

OUR HISTORY – THE SCRACE FARM

Did you know that Bards' and Poets' Walkways sit on what was once some of the finest Class 1 farmland in the world? This rich soil ran from the Forks of the Don River to Steeles between Leslie and Victoria Park. It was farmed up to the early 1970's.

YCC327 property is located on a small portion of farmland once owned by the late Henry and Jane Scrace, and later by their son William.

The Scraces' farm encompassed the entire land mass now known as the Pleasant View community, on Lot 16 and 17 Concession 4 east, North York.

Henry and Jane built their farmhouse around 1864 at the location the city later designated as 38 Pleasant View Drive.

The Scrace farmhouse was still standing back in 1964 when the picture below was taken. It remained a working farm into the early 1970's producing wheat.



Above: A beautiful Scrace farmhouse is seen here in May 1964. Built over a hundred years earlier on Henry Scrace's original farm, it had a new address by the time this photo was taken: 38 Pleasant View Drive, an ironic choice of names as the views from the farmhouse windows changed to show the construction of encroaching suburbs.

Today, the address of 38 Pleasant View Drive no longer exists. The home was demolished to make way for Sanwin Court with twelve single detached homes in its place.

In 1965 the builder Arthur-Blakey Inc. surveyed land and construction of the houses north of Bards' and Poets' Walkway were soon underway.

In 1975 Bards' and Poets' Walkway became a condominium corporation developed by Reiwens Holdings Ltd. And Humboldt Properties Ltd.

Senior residents, still living in the Pleasant View community (at time of this writing), were actively involved in Bards' and Poets' Walkway community consultations related to city approvals of the developers' plans.

These residents still recall the Reiwens/Humboldts' original plan for mid-rise condos, like the Crossroads buildings, to extend along Sheppard Ave. E. right from the DVP to Brian Drive.

These residents fought hard to change those plans, insisting on a variety of build forms (town houses) with back yards more appealing to family living. They also negotiated more land from the developer for the Old Sheppard Park and for the well-designed community we now live in.

The previous farmers in the Pleasant View community had also expressed concerns about their changing landscape. Today's residents are no different as we try to manage the growing intensification around us.

"It's a hot day in August 1969. Three combines are threshing soft wheat on a forty-acre plot of land to the north of Finch Ave East, directly in the path of the planned northward extension of Don Mills Road. From the combines, you can see the high-rises closing in from the south. Fred Hampson is on one of the combines. When the day's work is done, he will have harvested fifty bushels of what per acre. This will be combined with the wheat he has harvested from an additional 200 acres he either owns or rents in the same area. He will harvest 12,000 bushels of what that year that he will sell to Maple Leaf Mills in the city for \$20,000. The wheat will be ground into fine pastry flour and grace many a table in pies, cakes, bread, cookies and biscuits. Every year, Fred has to ask North York how much wheat he is allowed to plant, and every year he harvests less as more and more land is gobbled up for housing".

Henry Scrace donated land for the community to build the Zion Primitive Methodist Church which is now owned by the City of Toronto and used to provide social services. It is a familiar site to all of us, situated at 1650 Finch Ave E. just east of Don Mills Road near the entrance into the plaza.



The above information was sourced from (Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication. Kennedy, Scott 1952 Feb 22- author Don Mills from forests and farms to forces of change/Scott Kennedy)