



What's in a Name?

By Allen Maclure

The original purchasers here at 21 Burkebrook may recollect that, in some of Daniels promotional literature, they wrote about how this development was built on the land that was once the estate of Joseph Kilgour. So it seemed like an interesting project to expand a little on the history of the Kilgour estate.

Have you ever strolled east on Kilgour Road on a sunny afternoon (I guess it could be raining but you might be less observant in the rain) and walked, past Toronto Rehab and continued on, skirting the old white stucco house at the entrance to Lyndhurst Hospital. Did you notice the stone gates on each side of Sutherland Drive at the entrance? If so, you have seen the south entrance to the original Kilgour estate. In 2005 City Council included these, together with the stucco house, on its inventory of historic properties. In making its recommendation to council city staff indicated that: "The Kilgour Gates and Gatehouse are recognized for their historical, architectural and contextual significance as the last surviving residential components of the Kilgour Estate."



Note that the designation indicates the last remaining residential components because there certainly is a significant portion of the non-residential component of the estate that has remained.

In the late 1800's, early 1900's this area was farm land with the farms consisting of long narrow swaths stretching from Bayview Avenue to Leslie Street. In 1909, Joseph Kilgour purchased about 200 acres of farmland north of Eglinton from the Burke family. (I wonder where the name for Burke Brook came from?) At the time Joseph was a 47 year old bachelor and he was not a farmer. In today's language we would call him a gentleman farmer as his primary occupation was his role as the President of the Canada Paper Company, a firm he and his older brother Robert had established to manufacture paper products and most notably the recently invented flat bottom paper bag.

Kilgour named his property Sunnybrook Farm and today we can still see his farm buildings as the Sunnybrook Stables and barns if you walk down the hill east of Lyndhurst Hospital into Sunnybrook Park. In addition to his hunters Kilgour also maintained dairy cattle and draught horses.

In 1912 he married Alice Margaret Grand, the 48 year old widow of T. G. Bright. He brought her to York Lodge, his residence on the farm which was located roughly where the Donwoods Institute sits today. In the early 1900's, with fewer trees than are here today the view over the farm and valley below must have been impressive.



Figure 2 York Lodge in the 1940's



Figure 3 View of Sunnybrook Farm Early 1910's

northern border of Leaside, developed a context plan for this area to provide guidelines and a framework for development. The plan identified the need to preserve the trees along the original estate driveway or "Grand Allee". While it would be easy to think this referenced the hemlocks that are so evenly spaced along the south side of the Donwoods parking lot it actually is referencing the trees along the Bayview entrance to the estate. The walking path along the top of the Burke Brook ravine

was the Grand Allee into the estate. Today the evenly spaced trees that lined the driveway so many years ago are best seen behind Holland Bloorview and Lyndhurst. However, for those who have a south view and look over the townhomes you can still see the evenly spaced conifers which help obscure our view of the hospital.

In this same timeframe the Canadian Northern Railway Company was purchasing large blocks of land, including the acreage north of Eglinton Ave and in 1913 incorporated the Town of Leaside. It would be interesting to know if the railway approached Joseph Kilgour about his land because the Burke Brook ravine would have made a much more natural northern boundary of Leaside than the current boundary north of Glenvale Blvd.

While the great estates of Bayview each have their own history the estates north of Sunnybrook Farm, Bay View (the MacLean Estate) and Donningvale (the Vaughan Estate), were not built within Joseph Kilgour's tenure. For much of their life at York Lodge the Kilgour's neighbour to the south was the Leaside Aerodrome.

Joseph Kilgour died in Florida in January 1925. (Likely the first Kilgour Estate Snowbird!) A few years later his widow Alice Kilgour donated most of Sunnybrook Farm to the City for the creation of a park in his memory. Today this is, of course, Sunnybrook Park. Alice Kilgour retained York Lodge and surrounding lands and continued living there until she sold it to David Dunkelman, President of Tiptop Tailors in 1930. Six years later it was transferred to Captain James Flanigan who renamed it "Divadale".

At the start of World War II the Department of Veteran Affairs recognized that a new hospital for Veterans was needed in Toronto and began the search for a site. The city suggested that

Sunnybrook Park might be a suitable location and negotiations we held with the trustees of the Kilgour estate and agreement was reached for a portion of the park to be deeded to Veterans Affairs. Construction of Sunnybrook Hospital was started in 1944 and officially opened in 1948.

Meanwhile James Flanigan, owner of York Lodge, a.k.a Divadale, converted it into a convalescent home for veterans. After the war, it, and the land out to Bayview Avenue (what later was referenced as the institutional lands), was turned over to Veterans Affairs. It continued for many years as a wing of Sunnybrook Hospital. Over time Veterans Affairs deeded pieces of the lands to other institutions starting with the CNIB in 1950 and it is this land upon which we live today.

Researching any historical story results in interesting side notes. One of these relates to the Kilgour Brothers factory which was located at 21 Wellington St. West. In 1904 it was only a short distance away from the origin of the great Toronto fire. As the fire spread east it was feared that once it reached Yonge Street it would spread quickly up Toronto's main street. On Wellington Street it was stopped at the Kilgour factory because it was one of only a few buildings that had installed a sprinkler system.

The second interesting side note involves Joseph's widow Alice Grand who had previously, in 1892, married widower Thomas Bright, a man with his own interesting history. Thomas Bright was a businessman who began a company in 1874 the Niagara Falls Wine Company, later renamed T. G. Bright & Company Ltd. and the producer of Brights wines. In 1993 Brights, although out of the Bright family hands for 60 years, merged with Inniskillen to form Vincor and created the Jackson-Triggs label.

Finally, a personal discovery in doing this little bit of research was learning that Robert Kilgour, Joseph's elder brother and business partner, was married to my Great-Grandmother's sister.