

# TOLLKEEPER' S WALKING TOUR No. 1

## Southwest 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**  
c/o Spadina Road Library  
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Tollkeeper's Tours are designed as a series and no tour duplicates information given on other tours.

### **THE ESCARPMENT**

The great ridge that crosses Toronto is the shoreline of Lake Iroquois, the post-Ice Age lake that formed over 10,000 years ago and shrank to form the Great Lakes. South of it is the alluvial plain it left behind upon which the oldest parts of the city developed. Historically, the escarpment was marked by forests of giant white pines and white oaks, and by indigenous plants such as the famous "Rosedale Rose". All Torontonians should seek the fullest possible restoration and preservation of the escarpment and its indigenous species as the major topographical feature which influenced the way Toronto developed.

### **DAVENPORT ROAD**

As the Ice Ages ended, the first human beings in the area walked along the narrow beach as the base of the escarpment. Their names for the route over centuries have been lost, as have the names used during the French Regime. Elizabeth Simcoe drew a map of the route on birchbark in 1796 showing it extending from Montreal to Niagara, and on maps after that time it was called: *The New Road to Niagara, The New Plank Road, the New Pinery Road and by the Bull, family, Bull's Road*. The name *Davenport* came from the name of the first house built on the ridge

### **TADDLE CREEK**

This muscular little creek crosses the entire city and makes its presence felt despite being buried. It begins north of St. Clair, in Concession 3, and empties into the lake just west of the mouth of the Don River. From roughly the position of the south gate at Wychwood Park it flowed southeast, across the MacNamara Farm, to cross Bathurst Street just north of the CPR. In historic times, travellers along the old Davenport trail forded the creek as there is no historical evidence for any bridge at this point. But the Taddle would have kept the road in a very muddy state in the spring and fall particularly.

## GARRISON CREEK

Not far to the west and not part of this tour, Garrison Creek flowed, and you may still hear it by listening at the storm sewer lids on Shaw Street. The Garrison was "buried" (or so the city thought) in the largest engineering project of its time but, like the Taddle, the creek had its own course to follow and when human beings interfered, it simply altered its course. The Garrison was a larger creek with a deep ravine, and the records suggest that it had a bridge at Davenport Road.

## SEATON VILLAGE

Never incorporated, Seaton Village developed in the lower half of Farm Lot 26<sup>1</sup> on a plan by Hon. George Crookshank in the 1850s, renewed later by his executors. On maps, the village is shown variously, running from Brunswick Avenue westward as far as Ossington and beyond, and from Bloor up to Davenport. This tour examines the top part of the village which remained as farmland into the early 20th century. Until annexation in 1887, the Tollkeeper's Cottage, like Seaton Village itself, was in York Township. The York Township records were destroyed by fire in 1881.

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<sup>1</sup> FARM LOT 26 CONCESSION 2 FROM THE BAY extends from Bloor to St. Clair west of Bathurst Street to Manning Avenue east of Christie Street.

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## THE MACNAMARA FARM

The first person to buy land in this area from George Crookshank was William Russell Bartlett who had been a friend of Thomas Dalton in Kingston. Both had worked for the Bank of Upper Canada there. and when the bank failed in 1829, Dalton started the newspaper *The Patriot and Farmers Monitor*. In 1830\_ Bartlett married Dalton's daughter, Sophia, and they moved to Brantford where he served on the Bridge Commission. In 1837 W.R. was appointed Clerk of the Executive Council, moved to Toronto, and lived on Spadina Avenue.

In August 1850, W.R. Bartlett bought 10 acres out of Crookshank's land and built *Bartlett Place* on the south side of Davenport Road, opposite Wychwood Park., adding another 20 acres on either side ten years later. In the meantime, Thomas Dalton's son William Henry Dalton, had moved to Ancaster, then to Bolton, finally arriving in Toronto in 1862 when he was appointed Associate Coroner for York. In 1875, W.H. moved into *Bartlett Place* with his brother-in-law, purchasing one of the three acreages where he built another house facing Davenport Road. A third 10 acres was leased to, then purchased by, John MacNamara who had also purchased a lot out of the Crookshank lands. MacNamara's house was close to the southwest corner of Davenport and Bathurst. When Bartlett died in 1885, he left his lot to his God-daughter, Elizabeth Sophia MacNamara.

John MacNamara controlled about 40 acres by 1875, which he developed into an extensive market garden. His wife, Sophia, sold her 10 acres to National Carbon in 1919. Although he was a successful market gardener, John leased the central section of his lands to the Jockey Club which developed the Hillcrest Racetrack. In 1921, the newly formed Toronto Transportation Commission purchased all 40 acres, tore down the houses, and developed the Hillcrest Yards, with the oldest of its buildings on the site of the Dalton house.

## 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.