

TOLLKEEPER' S WALKING TOUR No. 2

Southeast 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
10 Spadina Road
Toronto, M5R 2S7
(416-515-7546)

Tollkeeper's Tours are designed as a series and no tour duplicates information given on other tours.

FARM LOT 25, CONCESSION 2 FTB

This 200 acre tract runs north from Bloor to St. Clair between Brunswick Avenue and Bathurst Street. Granted first to Ensign John McGill of Simcoe's staff Widow McGill sold the entire acreage to Col Joseph Wells. The part examined on this tour was originally part of the amorphous area called Seaton Village which ran from Bloor to Davenport Road and began to be developed in the 1870s as blocks were sold off by the Colonel's heirs. Before that time it was forest converted into farmland.

THE ANNEX

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to clarify the location of the Annex. The Annex proper was developed on lands belonging to the great Baldwin family, Farm Lots 23 and 24. The Annex began at Bloor and extended north to the CPR tracks and included only that part of Davenport Road which dropped south after passing Poplar Plains Road. In later years, the Annex included the westernmost strip of Yorkville and everything east of Bathurst Street to Brunswick, but only south of the CPR tracks. Thus, the Annex is directly to the south of this area but does not reach this far. Both Yorkville and Seaton Village are older than the Annex which did not develop until the 1880s and 90s. Farm Lots 23 and 24 were farmed until development began after the death of the Hon. Robert Baldwin.

FIRST BUILDINGS

The Tollkeeper's Cottage was the first building constructed in the area. At one point in its history, one tollkeeper took out a lease on 16 acres at the southeast corner and farmed the land for a while. Next to be built was SS 25, the school for Seaton Village, but by this time the Bartlett's and Daltons had built their houses west of Bathurst on Davenport. By the turn of the 20th century, the streets had been widened to their full road allowance of 66 feet and several attempts had been made to develop subdivisions from the southeast corner of the intersection. By 1890, a two-and-a-half storey red brick house was standing at the

southeast corner of the intersection_ and there were 4 houses on Davenport, 3 on the west side of Howland, 3 on its east side, 9 buildings on Bathurst, only one on Dartnell, and 4 on the north side of Bridgman.

SHELL GAS STATION

The red brick house on the south east corner was demolished and replaced by a Shell Oil Service Station. The company closed the station and tried to sell the site, but found difficulties in doing so due to the high degree of soil contamination which remains a problem for the entire area. The lot was paved over and was vacant for several years until it was acquired by Starkman's for use as a parking lot. Until the lot has been officially de-commissioned it can never be used for anything else.

BLACKSMITH

At 653 Davenport is a frame building, now much modified and completely unlike the original. The original building was the home and workshop of blacksmith Alex MacDonald who operated his business into the 1940s.

645 DAVENPORT

Industrial sites are always problems because of the contaminants they leave behind. This is one such site. Patterson Springs installed springs in trucks and habitually dumped their oils and chemicals on the grounds around the building. These leached away, affecting other properties and led to a lawsuit which Patterson lost but did not pay, declaring bankruptcy. The property and one adjoining one that the courts had forced Patterson to buy, were put on the market and purchased by Victory Estates which tore down the industrial building and did extensive soil remediation. Then the Castle Hill townhouses were built and are the first major improvement of the streetscape along historic Davenport Road.

643 DAVENPORT

Until the 1950s, the narrowest house in the city stood on this site. A frame building of two storeys, it was only_ seven feet wide, and had been built in 1908.

559 DAVENPORT

Irishman Mark Bredin arrived in Toronto in 1883 and set himself up as a baker on Yonge Street, moving to Avenue Road at the turn of the century. Very successful, he joined George Weston and Cawthra Mulock to form *Canada Bread* serving as its second president and general manager. He was operating his own bakery at this address when he retired in 1929.

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

The Casa Loma Campus opened in 1974, replacing the Provincial Institute of Trades and Occupations as a teaching facility. But the area had earlier accommodated a number of small industries. a lumberyard and a bakery.

118-28 BRIDGMAN

In 1991 the present townhouses replaced *Cooey's Machine Shop* which made rifles for World War 1. The next use of the early building was by the *Involute Gear Company*.

TARRAGON THEATRE

The first use of this property was by a small brickyard which had a kiln. Then, for several years, the site was abandoned before the present red brick building was constructed for use in metal casting. In 1971, director Bill Glassco and his wife took over the building, creating the *Tarragon Theatre*.

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.