additions on the north and south sides, and a new front entrance. Toronto Public Library opened a smaller branch, St. Clair/Silverthorn, to serve the district in 1981.

## Earlscourt Park

Earlscourt Park is located on one of the most historic properties in the area. The land was originally part of a 400-acre tract, Lots 32 and 33, 2nd Concession, purchased by George Cooper and his wife, Mary Gilbert, in the 1830s, and where they built their home, *Preston Villa*, around 1854. The property was left to their foster son, Allan Royce (1835-1902), who, in turn, passed it on to his children.

In 1910, Earlscourt was annexed to the City of Toronto and local residents petitioned the City to establish a public park in their community. Local developers offered to sell to the City a 50-acre section of the old Bull farm, at the southeast corner of St. Clair and Dufferin Street. The site would make an ideal natural park, at a very reasonable price. Not only did it have groves of oak and pine trees and two woodland streams, but the cost of the land (at \$1,000 to \$2,000 an acre) could be offset by selling the St. Clair Avenue frontage for businesses.<sup>18</sup> Nothing came of their proposal. With many vacant lots in the district, public parks and playgrounds were not considered urgent.

In 1916, Toronto City Council asked the Commissioner of Parks and the Assessment to rent the Royce property “for park purposes for one or more seasons.” Local residents called the property, Royce Park. Before long, the City decided to purchase the land for a park. During 1919, it negotiated with Colonel George Cooper Royce, Allan Royce’s eldest



son, about buying the property, which extended from Davenport Road to St. Clair Avenue, from the rear of the lots on Lansdowne Avenue to Station Road (now Caledonia Park Road). The negotiations failed, and in September 1919, the City passed bylaw 8189 to expropriate the Royce land. In March 1920, Colonel Royce sold the 32-acre estate, including *Preston Villa* to the City for \$330,000. Earlscourt Park was officially opened on October 23, 1920.

*Preston Villa* became the Earlscourt Park Community Clubhouse. It seemed fitting that the doors of this large rambling brick home, with its reputation for hospitality, would now be flung open to the public. It was used for wedding receptions, by a variety of organizations including the Orkney Shetland Society, Miss McLure's Dancing School, and the Earlscourt Boxing Club, as well as a residence for the park superintendent. (Henry Parfrey, an Earlscourt resident who had lobbied for the park for many years, was the first park superintendent.) The brick stables, which recalled the days when George Cooper bred prizewinning race horses, were also converted for park use.

In 1944, the Toronto Parks Commissioner described the facilities at Earlscourt Park: "It serves the recreation needs of the district and is equipped with four baseball diamonds (two softball and two hard ball, one of which is equipped with bleachers), a bowling green, ten hard tennis courts, a cricket crease, two soccer fields, two picnic areas, a field-house, a community clubhouse and a children's supervised playground equipped with wading pool. A skating rink and three hockey cushions are operated in the park during the winter season."<sup>19</sup>

The clubhouse building, considered dilapidated and a fire hazard, was closed in 1955 and subsequently demolished. In 1959, 50 temporary housing units on Caledonia Park Road fronting the park during the war years, were also torn down. The space was redeveloped for recreation.

Toronto City Council continued to appropriate funds for Earlscourt Park over the next two decades. In 1960, it approved construction of a swimming pool and dressing room building, at a cost not to exceed \$300,000. Ten years later, over \$1 million was appropriated for a recreation centre. Earlscourt Recreation Centre opened in 1980. Reflecting the Italian origin of many local residents, it included an indoor soccer field and indoor bocce courts. In May 1986, the centre was officially renamed the Joseph J. Piccininni Community

Recreation Centre, in honour of the alderman's 25 years of service to Toronto citizens. The park retained the name Earls court.

## Toronto's Third Little Italy

By 1881, almost 2,000 people of Italian origin lived in Canada, particularly in Montreal and Toronto. Italians have lived in the district for at least a century, John Zucchi documents in his history, *Italians in Toronto; development of a national identity, 1875-1935*. During the 1890s, Italians in Toronto started to move beyond their original settlements in the Ward (bounded by Queen, Yonge, College Streets and University Avenue) and around College and Grace Streets, to form a third Little Italy in the Dufferin Street - Davenport Road area.

These immigrants had come, not as Italian nationals, but as people from their specific villages and towns through a hometown immigration chain, or with the help of a hometown labour agent or *padrone*. They were mostly from Abruzzi in central Italy and Friuli in northeast Italy.

Railway labourers and construction workers were the earliest migrants to the new Italian neighbourhood. Many worked in Toronto Junction maintaining railways, installing sewers, and macadamizing dirt roads. Some of these newcomers lived in local boarding-houses. For example, before 1910 John Martello, a grocer from Lanciano, Italy, ran a boardinghouse on Dufferin Street near Davenport Road for moulders and other labourers from his hometown who worked at Canada Foundry.

Between 1900 and the First World War, 120,000 Italians entered Canada (primarily from the United States), the greatest number in 1913. About 80% were young males. The 1911 census of Italian-born in Toronto lists 2,200 males and 800 females. During the 1910s, both the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches offered special (and often competing) services to the area's Italian-speaking population. In 1914, the Methodist Church built the Dufferin Street Italian Mission at 1467 Dufferin Street, just south of Davenport Road. With the outbreak of the First World War, the ministers and many of the congregation returned to Italy.

The overwhelming majority of Italians are Roman Catholic, and in 1915, the Roman Catholic Church established an Italian mission, St. Clement, on Dufferin Street south of Davenport Road. Father Scafuro, pastor of the church, was well aware that his parish had a reputation for being "downright dangerous" by residents in Toronto's other Italian



***Italian Methodist Mission, about 1910.***

The Methodist Church undertook evangelical work among Italian immigrants. It offered kindergarten and sewing classes, and evening language instruction in Italian and English, as well as church services. The banner in the background translates from the Italian as "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your house will be saved."

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neighbourhoods. In 1924, he recalled, “Years ago it was not safe to pass by Beaver Avenue and Dufferin Street.”<sup>20</sup> He also saw the Methodists as the devil’s instrument and worked to stave off the Protestant onslaught. Only the basement of the church was finished when the church opened; in 1937 the superstructure was completed, the church having been renamed St. Mary of the Angels in 1936.

The First World War had its effect on the City’s Italian community. Italy entered the conflict on the side of the Allies in May 1915. This galvanized the City’s Italians, who then numbered about 10,000 people, to join the war effort, and for the first time Italians were accepted as partners with other Torontonians. Despite tighter immigration restrictions following the war, more than 29,000 Italians had entered Canada by 1930. Most settled in Toronto, working in construction, as food merchants, or artisans. Several lived on St. Clair Avenue, operating fruit and vegetable stores (mostly Sicilians) and other businesses. Historian Franca Iacovetta identified other pre-Second World War local Italian colonies: “In the Junction colony near Dupont Street and Old Weston Road, people from Apulia, Abruzzi, and Molise predominated. . . . Near Dufferin Street and Brandon Avenue could be found many from Abruzzi and Friuli.”<sup>21</sup>

Mussolini’s declaration of war against the Allies on June 10, 1940 had a devastating effect on the City’s Italian community. More than 200 Torontonians of Italian origin, including several local residents, were sent to internment camps for up to three years because of suspected Fascist leanings, largely unfounded.

One was contractor James Franceschini, who had come to Canada in 1905, first living on Dufferin Street. His multi-million dollar Dufferin Construction Company had built many of the province’s highways.

Another was Reverend Libero Sauro, minister of St. Paul’s Italian United Church, as the Italian Methodist mission was called following the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925. When released, he found that the United Church had almost rejected his congregation, that their church was no longer available, and they had to worship in the basement of another congregation outside the district.

Kenneth Bagnell noted in his book, *Canadese*: “It was a blow which the tiny congregation of 200 families - a minority within a minority - would never fully forget. In that experience, they symbolized Italians in Canada in the 1940s - leaderless, rejected and dejected.”<sup>22</sup>



***World Cup celebrations along St. Clair at St. Clair Gardens, 11 July 1982***

St. Clair Avenue's status as the heart of Toronto's Italian community was no more evident than on 11 July 1982 when Italy's Azzurri club won the country's first World Cup Soccer championship in 44 years. An estimated 200,000 Italian-Canadians converged on the street in a spontaneous horn-blowing, flag-waving, but very orderly, street party. At the time, it was the largest crowd ever recorded in Toronto. In the background is the Gibson Block, a group of stores and apartments at the northwest corner of St. Clair and St. Clair Gardens that J. R. Gibson, a local doctor, constructed on the site of John Robinson Bull's house in 1916.

Vincenzo Pietrapaolo



St. Paul's Italian United Church returned to the area in May 1949, opening a new building on the west side of Ossington Avenue, north of Geary Avenue.

Another 17,000 Italian Canadians, branded enemy aliens during the war, were subjected to mandatory registration, house searches and surveillance: none were ever charged. Many saw their businesses shunned.

Harry Rasky recalled that when Italy entered the war on Germany's side, Magani's grocery store on St. Clair was boycotted by many local residents: "It broke Mr. Magani's heart that the local Scots and English started their own personal blockade. As if Magani himself were bombing Britain. You really don't have to leave the block to find a world war."<sup>23</sup>

Following the Second World War, a widespread shortage of labour once again made Canada receptive to Italian immigration. Between 1951 and 1961, close to 90,000 Italians settled in Toronto. Another 33,000 Italians had come to Toronto by 1966; and by 1971, 39,000 more had arrived.<sup>24</sup> Over half were from southern Italy, mostly from the regions of Abruzzi, Molise, and Calabria.

Many settled in the St. Clair and Dufferin area, transforming the neighbourhood. In the 1950s, St. Clair Avenue West near Dufferin Street became Toronto's fastest-growing Italian area. In 1951, Italians were the district's second largest ethnic group (after the British), but they comprised only 7.5% of the population. Ten years later, almost 20,000 people or 42% of the neighbourhood's population were of Italian origin.

In the early 1950s, the neighbourhood's Italians continued to live mostly around Dufferin and Davenport at the bottom of the hill near St. Mary of the Angels Church. Before long, Italians had spread throughout the neighbourhood.

Like their counterparts elsewhere in Canada, many of the area's postwar Italian immigrants worked in construction; others opened fruit stores, barber shops, restaurants and other businesses. By the 1960s, sponsorship played a role in Italian immigration, with earlier immigrants sponsoring wives, children and other relatives. Family "chain migration" from Italy was so extensive that in 1958 Italy surpassed Britain as a source of immigrants.

The influx of so many Italian-speaking newcomers vastly changed the character of the neighbourhood. The Italian community established its own organizations. The Italian Canadian Recreation Club (or Brandon Hall) started in 1947 on Brandon Avenue as a home for the city's diverse Italian clubs and socials, and to foster a wider sense of community. Neighbourhood cafes and clubs also increased in the 1950s and 60s. Social



***St. Mary of the Angels Roman Catholic Church.***

Started in 1915 as St. Clement's Mission to serve Italian-speaking Roman Catholics, services were held in the basement of this building until 1936 when the cornerstone for the super-structure was laid. Located on the east side of Dufferin just south of Davenport Road, the church was designed by J. M. Cowan in a modern version of Italian medieval architecture. Both the church and the adjoining school were renamed St. Mary of the Angels in 1936.

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services agencies such as COSTI established branches in the district.

Gradually, other organizations and businesses extended services to the local Italian community. Toronto Public Library appointed an Italian-speaking librarian to Earls court Branch in the 1960s. It soon had the second largest collection of Italian books in the City's public library system. The St. Clair Theatre featured Italian films until it closed in the late 1970s. Earls court Park's Recreation Centre, built in 1980 and renamed the Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre in 1986, included an indoor soccer field and bocce courts. The City even changed the name of Elmwood Avenue to Via Italia in 1984.

Local Italians became politically active, representing the area at many government levels. Charles Caccia, for example, a native of Milan, Italy, became a City alderman in 1964, and was first elected to the House of Commons for Davenport in 1968. He was appointed minister of labour in 1981, the first Italian Canadian minister.<sup>25</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church played an important role in the life of St. Clair's burgeoning Italian community. St. Mary of the Angels, the area's original Italian national parish, had 2,500 members by 1961. Because of the postwar influx of Italians, the Archdiocese embarked on a major expansion programme. A second Italian national church, St. John Bosco, opened in 1961 at 402 Westmount Avenue, in the northern fringe of the district. St. Nicholas of Bari took over the Church of the Nazarene (established 1935) at 1277 St. Clair Avenue West, and opened the renovated building as an Italian parish church on in 1967.

St. Clare Church, the area's first territorial parish, became a bilingual church in the 1960s with services in English and Italian. Some older non Italian-speaking parishioners protested. They felt that with several other churches in the area offering Italian services, the newcomers were being given too much.

One of the most colourful events that the Italian immigrants brought to the neighbourhood in the 1950s was the *festa* celebration. Local churches sponsored elaborate festivities in honour of favourite patron saints. The events included a religious procession through local streets, then a mass, followed by merrymaking at a banquet and at games.

By the 1960s, St. Clair Avenue began to replace College Street as the business and cultural centre of the City's Italian community. The first businesses that catered to this clientele were food and service shops. These were soon followed by fashionable clothing boutiques, restaurants, specialty shops, and outdoor cafes.

By the 1980s, St. Clair Avenue between Dufferin Street and Lansdowne Avenue had been transformed into one of the most successful commercial strips in the City. The opening of a major branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana of Canada, a subsidiary of one of Italy's leading banks, on St. Clair at Elmwood (Via Italia) in 1984 showed the street's importance as the commercial hub of Metropolitan Toronto's large Italian-Canadian community of more than 500,000 people.

In the late 1980s, a local business improvement association erected street signs proclaiming the section of St. Clair between Dufferin and Caledonia as *Corso Italia*, the Italian Way.

Italian immigration to Canada declined in the 1970s, as economic conditions improved in Italy. By the mid-1980s, as the children of immigrants achieved more education and took important positions in professional and semi-professional occupations, some people of Italian origin moved out of the neighbourhood to more prosperous residential suburbs such as Woodbridge.

"The axis along which they moved was Dufferin Street; when they reached Lawrence Avenue they generally moved westward,"<sup>26</sup> according to Franca Iacovetta in her study, *Such hardworking people; Italian immigrants in postwar Toronto*. But, as writer Rosemary Harris noted in 1984, Italian-Canadians continued to return to the old St. Clair neighbourhood: "The street holds such a wealth of attractions that even the most prosperous Italian-Canadians who have moved on to mansions in the suburbs come back every weekend."<sup>27</sup>

In 1991, Italians were still the area's single largest ethnic group with 26% of the local population and 8,400 people, but their proportion had declined substantially in 30 years. About 70% of local residents of Italian ethnic origin still spoke Italian at home, indicating a community of many first-generation Canadians.

## Garrison Creek

Garrison Creek is one of several streams that used to run through Toronto. It was formed by the receding glacial Lake Iroquois. The headwaters were located north of present-day St. Clair Avenue; the stream flowed down the hill to cross Davenport Road and meander through a broad ravine to Lake Ontario. Named for its proximity to the garrison that Simcoe built in 1793 on the present site of Fort York, the Garrison Creek watershed is bor-

dered roughly by Dufferin Street, Spadina Avenue, Lakeshore Boulevard, and St. Clair Avenue. The east branch rose about 300 feet above the lake in Lot 27, Concession 3, near the present site of Humewood School at Cherrywood and Valewood avenues. The west branch began in a shallow bowl of land in Lot 31, Concession 3, southeast of the intersection of today's Earls court and Morrison avenues. The two branches probably joined between the present Oakwood and Mount Royal avenues near Davenport Road.

Garrison Creek was valued by local aboriginals and European settlers for its water and wildlife, and its recreational enjoyments. Bartholomew Bull named his farm, "Springmount," for the creek. Each fall he would dam a section near the northeast corner of Davenport and today's Dufferin Street so that in winter, local children could skate and play shinny on the flooded, frozen water.<sup>27a</sup> In the 1890s, Margaret Hendrick Paxton kept ducks in the creek behind the family house on the west side of the present Winona Drive.

With increased settlement, Garrison Creek became an open sewer, and so polluted with sewage and refuse that it was a public health hazard. The creek began to be buried in the 1880s, with water diverted into underground sewers, and the Garrison Ravine filled with refuse and excavation soil. The last visible remnants in Christie Pits disappeared around 1912 and by the mid-1920s, the creek had been fully buried.

The 1990s saw a renewed interest in the old creek. The City of Toronto passed a resolution in 1996, calling for the revitalization of the Garrison Creek Ravine System. The Garrison Creek Headwaters Committee, the local arm of the Garrison Creek Community Group, undertook a number of projects to increase public awareness and understanding of the creek's place in its bio-region. It organized tours and meetings, installed markers, and advocated replacing storm and sanitary sewers with underground reservoirs to stop untreated sewage flowing into the lake.



***Garrison Creek marker, 1998***

The Garrison Creek Headwaters Committee installed brass markers with this design in August 1998 in the sidewalks where the creek once crossed St. Clair Avenue and Glenholme Avenue. The name, "Garrison Creek," was also placed in the pavement at several intersections along St. Clair such as at Lauder and Alberta. A map of Garrison Creek is on page 133.



## APPENDIX: ORIGIN OF LOCAL STREET NAMES

**Ascot:** The famous racecourse in Ascot, England laid out in 1771 by order of Queen Anne, who inaugurated the Royal Ascot Meeting which still runs each June. The street was so named in a 1889 subdivision plan of John Robinson Bull's farm, which created other streets named for English horse races, Derby (now Hope) and St. Leger avenues.

**Alberta:** Possibly after the province, named by the Marquis of Lorne, Governor-General of Canada 1878-83, for his wife H.R.H. Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The street was laid out in 1890 as Bartholomew Avenue, for Bartholomew Bull. (See Springmount.)

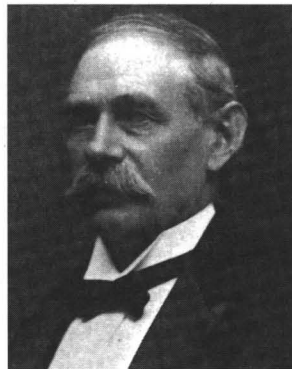
**Appleton:** For *Appleton*, the home at the northeast corner of Appleton and St. Clair Avenue belonging to John Paxton Sr. (d.1896), a florist and gardener. Appleton Avenue was opened through his apple orchard. Paxton was born in Alloa, Scotland, and came to Canada in 1858. He lived in Quebec for 13 years, then relocated to Toronto in 1870 to garden for D. L. Macpherson at his *Chestnut Park* estate. In 1877, he purchased a L-shaped property on Lot 29, 3rd Concession: five acres fronted the north side of St. Clair and five acres were on today's Oakwood Avenue. Here he operated a successful fruit and market garden. Paxton was a trustee for school section 13, Davenport in 1882, a director of the Toronto Belt Line Railway Company, and a justice of the peace until his death.

**Boon:** Possibly for C. J. Boon, who in 1889 when the street was so named, was a real estate and insurance broker at 4 Dundas Street West in the Junction, and the secretary of the West Toronto Junction Liberal Conservative Association. Boon served on Toronto Junction Council from January 1894 to April 1895, when he resigned.

**Connolly:** Probably for the Connolly family, early settlers in the district. Mrs. Eliza Connolly (1857-1923) was born in Lincolnshire, England and joined Davenport Methodist Church in 1878. She had four sons and four daughters. Her husband, Edward Connolly, was involved in the Loyal Orange Lodge. The street was laid out in 1855-56 as Carlton Street. To avoid confusion with the downtown street, its name was changed to Connolly in 1909 when West Toronto was annexed by Toronto.

**Crang:** The Crang family, building contractors/land developers. James Crang (1841-1928) came from Devon, England to Toronto in 1867, and started the family business that spanned several generations. About 1906, he bought land on the north side of St. Clair between today's Winona and Crang avenues (Lot 29, 3rd Concession) from Dudley Jessopp; the 1893 house stands at 15 Robina Avenue. Over the years the family developed this property. Part of it was subdivided into building lots in the 1920s, when Crang Avenue was created. One son, Jethro Crang (1867-1942), built a block of stores and apartments along St. Clair in the 1910s. Behind them in the 1920s, he developed Oakwood Park Skating Rink and Athletic Ground and the Oakwood Swimming Club. He also built many houses on Glenhurst Avenue and Roseneath Gardens, and in Oakwood, where in the 1920s he constructed his own home at the northeast corner of Regal Road and Oakwood (demolished in 1955 for apartments). Another son, James Crang Jr. (1873-1928), built the Oakwood Theatre on Oakwood Avenue just north of St. Clair in 1918.

**Davenport:** It gave access to *Davenport*, the home of Adjutant John McGill on Lot 25, 2nd Concession, and the first house on the Davenport Hill in 1797. McGill may have named it after a friend, a Major Davenport, apparently then stationed at the Fort York. Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Wells (1773-1853) purchased the farm in 1821 and constructed a larger *Davenport* on the high ground overlooking Davenport Road, just



**James Crang (1841-1928)**  
Crang, 34

northeast of today's Bathurst Street. Scadding described the house as "picturesque and chateau-like."<sup>28</sup> Wells was born in London, England. He served as an officer during the Napoleonic Wars, receiving several medals for bravery. With the return of peace in 1815, Wells came to Canada. He became a half-pay officer in 1817, and sold his commission in 1827. Wells received many appointments and directorships including the Legislative Council (1820), the Bank of Upper Canada (1822), the Welland Canal Company (1825), and the Executive Council (1830). He was elected first president of the St. George's Society in 1836. In 1827, Wells was appointed bursar of King's College (University of Toronto); subsequently he became its registrar as well as treasurer of Upper Canada College. His business methods were "hopelessly sloppy," and he was fired from his King's College positions in 1839.<sup>29</sup> The Wells family continued to live at *Davenport* until 1913, when the old house was demolished.

**Dovercourt:** *Dover Court* was the name of the estate and two homes of Richard Lippincott Denison (1814-1878), located on sections of Park Lots 25 and 26 between today's Queen and Bloor streets in the vicinity of what is now Dovercourt Road. They were named for his grandmother's house in Essex, England.

**Dufferin:** Right Honourable Frederick Temple Blackwood, 1st Marquis of Dufferin and Ava (1826-1902), who was Governor-General of Canada from 1872 to 1878. Dufferin Street was so named by the City of Toronto in 1876. Prior to that it was known as the Side Line.

**Dundas:** For Sir Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville, Home Secretary from 1791-4, the British government official responsible for the colonies. Simcoe named the road for his boss.

**Dupont:** George Dupont Wells (1814-1854) was a son of Joseph Wells. (See *Davenport*.) Sections of Dupont Street were called Van Horne and Royce until 1947. Van Horne was the name of the section from Ossington to Emerson. It was named for Sir William Van Horne (1843-1915), president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Royce was named for the Royce family who inherited most of the Cooper estate on Lot 33, 2nd Concession in the 1880s.

**Earlscourt:** The street was so named in a 1889 subdivision plan of lands north of St. Clair Avenue, west of Dufferin Street. The developers probably named the street for *Earlscourt*, a 50-acre estate that was on the west side of Dufferin Street between Davenport Road and St. Clair Avenue from the mid-1850s until the early 1900s. The source of the estate's name is controversial. Local legend maintains that the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, suggested the name Earlscourt during his visit to Canada in 1860.<sup>30</sup> Another source suggested that Major Edward Henry Foster, the estate's second owner, named it after his English home near Aldershot, the famous military training ground.

**Ford:** William Henry Ford was the postmaster at Carlton Post Office from 1898 to 1907. The post office was located in his store at the northwest corner of Davenport Road and today's Ford Street. Ford also served on West Toronto Junction Council as a councillor in 1899 to 1909. The street was laid out in 1855-56 as King Street; its name was changed to Ford Street in 1909 when West Toronto was annexed to Toronto.

**Geary:** George Reginald Geary, (1873-1954), mayor of Toronto from January 1910 until his resignation in October 1912. Born in Strathroy, Ontario, Geary was educated and subsequently successfully practised law in Toronto. He was elected to the Toronto school board in 1903, and was on Toronto City Council from 1904 to 1907, becoming a controller in 1909. Geary resigned from the mayoralty to become corporation counsel for Toronto, a position he held until 1917. From 1925 to 1935, he was Conservative MP for Toronto South, becoming the minister of justice in R. B. Bennett's cabinet in 1935. He ran but lost in the 1935 and 1940 federal elections. Geary died in Toronto in 1954. The street was first laid out in 1885 and 1887 by different



**William Ford**  
Tribune Souvenir edition, 1901, 1.



**George Reginald Geary**  
Greater Toronto and the Men who Made it, 25



**Thomas Gilbert Junior**



**Marquis of Lansdowne**

developers. The earlier section was called Arlington Avenue and the later extension, Main Street. Both parts were changed to Geary Avenue in 1910 when the area was annexed to Toronto.

**Gilbert:** Thomas Gilbert Junior (1843-1892), who in 1868 bought most of Lot 33, 3rd Concession from his uncle, George Cooper, paying \$1,600. He farmed the property but during the 1880s, according to a contemporary source, "the rapid growth of Toronto made this property very valuable for building purposes."<sup>32</sup> In 1888, Thomas Gilbert and his wife, Jane Gough, sold the farm to Alexander McRoberts and other developers for \$57,780. There, they laid out a subdivision called Prospect Park in 1889, naming, among others, Gilbert Avenue. Gilbert retired from farming, and moved to *Aikenshaw Lodge*, Toronto Junction, the former home of Colonel E. W. Thomson. Gilbert was a trustee of York Township School Section No. 13, Davenport for six years. He and his wife had 13 children. Other Gilberts also lived in the district. Thomas Gilbert Senior (1804-53) emigrated from Ireland to Canada in the early 1830s and was a cattle dealer. He died, leaving three children. His daughter, Sarah Jane (Jennie) Gilbert (1840-1927), married George Cooper's foster son, Allan Royce (1835-1902), in 1863, and they inherited the Cooper estate in the 1880s. The second son, George James Gilbert (1846-1910), married Emma Mary Rowntree, a daughter of David Rowntree Senior, and lived at 270 Davenport Road. He served on West Toronto Junction Council in 1889, and 1895-8. (See McRoberts.)

**Gillespie:** Possibly for Walter Gillespie, a physician, who lived at 57 17th Street (now Mavety Street) in 1889, and who was a councillor for Toronto Junction in 1893 and 1894.

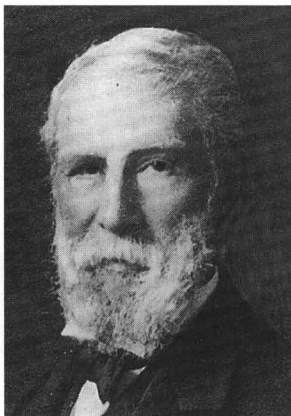
**Hendrick:** For the family of Myles and Mary Hendrick who operated a market garden in the area. Myles Hendrick emigrated to Canada from County Wexford, Ireland in the mid-1850s, and married Mary Kennedy, a native of Tipperary, Ireland. In 1877, he purchased 6.5 acres on the north side of St. Clair Avenue between the present Atlas and Arlington avenues (Lot 28, 3rd Concession). By 1885, he had acquired additional property on the south side of St. Clair, bounded by today's Alberta and Greensides avenues (Lot 28, 2nd Concession), owning some 18 acres in all. Hendrick planted fruit trees on his properties, and soon had one of the best orchards in the district, employing as many as fifty pickers during the fruit season.<sup>33</sup>

**Italia:** The street was laid out in a 1906 subdivision plan as Elmwood Avenue. The City of Toronto changed the name to Via Italia in 1984 (bylaw 819-84) as a result of a petition initiated by the Italian community and street residents.

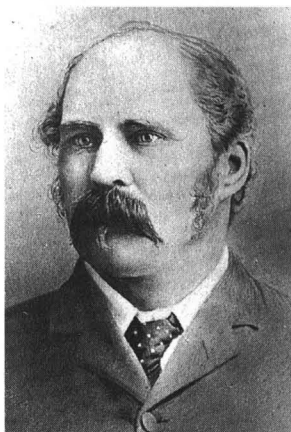
**Kingsley:** Thomas Kingsley had a market garden on eight acres of Lot 33, 2nd Concession, given to him by George Cooper. Born in Wexford, Ireland, Kingsley came to Toronto in 1840 and worked on George Cooper's farm for 27 years before establishing his own business. The two men had a falling out at the time of the Fenian Raids around 1866. Cooper horsewhipped and fired Kingsley as foreman, accusing him of being the ringleader in a plot to have the Irish-Catholic farm labourers take over the Protestant Cooper's 400-acre farm. In 1887, Kingsley subdivided his property on the west side of Cooper Avenue (now Symington), north of the CPR tracks, into 32 building lots. Plan 771 named, among others, Kingsley Avenue.

**Lansdowne:** Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquis of Lansdowne (1845-1927), was governor-general of Canada from 1883 to 1888. The street was named in 1883 by Village of Parkdale Council bylaw 138. The section of today's Lansdowne Avenue between the present Dupont and Davenport roads was laid out in 1888 as Mackenzie Avenue, named for William Innes Mackenzie, secretary of the Toronto House Building Association which had subdivided the property (plan M20, M58). The name was changed to Lansdowne in 1910 when the area was annexed to Toronto.

- Lappin:** Possibly for a Mr. Lappin, one of George Cooper's farmhands, who was given property south of Davenport Road. According to Colonel George Cooper Royce, Lappin invented the Lappin car coupling, a device for attaching train cars.<sup>34</sup>
- Laughton:** Peter Laughton, a native of Bedford, England, who came to Canada in 1867. In about 1881, he purchased 27 acres in Carlton, described as "the most extensive gardens about the city."<sup>35</sup> Originally Laughton's house stood at the corner of the present Laughton Avenue and Connolly Street. Today the house still stands, but on the north side of Davenport Road (no. 1960) between Osler Street and Laughton Avenue, where it was moved when Laughton sold his property. In 1906, he took advantage of rising real estate values and sold his market garden to contractor John Mullin. In the 1890s, Laughton owned the Subway Hotel at the southwest corner of Keele and Vine streets. Laughton was active in local politics. In 1889 he was 1st vice-president of the West Toronto Junction Liberal Conservative Association. With the exception of 1895 when he was voted out of office, Laughton served continuously on West Toronto Junction Council for 11 years, as deputy-reeve in 1889, councillor from 1890 to 1899, and mayor in 1900. A devout Anglican, in 1909, he gave a lot on the east side of Dufferin Street just north of St. Clair Avenue for St. Chad's Mission Church.
- Lindner:** The Lindner family. John Lindner emigrated to Canada from Germany in 1854, and four years later settled at Carlton where he worked as a weaver. His son, Edward Lindner, trained as a carpenter and established a contracting and building business in the village in 1879. By 1885, he had constructed almost 52 houses, as well as a three-storey building, known as Lindner's Hall, at the southwest corner of Davenport Road and Edmund Street (now Osler Street). It contained two public halls as well as a general store, barns, and a large dining room for lodgers. About 1886 his business collapsed and Lindner's Hall was not listed in *Charlton's Directory* of 1889. The building was still standing in 1997, although considerably altered. Edward Lindner also built a magnificent home for himself at the northeast corner of Davenport Road and King Street (now Ford Street), but sold it in about 1886. Francis and Isabella Heydon, the new owners, named the house *Heydon Villa*. Lindner Street was so named by Edward Lindner in an 1880's subdivision plan.
- Lightbourn:** Possibly for E. T. Lightbourn, who in 1889 was manager of the Ontario Industrial Loan and Investment Company, which subdivided the Nairn estate north of St. Clair that year. Lightbourn Avenue was so named in an 1885 subdivision plan.
- McRoberts:** Alexander McRoberts, secretary-treasurer of the Toronto and Mimico Land Company and a resident of St. George Street, who was one of a group of investors who paid Thomas Gilbert \$57,780 in 1888 for his 200-acre farm on Lot 33, 3rd Concession. The developers laid out a subdivision called Prospect Park in 1889, naming, McRoberts Avenue. (See Gilbert.)
- Morrison:** Possibly for Angus Morrison (1822-1882), mayor of Toronto from 1876 to 1878. Morrison was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and came to Canada with his family in 1830. He became a well-known lawyer in Toronto, and was elected to City Council as alderman for St. James' Ward in 1853 and 1854. Subsequently, Morrison sat in the Parliament of Canada, first as member for North Simcoe (1854-63) and then for Niagara (1864-74). He died in Toronto. The street was so named in a 1907 subdivision plan.



**Alexander Nairn**  
MTLR/JRR T34666



**Edmund Boyd Osler**  
MTLR/JRR T16796

**Nairn:** Alexander Nairn (1832-1914), who in 1879 purchased the southwest corner of Lot 31 and the southeast corner of Lot 32, both in the 3rd Concession. This had been the farm of Edward D. Grossman, where produce was grown for the Rossin House, Toronto's largest and most luxurious hotel until it burned down in November 1862. A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Nairn came to Canada in 1857, and in 1858 started business as a grain commissioner and general merchant at Rockwood, Wellington County, Ontario. In 1874, he moved to Toronto and worked as a contractor. Four years later, he formed a partnership with his brother: A. & S. Nairn, wharfingers and coal and wood merchants. Its offices were in the Imperial Bank Building on Adelaide Street, and a shipping dock, Nairn's Wharf, was near the foot of Church Street. In 1884, the partnership was dissolved, and Alexander Nairn retired. He sold the 100-acre property along St. Clair Avenue to the Ontario Industrial Loan and Investment Company in 1889 for \$76,000. That year, it subdivided the property, creating Nairn Avenue.

**Old Weston** see Weston

**Osler:** Sir Edmund Boyd Osler (1845-1924), financier, began his business career at the Bank of Upper Canada and when that institution failed, he entered into partnership with Henry Pellatt, father of Sir Henry Pellatt of Casa Loma fame. Later he formed the firm of Osler & Hammond, financiers and stock brokers. In the 1890s, Osler held a large number of West Toronto Junction bonds and when the town ran into financial difficulties and could not pay interest on the bonds, his committee forced the town to sell 1,800 lots of land at a 1896 tax sale to raise funds. Junction historian A. B. Rice described the action as "a bit of legalized daylight robbery."<sup>36</sup> Osler represented Toronto West as a Conservative member in the House of Commons from 1896 to 1917. He was knighted in 1912. He held a number of important directorships including the CPR. The section of the street north of Davenport Road was laid out in 1855-56 as Queen Street. Its name was changed to Osler in 1909, after West Toronto was annexed to Toronto. The section below Davenport Road was called Edmund until 1896, when the City of Toronto changed it to Osler.

**Rogers:** Stephen Rogers came from Teignmouth, Devon. In 1876, he built one of the first houses in the district, near the corner of what is now Rogers Road and Oakwood Avenue.

**Rowntree:** For the Rowntree family. David Rowntree (1820-1904) was born in Cumberland County, England, and came to Canada in 1832 with his parents and six brothers and sisters, settling in Etobicoke. In 1844, he established a 100-acre farm in the middle part of Lot 35, 3rd Concession and soon built a house on the east side of (Old) Weston Road, south of the present Rogers Road. After it burned down, he built again in 1887 at the northeast corner of the present Old Weston Road and Rowntree Avenue. Rowntree imported and raised prize-winning Clydesdales, and judged cattle and horses at exhibitions. He was active at Davenport Methodist Church, was elected school trustee for Section 13 in 1874, and served as pathmaster for York County in the mid-1880s. Rowntree married twice and had 20 children, many of whom were associated with the area for many years. William Rowntree (1865-1926) ran a grocery store on Davenport Road, and was Davenport postmaster from 1888 to 1908. The family is possibly Scandinavian in origin, their name coming from the Rowan tree, a sacred Viking symbol. Contrary to popular belief, the family is not related to the chocolate Rowntrees. The street was laid out in a 1911-12 subdivision plan of Lot 34, 3rd Concession as Rountree Avenue. The name was corrected to Rowntree in 1913.

**St. Clair:** Formerly the 3rd Concession Road. The Grainger family, market gardeners at Deer Park (Yonge and St. Clair), originated the street's name, but there are two versions as to how this happened. In 1970, Victor

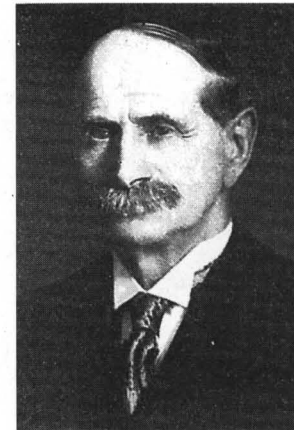


Grainger recalled that, in the late 19th century, his grandfather's family rented a farm near what is now the southeast corner of Avenue Road and St. Clair Avenue. His sons, Edwin and Albert, had not been given middle names. Wanting to remedy the situation, they adopted the names of two characters in the play, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which had played in Toronto. Victor's father became Edwin Norton Grainger and Albert chose St. Clare though spelling it "St. Clair" as it had been printed in theatre programs. As a joke, they nailed two signs with these names near Yonge Street. The St. Clair sign survived weather and time, and the name came to be accepted for the 3rd Concession Road. Very few residents realized the spelling was wrong.<sup>37</sup> Ethel Paxton Martyn tells a slightly different version of the story in her 1934 reminiscences. The street was so named by Albert Grainger, who as a young man was very popular. Both he and his brother, Edwin Grainger, were members of the Queen's Own Rifles. Albert was a bugler and used to play in military plays at the old opera house. The boys dated young show girls, always using incognitos. Albert chose the oddest name one could imagine, "St. Clair."<sup>38</sup>

**Silverthorn:** After the Silverthorn family. Aaron Silverthorn, a Loyalist from New Jersey who settled in Etobicoke Township as a yeoman and a miller, purchased Lot 34, 3rd Concession in 1834 for £750. His son, Francis, inherited the farm in 1872 and continued to cultivate the 200-acre property. Local historian William Perkins Bull described him as a "quaint amateur physician whose hobby was hygiene, who called the teapot a "she-devil" and who would not eat cake or bread containing salt."<sup>39</sup> He grew wheat, tall white clover and raised bees to produce salt-free "Silverthorn's Honey and Hardtack." It enjoyed a wide sale and was regarded as a dietetic cure for many ills.<sup>40</sup> The Provident Land Company subdivided part of the property into building lots in 1911 (Plan 1626), creating Silverthorn Avenue. According to one local history: "Dominating the scene on the high land at the corner of Blackthorn Avenue and Hillary Avenue (now Rogers Rd.) stood the farm house and orchard of the Silverthorn family from which the district got its name."<sup>41</sup>

**Springmount:** After *Springmount*, the house built in 1830 by Bartholomew Bull (1791-1878) and said to be the first brick house in York Township. Bull probably chose this name because two branches of Garrison Creek flowed near the homestead on the northern 100 acres of Lot 30, 2nd Concession. *Springmount* and a coach house were built on the north side of Bull's (Davenport) Road just west of today's Springmount Avenue; the barns and stables were south of the road. This *Springmount* was demolished in the 1880s, and a new *Springmount* was built near the northwest corner of the estate, near the southeast corner of St. Clair and Dufferin. The street was so named in an 1890 subdivision plan by Bartholomew Bull's sons, John Perkins, Edward and Thomas Henry.

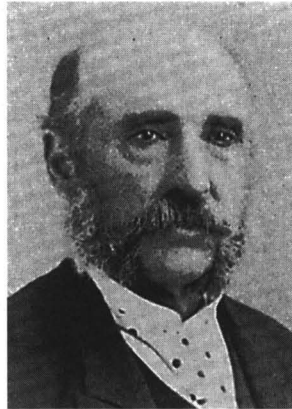
**Townsley:** George Stogdale Townsley (1829-1904), a native of Yorkshire England, first established a brick and tile business with his father in the village of Yorkville in the 1850s. During that decade, he also made large quantities of brick on George Cooper's farm used in the construction of *Preston Villa* and other local buildings. In 1869, he moved west to Carlton and founded a brickyard on the west side of (Old) Weston Road, north of St. Clair Avenue (Lot 35, 3rd Concession). By the mid-1880s, Townsley employed about 20 men who produced about two million bricks annually, and an equal number of sewer pipes. Townsley was an active member of Davenport Methodist Church, being a trustee and a Sunday school superintendent. His son, George Henry Townsley, was born in Carlton in 1876. By the 1890s he had joined the firm, looking after the pottery side of the business while his father handled the bricks. He took over the



**William Rowntree**  
Spadunk, 233



**David Rowntree Senior**  
Spadunk, 233



**George S. Townsley**  
Spadunk, 275

company after his father retired in about 1901. The Townsleys lived at *Stogdale Place*, a comfortable brick house (demolished) on the west side of (Old) Weston Road south of today's Turnberry Avenue. The street was originally laid out in 1857 as Victoria Street. The name was changed to Townsley in 1909 when West Toronto was annexed to Toronto.

**Talbot:** Probably for the Talbot family. Henry Alfred Talbot (b. 1871) joined Davenport Methodist Church in 1903 and subsequently had many important church positions, including superintendent of the Sunday school, 1910-25. His son, Charles Alfred, enlisted in the Officers Training Corps, but did not serve overseas during the First World War.

**Turnberry:** After Turnberry Castle perched high on the cliffs above the Forth of Clyde in Scotland, and the birthplace of Robert Bruce, hero of Bannockburn, July 11, 1274. The Toronto street was so named in a 1911-12 subdivision plan.

**Weston:** Weston Road connected the village of Weston to York (later Toronto). A portion of Weston Road may have been the aboriginal Humber Trail, widened by settlers about 1811. Originally called Weston Road, the section described in this book was changed to Old Weston Road in 1948.

**Winona:** According to John Martyn, a descendent of Myles Hendrick on whose property the street was opened, the name was suggested by Mrs. Fanny van Zant, nee Fanny Coates. The Coates were Blacks and pioneers in the district. Coates Avenue, which runs off Winona Drive north of St. Clair, was opened through their property. Fanny named Winona Drive to honour her son's wife, Winona van Zant. The street was called Ossington until 1929 and 1930, when the City of Toronto renamed it Winona. Ossington was retained for the section below Davenport Road.

# FOSTER PARK

## THE CHOICE OF THE KING

### Historical and Descriptive

King Edward, then the Prince of Wales, selected Foster Park, the Home of Col. Foster, as one of his stopping places during his stay in Toronto in 1864.

It is truly a regal site, well wooded with some fine old trees, sitting on the brow of the hill high above the western part of the city, overlooking Lake Ontario, and with a bracing atmosphere that is always pure and healthy.

Its unsurpassed natural beauty, unrivalled location, and nearness to the city, make it an ideal spot for a fine home.



### THE PROPERTY

Foster Park is situated at the junction of Davenport and Dufferin Streets.

It comprises 10 acres of the choicest land now available in north-western Toronto for medium class residential purposes, and is bounded on the north by St. Clair Avenue, west by Gilbert Estate, south by Road, and east by Dufferin Street, and is within City limits.

This property is within a stone's throw of many big industries.

Street Cars pass the property on Davenport Road, making quick connections with all parts of the city.

**Don't Miss This Opportunity** to secure a Fine Home, a Good Investment, or a Safe Speculation.  
**Sale Begins SATURDAY AFTERNOON** at our Branch Office, cor. Davenport Road and Dufferin Street. Take Dovercourt Car to end of line and walk north to the property. If more convenient for you, call at the HEAD OFFICE, cor. Adelaide and Victoria Streets. Plans can be seen to-night and Saturday at Head Office.



### PRICES

The lots are 50-foot frontage by a depth of 110 to 170. The prices average about \$20 per front foot, with a few choice locations a bit higher.

The whole section is laid out in modern style, with winding roadways, etc., and the reasonable restrictions on each lot warrant an exceptional class of residences being erected.

The lots are bound to advance rapidly.

## A Regal Residential Park

AT ONCE THE CHOICEST AND MOST ATTRACTIVE IN TORONTO



PLAN OF FOSTER PARK. Davenport Cars run past the Property

# ROBINS LIMITED

22 Adelaide Street East  
 Phone 7171 Main Toronto

Over 10,000 Satisfied Customers are our best references

Advertisement for building lots on the old Ross/Foster estate, Toronto Daily Star, 4 March 1910

The "Historical" section of this ad contains several inaccuracies or unsubstantiated statements. The Prince of Wales toured Canada in 1860, not 1864. At that time, John Ross owned the Davenport/Dufferin-area estate, not Edward Henry Foster who did not acquire it until 1872. While it is highly likely that the Prince visited the Ross property while in Toronto from 7 - 10 September 1860 (for it was John Ross who had suggested a royal visit to Canada in an audience with Queen Victoria in Britain in 1858), nothing documenting this was found. Pictured here is the house known as *Earlscourt*, which stood at the northwest corner of today's McFarland and Ashburnham avenues, with the front entrance facing east. It was demolished sometime between 1910 and 1916.

MTRL

## ENDNOTES

### Part I: Development of the St. Clair West Area

1. A. P. Coleman, *The Pleistocene of the Toronto Region (including the Toronto interglacial formation)* (Toronto: H. H. Hall, printer to the King, 1933), 32.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, 38.
4. Samuel Thompson, *Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer For the Last Fifty Years [1833-1883]: an autobiography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 209.
5. Letter from C. J. Manser to William Perkins Bull, 12 December 1934, William Perkins Bull Collection, Box 28, File 562, AUCC.
6. Henry Scadding, *Toronto of Old, Abridged* and edited by F. H. Armstrong, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), 300.
7. Elizabeth Simcoe, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe, Wife of the First Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Upper Canada, 1792-6*. With notes and a biography by J. Ross Robertson (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 196.
8. Robert Gourlay, *Statistical Account of Upper Canada*, 2 vols., (London: Simpkin, 1822).
9. Edith Firth, *The Town of York, 1815-1834* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 306.
10. William Perkins Bull, *Spadunk* (Toronto: George J. McLeod for The Perkins Bull Foundation, 1935), 236.
11. John Ross Robertson, *Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, 6 vols., (Toronto: J. R. Robertson, 1894-1914), 2: 733.
12. Ibid, 4: 420.
13. The Act of Union of 1841 united the Provinces of Upper Canada and Lower Canada into the Province of Canada. The two parts were called Canada West and Canada East, and are now the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.
- 13a. *Canadian National Railways Magazine*, February 1932, 14.
14. Robertson, *Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto*, 2: 733.
15. Bull, *Spadunk*, 200.
16. Over the years, this community's name has been spelled both Carlton and Carleton. Sometimes both spellings were used in a single publication, e.g., *Tackabury's Atlas of the Dominion of Canada* (1875). After the railway was established in the area in the 1850s, the village was referred to as Carlton/Carleton. "West" was sometimes added, probably to distinguish it from the village of Carleton, near Ottawa.
17. W. H. Smith, *Canada: Past, Present, and Future*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Thomas Maclear, 1851-2), 2: 15.
18. Robertson, *Robertson's Landmarks of Canada*, 2: 734.
19. Samuel Thompson, *Reminiscences of a Canadian pioneer*, 209.
20. *Mitchell's Canada Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1864-65* (Toronto: Mitchell & co., 1865).
21. Robertson, *Robertson's Landmarks of Canada*, 2: 733-4.
22. The first postmaster's surname is variantly spelled as Yearly.
23. *Mitchell's Canada Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1864-65*.
- 23a. Bull, *Spadunk*, 214.
24. Ethel Martyn, "Early History of York Township and Some Early Pioneers," [Toronto] March 5, 1934, 3. (Copy at TPLDU.)
25. In June 1887, the Village of West Toronto Junction was incorporated, receiving provincial assent on 1 January 1888. It was elevated to the Town of West Toronto Junction on 23 March 1889, when its boundaries were expanded to include Carlton and Davenport, two unincorporated villages to the northeast. On 22 June 1891, Council shortened the name of the town to Toronto Junction. It became the City of West Toronto on 14 April 1908, and was annexed to the City of Toronto on 1 May 1909. Informally, the area was known as the Junction, West Toronto, and West Toronto Junction.
26. "West Toronto Junction. . . ." *York Tribune*, Exhibition Number, [August] 1889, 1. (Partial copy at TPLAN.)
27. Interview with Dr. Harold Clark, Toronto, 3 December 1934, William Perkins Bull Collection, Box 26, File 525, AUCC.
28. "Toronto Junction," *Toronto Globe*, 25 July 1891, 4.
29. *Prospect Park* [broadside], 1889?.
30. *Charlton's West Toronto Junction Directory, 1890-91/2* (Toronto: Charlton, 1891?).
31. A. B. Rice, *West Toronto Junction revisited* (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press for the West Toronto Junction Historical Society, 1986), 21.
32. "Among our firemen," *Toronto Junction Leader & West York Gazette*, 27 July 1894, 8.
33. *Toronto Globe*, 25 July 1891, 4.
34. Ibid.
35. *Dominion Illustrated*. Special Issue Devoted to Toronto. (Montreal, 1892).
36. West Toronto Junction Council, Minutes, 28 October 1889.
37. James V. Salmon, *Rails from the Junction: The Story of the Toronto Suburban Railway* (Toronto: Lyons Productions, nd), 9.
- 37a. Audrey Hutchison Fox, The "Turners of Bracondale", *The York Pioneer*, 94 (1999): 2-8.
38. *The Highlands of Toronto, Illustrated*, Presented by the Directors of the Toronto Belt Land Corporation (Toronto, 1891), 13.
39. quoted by William French, *A Most Unlikely Village: an Informal History of the Village of Forest Hill* (Toronto: Printed for the Corporation of the Village of Forest Hill by Ryerson Press, 1964), 44.
- 39a. Bull, *Spadunk*, 133.
40. Martyn, "Early History of York Township," 3.
41. Interview with George Cooper Campbell, Toronto, 29 November 1934, William Perkins Bull Collection, Box 28, File 555, AUCC.
42. Bull, *Spadunk*, 244.
43. J. M. S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918; an illustrated history* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1984), 158.
44. *Globe*, 1 June 1907, 23.
45. *Who Gets Your Wages? You or the Landlord?* (Toronto: Dovercourt Land, Building and Savings Company, 1910?), 14-15, Dinnick Family Papers, MU 919, AO.
46. Ibid, 10-11.
47. Peter Bryce, *Earls court Methodist Churches* (Toronto: Earls court Methodist Churches, 1915).
48. Augustus Bridle, "A Visit to the Works of the Canada Foundry
49. The building was still standing on Prescott Street in 1997, having been recently converted to artists' studios.
50. A. J. Heydon, *The Heydons and Their Hotels; the first four generations of the Heydon family in Ontario* (Toronto: Pro Familia Genealogical Services, 1987), 86.
51. [George Locke], "Earls court, Dec. 18th 1913," Toronto Public Library, Toronto Scrapbooks, 4: 248-9.
52. *Who Gets Your Wages? You or the Landlord?*
53. "Carter Family Said to Be the Oldest Pioneers", *Toronto Weekly Times*, 16 December 1938, 6. (Partial copy at TPLDU.)
54. Augustus Bridle, "A Shacktown Christmas," *Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*, 34 (1909): 134.
55. *Who Gets Your Wages? You or the Landlord?*, 6.
56. *Saturday Night*, 3 January 1914, 9.
- 56a. Bailey, *Stories of York*.
57. Lily M. Cockburn, *A History of Earls court Public School, 1889- 1964* (Toronto, 1964), 1.
58. *Toronto Star*, 7 November 1903, 12.
59. *Toronto Star*, 23 February 1903, 4.
60. "St. Clair prohibition ends after 91 years," *Toronto Star*, 16 November 1994, A6.
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62. Toronto *Telegram*, 10 January 1910.
  63. Toronto City Council Minutes, 11 June 1909, Appendix A, 784.
  64. *Stories of York*, Bailey, 64.
  65. Bill Bailey, *Stories of York* ([Toronto,] 1980), 79.
  66. [Locke], Toronto Scrapbooks, 4: 249.
  67. Bailey, *Stories of York*, 82.
  68. Letter from Peter Bryce to James Bertram, Secretary, Carnegie Corporation, 21 June 1917, Carnegie Corporation Correspondence. (Copy in TPL Archives).
  69. *Toronto Star*, 23 April 1919, 12.
  70. W. S. Craick, "New Regal Road School ranks as one of the city's show places," *Toronto Star Weekly*, 30 March 1918, 23.
  71. *Toronto Star*, 25 April 1983, A6.
  72. "Silverthorn Grove" [advertisement], *Toronto Sunday World*, 12 April 1914, 8.
  73. Victor G. Lewis, "Earlscourt, Toronto" (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1920), 83.
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  76. Dick Watts, "Notes on land development in Regal Heights," supplied to the authors, 24 February 1997.
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  82. "Earlscourt knew how to welcome prince," *Toronto Star*, 28 August 1919, 23.
  83. George Gamester, "Tent city spawned old T.O.'s 'Red Square,'" *Toronto Star*, 30 November 1994, A5.
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***St. Clair Avenue West, looking east from the vicinity of Lauder Avenue, 14 October 1911.***

This photograph was taken to document the progress of the St. Clair streetcar track construction and the "Lauder Ave fill," as the original caption stated. The fill was used to bury part of the western branch of Garrison Creek, visible in the middle right. The newly-opened Oakwood High School is on the upper right.

CTA Salmon 1737

## About the authors



Nancy Byers was the head of Dufferin/St. Clair (Earlscourt) Branch of the Toronto Public Library from 1971 until her retirement in 1987. Before becoming a children's librarian in 1963, she worked in the private sector. She continues to be active in the St. Clair area, doing community liaison work for Charles Caccia, federal Member of Parliament for Davenport. Byers holds a B.A. and a B.L.S. from the University of Toronto.



Barbara Myrvold has coordinated local history collections and services for the Toronto Public Library since 1982, including writing or supervising the publication of 13 books on Toronto neighbourhoods. The Toronto Historical Board awarded Myrvold with two letters of commendation for this work. She has been archivist for both the Toronto Public Library and the Toronto Transit Commission, and has worked as a reference librarian in public libraries in Toronto and Scarborough. Her most recent work is a multicultural history of the people of Scarborough, written for the Scarborough Public Library Board. Myrvold holds a B.A. from McMaster University, and a B.L.S. and an M.L.S. from the University of Toronto.

## Recipient of Heritage Toronto Award of Merit



### St. Clair West in Pictures

Originally published in 1997, this is the first comprehensive history of the communities bordering St. Clair Avenue West between Oakwood Avenue and Old Weston Road. The first edition met with critical and popular success, and quickly went out of print. The second edition provides new information including almost two dozen additional illustrations. It also updates the history to cover recent events.

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*John Bentley Mays, Globe & Mail*

"This is a rich portrait . . . Byers and Myrvold take pains to cover every aspect of history, but do it with enough style to make the text entertaining, a kaleidoscope rather than an inventory . . . Many a photographic jaw-dropper in this fine addition to a series that is itself one of the many outstanding contributions the TPL has made to life in old Toronto."

*Ted Mumford, NOW*

"Through informative text and precious old photos, this 132-page book (the term "handbook" really doesn't do justice to the work of authors Nancy Byers and Barbara Myrvold) describes the history and development of the Carlton, Davenport, Earls court and Oakwood communities that form part of Greater Toronto."

*Mike Filey, Toronto Sunday Sun*