

# **TOLLKEEPER' S WALKING TOUR No. 3**

## **Northwest Corner of Davenport and Bathurst**

**FUNDRAISING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION TOURS FOR  
THE RESTORATION AND OPERATION OF  
THE TOLLKEEPER'S COTTAGE**

*Sponsored by the*  
**COMMUNITY HISTORY PROJECT**  
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Tollkeeper's Tours are designed as a series and no tour duplicates information given on other tours.

### **TADDLE CREEK AGAIN**

Geological studies show a swale at the point where Bathurst Street rises up the escarpment, indicating that a large watercourse had flowed there at some time in pre-history. Therefore, in its earliest form, Taddle Creek must have been impressively large. It rises today on Concession 3 well west of Christie Street, crosses Christie to spread out as a pond on the site where the TTC Bams stand. Local people referred to this semi-swamp as Poverty Pond. When Wychwood Park was created, the creek was channelled, the old pond drained, and a new pond created. The flow continued out the south end of the subdivision and across Davenport. There is no doubt about the Taddle's influence on the way the areas developed, and it was a source of potable water, not directly, but through one or two pumps driven into the ground to draw its waters filtered by the earth.

### **STREETS**

There were no streets in this area in 1878. The first one to be developed was Victoria (now Tyrrell) which was surveyed by James Williams Tyrrell and named for his father, the Squire of Weston, and to commemorate the arctic explorations carried out by himself and his brother, Joseph Burr Tyrrell. Nine local streets were named for the Turner family.

### **DAVENPORT STREET RAILWAY**

In 1890, "interests allied to the railway" bought out the Yorkville and Vaughan Road Company and abolished the tollgate. The next year the railway company, led by Frank Turner obtained a 20-years lease from the Town of West Toronto Junction on a route that began at Keele and Dundas and ended on Bathurst at the CPR tracks. It was the curve around the Davenport-Bathurst intersection that necessitated the moving the Tollkeeper's Cottage off the road allowance entirely in 1892. The line was operated by other companies from 1894 and was finally taken over by the TTC in 1923 which converted the revised route to bus service.

## **WYCHWOOD PARK**

Artist Marmaduke Matthews and businessman Alexander Jardine each bought land (10 and 12 acres respectively) out of Farm Lot 26 and built houses. Matthews' house was named Wychwood and Jardine's Braemore. Access to each was from Davenport Road. Wychwood had a wing added in 1877, the year in which Jardine's house was built. The two men registered a plan of subdivision in 1888 with large lots, revising it to one with smaller lots in 1891. Created to be an artists' colony, it was all of that and more, with Marshall McLuhan a resident until his death. It was designated a Heritage Conservation District in 1985.

## **THE WYCHWOOD YARDS**

This area is the site of Poverty Pond, and the Christie Street frontage was used in earlier times for industrial purposes, including the leather factory of John E. Edwards at the corner with Benson. As St. Clair Avenue was being opened up, a street railway was constructed and needed barns for its cars. The dates of construction are recorded over the doors into the bays. The last car barns were built in 1921 when the TTC controlled all street railway lines. During World War II, the first women drivers were hired and lived in a house on the east side of Wychwood Avenue. As one of very few structures remaining from the days of pioneer street railways, the barns are threatened by conversion to live-work space for artists. The 1913 bay is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties, and the others have no protection at all.

## **BRACONDALE**

John Turner, a lawyer, bought a block of land and built the house called Bracondale in 1847. While he worked at Osgoode Hall, he also ran the first post office in the area, until then, all mail came from Yorkville. It was John's son, Frank, who was involved with the street railway, and registered a plan of subdivision in 1912. The community that grew up around the house took its name from the house. The area was annexed in 1909 and in 1937 the city demolished the house and turned its lot into the present Hillcrest Park

## **EXTRAS**

Not part of this tour but worth investigating are properties farther west: the location of Springmount on Davenport Road where Bartholomew Bull established the first school; the Davenport Station of the Grand Trunk Railway on Davenport between Wiltshire and Lansdowne, and the first church on Davenport established by Bull and George Cooper, now the Davenport-Perth Community Centre and United Church.

## **SIR WILLIAM GAGE**

On Burnside Drive and included in the Wychwood Park HCD is the fine estate home of William Gage. The house is called Bon Air which is the same name of his earlier house on Bloor at Walmer Road. Designed by Charles B. Cobb, it was built in the Palladian style in 1913-15 and is a well preserved private property.

## **DAVENPORT SQUARE PARK**

The large block of land was purchased by W. J. Gage with the intention of creating a hospital for people with respiratory diseases. The neighbours objected and the hospital was never built. When Government House on King Street was demolished, Gage offered his block of land with the house, and offered to buy the MacNamara Farm as well to convert into a vista of gardens below the ridge. The government turned him down, so he sold off the house and lands for a subdivision, and donated the lands at Davenport and Bathurst for use as a public park.

## **THE TOLLKEEPER'S COTTAGE**

This rare wooden building once stood on the road allowance of Bathurst at Davenport where it served as No. 3 Tollgate on Davenport Road from around 1835 until 1892-3 when it was sold and moved off-site to serve as a

house. It is the *only* early tollhouse known anywhere in Canada, and is one of only four buildings known in Ontario to be of vertical plank construction. It was designated by the City of Toronto September 2003.

As the local history group for the area, the Community History Project undertook to salvage, relocate, and restore the Cottage to serve as a museum devoted to the history of roads and the 19th century tolling system, and as a facility for the community. The Cottage is being restored to its earliest state, and furnished to 1861 when the largest family of a tollkeeper lived in the building.