

A BEACH SCRAPBOOK

THE VILLAGE TAKES SHAPE



by Jean Cochrane and Carole Stimmell

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CHAPTER 1:

THE BEACH COMES OF AGE

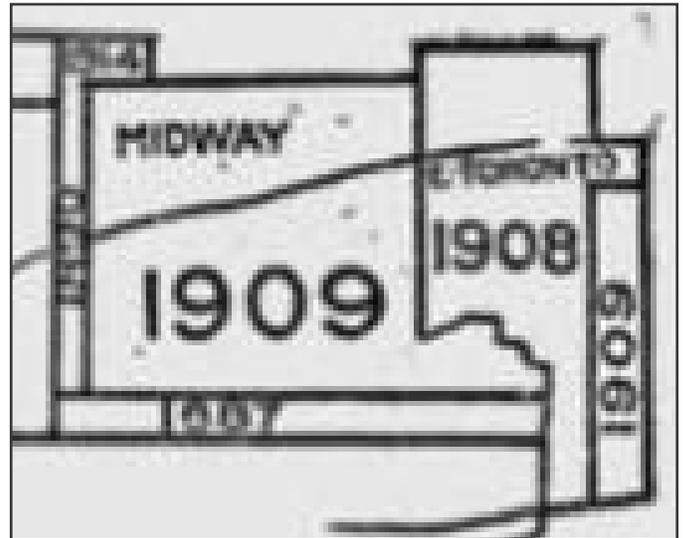
Between the 1910s and the 1940s, the Beach experienced wide-ranging changes, as now familiar landmarks and brand new neighborhoods were put in place. After the turn of the century, it was a cozy village and summer resort, but in the two decades after World War I, the area would see its political and civic boundaries modified, the end of the thrill-a-minute amusement parks, the breakup of old estates, better transit, and the gradual disappearance of the summer tourist hotels and boarding houses.

The Beach as a distinctive neighbourhood grew, in part, because it was one of Toronto's premier summer retreats. The area was a great draw for Torontonians wanting to escape the city. There was the beach itself, of course, augmented by three amusement parks; Victoria Park, Munro Park, and finally the gaudy 14 acre Scarborough Beach Park which opened in 1907 and drew thousands of visitors yearly until it closed in 1925. Woodbine Race Track was a year-round attraction. Getting to the area was facilitated by the Toronto Railway Company which ran a street car line along Queen Street that ended close to the Scarborough Beach Park.

In July 1900, the *Toronto World* reported that there were 279 houses and 91 tents east of Woodbine, although many of these were used as cottages rather than as permanent housing.



Kew Gardens Park in 1914



Toronto annexed the largest part of the Beach community in 1908 and 1909.

Obviously many of the visitors recognized that the area might be a good place to live fulltime. In 1902 the *Toronto Daily Star* was already running a story on the rapid growth of the area under a head reading, "Kew and Balmy Beaches Are No Longer Summer Resorts – They Are Suburbs Now." By 1906, the *Star* was reporting that there were 270 families living in the village full time. Following a pattern begun by the city in 1887 with The Annex, Toronto acquired the unincorporated villages of Midway and Balmy Beach in 1908. Late in 1909, the city also annexed the town of East Toronto, expanding its new municipal boundaries to the east.

The area already had a number of schools and churches, and in the former town of East Toronto there were also public offices, a police station and a fire hall. As the area grew, more infrastructure was added, such as the Beaches library in 1913, to support the rapid growing permanent population. Builders and developers were creating a number of new neighbourhoods by breaking up land once part of old estates into building lots and, after 1925, the Scarborough Beach Amusement Park property was also redeveloped for housing.

In 1907 the city bought Kew Gardens for \$43,700 (approximately \$1,172,900 in today's dollars) from the Williams family, who had devel-



oped it, as a all-season recreation area. The city promptly cleared it for a park, moving and demolishing all the houses from the west side of Lee Avenue south of Queen. Only Kew Cottage, built by Williams for his son, Kew, was saved. Marshland near the lakeside and Pantry Park was filled. The new Kew Gardens was being made ready to become a bustling playground and athletic field.

TURNING THE BEACH INTO A PARK

However the lake was still the major attraction and resource, not only for the Beach, but for people all across the city. From the 1910s to the 1930s, waterfront transformation was part of a widespread municipal mandate. Toronto began working on a range of utilitarian and recreational projects centred on the city's shoreline. For instance, in 1920 the Toronto Harbour Commission took over the lifesaving service from the federal port authorities. They built several lifesaving stations across the city's entire waterfront, incidentally giving the Beach its trademark

Leuty Lifesaving Station, first named the Scarboro Beach Station. Eventually, the Leuty and Cherry Beach stations would be the last ones left standing.

Major changes to the Beach waterfront were proposed in 1917 when the Harbour Commission drew up an elaborate plan featuring a boathouse and boardwalk, as well as shoreline protection. That version never materialized. Later, when, on the west side of town, Sunnyside was actually being developed, some angry Beachers saw it as competition. They registered a formal complaint, saying the area's interests were being neglected. (see cartoon)

Protection of the beach was actually a serious, immediate problem for the area, one that has never entirely gone away. There were rising complaints about it from Beach residents to the Harbour Commission. Not only were the winds and waves washing away existing patchy areas of sandy beach, the flooding was a problem for many of the houses and private boathouses standing near the shore, notably from Lee to the boundary of the Scarboro Beach Amusement Park.

Toronto had already made an effort to get the federal government to pay for a solution for the shoreline erosion problem. That effort failed. A few years later, a delegation including Public Works Commissioner R.C. Harris (a Beacher) and Controllers Cameron and McBride, visited the shore to see the damage for themselves. They were appointed to assess the effectiveness and cost of building barriers called groynes, designed to keep the sand in place and create more beach. It was a technique that was used more than once over the years.

Initially, the cost was estimated at \$5,000 (about \$75,000 in today's dollars). McBride was reported as



1919 Storm damage to the beach near Kenilworth



Construction of the groynes in 1929. Note: Leuty Lifeguard Station in background.

suggesting that sandbags and stones could do the job to the beach instead, and was told by an outraged citizen that “you might as well take the city’s \$5,000 and throw it in the lake.”

Commissioner Harris, quoted by *The Telegram*, said, “The only way to save ground here is by erecting groynes.” He said sewer outlets installed in 1907, running 38 metres into the lake, had by chance served as groynes and, “to prove his assertion, led the two controllers to the foot of Lee Avenue,” to show them how it worked. He thought the \$5000 would cover the costs.

A September 1929 *Toronto Star* story said city council finally approved the groynes at a cost of \$20,000 (\$312,000 today). The story read, “to give the groynes a chance to see what they can do as beachmakers during the fall and winter and thus, perhaps get value for the money.... The groynes are wooden walls extending out into the lake at right angles and at intervals of about 15 metres, with an arrowhead of piles on the outer end so as to deter that which drifts in from drifting out again.... Their usefulness... depends so much on currents and local conditions that it can only be determined by experiment.” Not everyone was happy. The groynes were ugly, and according to one peeved resident, what they deterred was any effort to get into the lake to swim. He wrote to the *Toronto Telegram*, “It has become a standing joke along the beach... These piles passing under the grandiose name of ‘experi-

mental groynes’ are the butt of more sarcastic wit than anything else. Should they build up the beach as they are alleged to be doing to their full extent of 10 or 20 feet into the lake, the result would provide an excellent place for stubbing toes, and that is about all. Who on earth wants a beach with an ugly outcropping of piles every 20 feet or so?”

Nevertheless, the groynes were put in place in 1929, and the following spring, were basically considered a success. On March 19, 1930, *The Telegram* ran a fairly detailed report on first results: “The final departure of winter’s ice from the shores of the lake has left the eastern beaches in a very different condition to what they were last fall before they disappeared under their icy mantle. The threat of spring storms, the mention of which gave the hardest lake-front householder qualms in other years has all but gone completely .

“From the foot of Woodbine Avenue eastward stretches the serried array of steep-driven piles which constitute the famous groynes. Added protection for the first 100 feet or so is given by the heavy fence.... Behind this the beach remains firm and the houses along the front dry, although most of them are vacant, in accordance with the beaches project the city has in view....

“Between this impenetrable barrier and Kew Gardens a gap has been left, not a wide one, but wide enough to show clearly how unprotected the lake-front properties would have been without any bul-



View of beach groynes in 1931

wark to stave off the lake's advances. No beach is left here at all, the waves lapping against the ruins of a concrete sidewalk on the calmest day." The immediate success of the groynes varied that spring, "From Kew to the lifesaving station...the beach has made gigantic strides." It was apparently not bad in front of the stretch where the Scarboro Beach Park had been, good in front of the Balmy Beach Club, and threatening to tennis courts at Silver Birch. However, the goynes were generally judged to be successful, the sand accumulating, the beach improved or improving.

The privately owned cottages and boathouses, which had been constructed on the shore over the previous 50 years, were still a concern for the city. Storm damage to the properties was common and

Toronto wanted to expand the beach shoreline for a public park. A 1928 report in *The Telegram* said that 57 lakeshore properties had been taken over by the Board of Control and left temporarily in the hands of the owners. It quoted a variety of prices asked by the owners including \$125 a foot (\$19,750 today), \$35,000

for a lot (\$553,000 today), \$40 a foot (\$6,320 today) and damages. In 1930 the newspaper reported that most of the private properties had been expropriated to clear the way for a park and boardwalk, this time bought from owners who were not only angry about being forced out of their treasured lakeside homes



Lake Shore Lover of 97 Turned from Home



EXILED TO BACK STREET—"ONE STEP NEAR ER THE GRAVE"

Wm. Spanner, aged 97, father of eight children, built his own home at 100 Lake Shore Beach in 1907, when he was 73 years of age. For 23 years he lived there and drank in the life-giving breeze off Lake Ontario, and

now in his own words, this is what happened: "The city is putting me out—I have to move—and it is one step nearer the grave. I have to leave the lake shore I have loved for 23 years and live on a back street." Mr.

Spanner, who is shown ABOVE, with his house he built himself, is forced out by operations of the Beaches developments. With one daughter and five pet cats he is moving to Kenilworth Ave.



SCARBORO BEACH, TORONTO, ONT., FROM AN AEROPLANE.

Seen from the air, the 18-acre Scarborough Beach Amusement Park occupied a large area of the Beach.

and cottages, but who also felt they weren't being paid nearly enough for them. In all 211 houses and boathouses were cleared. The total cost of the Eastern Beaches Park was \$2.4 million (\$32 million today)

The Scarborough Beach Amusement Park, including its athletic spaces, had been bulldozed in 1925, and three of its waterside acres taken over by the city. The park had been a major attraction for 18 years, but by the mid 1920s, the charm had begun to fade, and Sunnyside was now drawing more and more people.

In addition, the privately owned Toronto Railway System, which had also owned the Scarborough amusement park and delivered many of its customers, was put out of business by the new city-owned Toronto Transit Commission which had no interest in the park. Local builders had bought the land and wasted no time in filling the property where the park had been. New streets were created. Wineva, Hammersmith and Glen Manor were extended north to Queen, and cross streets put in place.

The Price Brothers built most of the 217 new houses, including their distinctive fourplexes. The homes went on the market for \$5,000 to \$7,500 (\$75,000 to \$113,000 today). In 1930, work on the lakefront had begun in earnest, putting together the park, beach, boardwalk, newly planted trees, and greenspace. It was

to celebrate the opening of what one newspaper called "the dream of a decade," the lasting gift the city had made for itself.

Probably the biggest crowd ever to gather in the Beach appeared early that day and stayed. The coverage was enthusiastic. The *Mail's* subhead read, "Vast Throng Swarms into New Ward 8 Area for Gala Day." The story went on, "No more perfect holiday weather could be imagined.... Spectators four-deep lined both sides of Queen Street from Victoria Park to Woodbine Avenue and down Woodbine to the park – well over a mile and a half – when the parade passed.

"It was literally a vast swelling of humanity that broke from Queen Street after the big parade had passed, and rolled down the side streets, pouring like a spring flood into the park. Mayor Stewart, before hoisting the Union Jack and declaring the park opened, brought greetings from all other sections of the city to the largest assembly ever held in Toronto.

"Activities arranged by the various rate payers and community associations of Ward 8 under the general leadership of Alex Rhind began at 10:50 a.m. with a men's softball game in Kew Beach Park and ended somewhere about midnight with a huge bonfire at the foot of Waverly Road around which hundreds of grown-ups and younger folks sat in a big circle and sang familiar songs."

financed in part by Depression era relief work funding, providing much needed jobs. In all about \$2.4 million was earmarked for the Eastern Beaches Park (tactfully not called either Woodbine, Kew, Scarborough or Balmy) including a boardwalk 4,800 feet long (1463 metres).

On May 24, 1932, Eastern Beaches Park and Pantry Park officially opened with a parade and a bash said to have attracted 60,000 people. They were there

EARLY BEACH AMUSEMENT PARKS



Munro Park 1896-1906

George Monro bought a 25-hectare site just east of Victoria Park in 1847 which he called the Painted Post Farm. (Note: the family name of 'Monro' was misspelled as 'Munro' on both the street and the park.) George died in 1878 and in 1896, his heirs leased a 6 to 10-hectare portion of the site to the Toronto Railway Company, which wished to run an amusement park.

The park boasted a large 1300 square-meter dance hall, a bandstand, and a carousel and swings. In 1900, motion pictures and variety acts were added. The park was closed in 1906 when the lease expired.

Victoria Park 1878-1906

Toronto businessman, Peter Patterson owned an estate in present-day western Scarborough named Blantyre. In 1878 Patterson granted a 10-year lease to portion of the site to several business investors who created what would become Victoria Park which opened in 1878.

Initially amusement seekers could reach the park by ferry service. The park had picnic shelters, a dance pavilion, the restaurant, and an observation tower that overlooked the entire park area and the waterfront. By 1894 the street car lines extended to the area. The park also rented 13 streetcars and offered them as sleeping quarters for those wishing to stay overnight.

The property was bought by Henry Eckardt in June of 1906 for \$29,500. The park closed but in 1912, Eckardt offered the area for use as a 'forest school'. At the time it was believed that school children would derive health benefits from being taught out of doors.

Victoria Park Forest School reached an enrollment of 200 and was staffed by seven teachers, a nurse, and a supplies officer. The school moved elsewhere on Eckardt's property in September 1932.



CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING THE ESTATES

While the waterfront was being transformed by removing existing housing, the rest of the Beach was experiencing a real estate boom on the hillsides from Queen to Gerrard. The explanation for this rapid neighbourhood development was the break up of three major local estates.

The first estate was the property of the Toronto Golf Club. The club, the first 18-hole course in Canada, was established in 1876, and after operating in a number of locations, settled on land near Gerrard and Coxwell in 1894. By 1912 the area was no longer a desired rural retreat and the club moved to Mississauga, selling the land in 1912 for development.

In 1872, Reverend William Stewart Darling purchased 28.5 acres in the Beach for \$1,852.50 (\$292,600 in today's dollars). The property stretched from the south side of Kingston Road between Lee and Beech Avenues, south to Queen Street East between Lee and Glen Manor, at its peak.

In 1900, Darling sold the estate to Alfred Ernest Ames, a stockbroker. Initially, the property was used as his summer residence but later he lived there the year around. According to The Toronto Historical Society, "He made a number of improvements to the property, including building a trout pond, erecting a

large wooden fence along the Kingston Road frontage, building rustic bridges over the creek, building a lodge on Lee Avenue, landscaping and installing electric lighting, and adding more acreage to the property so that he could have a nine-hole golf course."

In the late 1920s, Beach troubadour Ted Reeves wrote an evocative description of the scene as it changed. "...such as Ames Bush, which spread over hill, dale and waterway, approximately from Queen to Kingston Road, from Balsam to Wineva to upper Lee. Howard's Pond with its swans and ornamental ducks snuggled in the gully that still exists in part at Queen and Glen Manor. Ames's Pond lay alongside Lee Avenue north of Williamson. They were joined by creeks and another pond near the Williamson Road bridge and with the Ames home rising on terraces to the great height near Main, now Southwood and Kingston Road, it formed as beautiful an estate as we have ever had in Toronto.

"Some of the lovely trees that were stretched in a great mass on the long rise and made a wonderful view between the Highway and the lake are still standing on the lawns on the Glen Manors and the Pine Crescent."

The third estate was owned by Alan MacLean

Howard, who was one of the major landowners in the area.

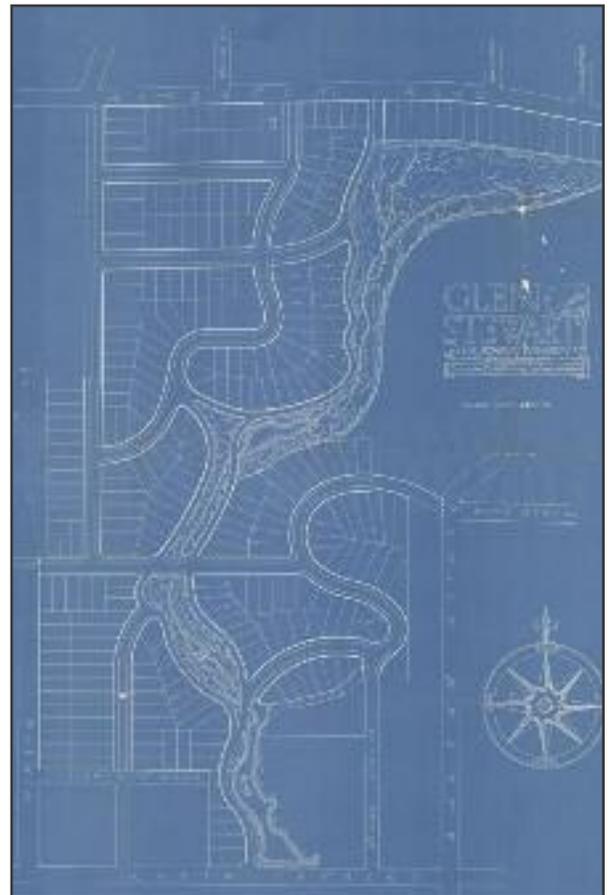
In 1980 Mrs. J.C. Cummins recalled the scene from a child's eye view in an interview with her granddaughter. "A large house [Howard's] was built on the northwest corner of what is now Maclean Avenue.... There was a lovely lawn leading down to what was called Howard's Pond with beautiful white swans floating about. This was where the beginning of





THE AMES AND HOWARD ESTATES – 1900s TO 1930s

Top: The view of Glen Manor from Queen Street in 1920. Bottom Right: Map of Glen Stewart broken up for development. Bottom Left: The bridge over Glen Stewart Ravine, 1921



the nature trail is now. A high iron fence ran along Queen Street and next to the pond. Where Glen Manor runs north there were large iron gates opening on a wide drive which led up nearly to Kingston Road where the owner of the other estate, Mr. A.E. Ames, had his home. In the winter the children would go north of the MacLean Howard home and down to the now frozen pond to skate.... There were wild games of crack the whip, tag, and shinny hockey.”

In 1915, when Alan McLean Howard decided to move to Oakville, he put his estate on the market for development. The property had started as a prosperous 14 hectare farm named Glen Duart after a family home in Scotland. A *Globe* story was headed, ‘Old Landmark Destined to Be Covered with Modern Bungalows.’

“Mr. H. Addison Johnston is the builder who is to transform this estate.... He proposes to put through a new street running westward from MacLean Avenue parallel to Queen Street. The property will be built up with bungalows of the English type following the lines developed in English garden cities.

“It included a hill which was the particular domain of Mr. Howard’s beautiful English and Indian pheasants, and a valley for his celebrated Manchurian ducks. Now the hill is to be levelled into the valley.”

As the houses went up along MacLean and Glen Manor, early real estate ads touted their electric and gas lighting, a good road and trolley cars to the door (“20 minutes direct ride from King and Yonge”), plus country air with city advantages. Still, it took several years to build and sell them all as the economy turned down in a 1920s post-war slump. The development included a 1.6 hectare plot for the Williamson Road School, severed in 1914.

In 1931 the developer turned over the Glen Stewart Ravine to the city for use as a park. Although it was part of the Glen Duart development, it was not a likely site for residential buildings. The stream that splashes through it originated as far north as the Danforth. All of the hillside streams were eventually steered into pipes to run tamely down into the lake, except for the bit burbling cheerfully in the new nature trail. That finally flowed under-

ground about where the swans had floated. For a while it did occasionally escape, disrupting Queen Street and even, it is said, tilting an apartment building slightly by washing away the sand beneath it.

In 1909, Ames began subdividing his property. The new development, was called Stewart Manor, was under the management of George Cox (Ames’ father-in-law) who had been vice-president and director of the Provident Investment Company. Provident would also buy the Scarboro Beach Amusement Park land and eventually act as agent for some of the Howard estate.

An enthusiastic biographical item on George Cox praised the company’s newest housing development, “Probably the most important development that has been worked out by the company is the Stewart Manor.... No pains or expense in the adaptation of this beautiful spot to home purpose have been spared by the company, which has graded all roads, built all sidewalks, laid out attractive drives and foot paths through a charming park, and in general has done everything within human artistic ability to make the manor ideal.... Even this early in its existence, Stewart Manor compares favourably with the older and most noted districts of Toronto.”

STEWART MANOR
Among the Oaks

The Place to Build Your Home

One must see STEWART MANOR to realize its natural beauties

A BEARING FOR CHILDREN. Stewart Manor is almost the only new estate left in the District, and is situated immediately adjacent to Sherbourne Beach Park, on high dry land, beautifully wooded. Children can play safely and in their health's interest within its spacious boundaries, and the location need not be mentioned in the listing.

IMPROVEMENTS. The owners have spent large sums on improvements. The property was planned to start with complete electric, gas, water, sewer, and telephone service. The natural beauties of the estate, including the stream, water and gas are furnished, including gas and electric service provided.

CLIMATE. It is not an isolated district, being nearly one mile from the city and only 15 minutes from Yonge Street by street car.

CLEAN AIR. Stewart Manor is free of all obstructions and is laid out to take the air, ensuring clear hills without exposure.

AN INVESTMENT IN WISE CONSTRUCTION. Stewart Manor has in an extremely safe and profitable investment. The property already contains most desirable homes and surrounding lands are being developed at very low prices to purchase and are shortly being up available lots.

WE WILL HELP YOU BUILD. We will begin building immediately in any lot available and we are equipped in every way to help you in your building of choice.

Map of general location, showing location of Stewart Manor.

COX & CUMMINGS
2115 Queen St. E.
PHONE BEACH 4228

Since 1906, Alfred Ernest Ames, his wife, Mary (Minnie) Cox and their two children had lived full time in their home perched on the hillside near Kingston Road and Main. He would leave his mark on the Beach, but he was principally a businessman who moved in prominent circles.

He was, for example, one of a circle of wealthy Methodist businessmen who were also notable philanthropists. He had several connections with the Massey family including investments in the City Dairy with Walter Massey. Massey, who died in 1901, had been a pioneer in the production and promotion of pasteurized milk and owned an experimental farm near Danforth and Victoria Park.

Ames, was a devout Methodist, and a biographical item noted that he supported the Beech Avenue Methodist Church near Pine Avenue, "whose chapel-like proportions then housed a struggling congregation...and for twenty years was a faithful member and official." He became a member of the building committee of the Kingston Road United Church, built in 1928, and donated a stained glass window in memory of his daughter, who died in 1927.

Ames was also an enthusiastic golfer and a founder of the Scarborough Golf and Country Club in 1912. In 1920, he built his own nine-hole



Alfred E. Ames 1901

golf course. Its boundaries were Kingston Road, the Williamson Road school grounds, Lee Avenue and Southwood Drive. He dammed a stream to create several ponds including an artificial one where, it is said, a boat was kept to make it easier to retrieve golf balls from the water.

On April 1, 1921 Ames leased his course to a group who were promoting public golf in Toronto, and who planned development of larger course. It was reported that 650 people attended the Glen Stewart Public Golf Course opening, some arriving by trolley, getting off conveniently at Stop 6 on Kingston Road.

In 1930 it reverted to being Ames' private

course, and one he allowed his neighbours to enjoy. He was noted for being generous with his surroundings, letting local kids skate on his ponds and sleigh ride down his hills.

His last years were tragic for him and for his wife. Six years after their daughter's death, their son died. He had been seriously wounded in World War I. Ames himself died of bone cancer a few months later, leaving an estate of \$705,000 (about \$14 million today) in the midst of the 1930s Depression. His will included a bequest to the Kingston Road Church. Minnie, herself a noted philanthropist, died in 1941.

His obituary in the *Toronto Star*, acknowledging his good works, rather daringly described Ames in part as "the child of a Methodist parsonage and a living refutation of the old saying that the children of clergymen come to no good."

Chapter 3: Beachers Known for Love of Sports

The Beach in the 1920s and 30s was alive with social, religious, drama and even art activities, but especially with sports. Beachers weren't just fans, they played. The Balmy Beach Club led the way with its remarkable roster of champions in the Olympics and early Grey Cup games, but they weren't alone. Beachers played on church teams, school teams and Girl Guide teams. They played in Kew Gardens, Pantry Park, church gymnasiums and everybody's back yards, and sometimes as semi-pros. Their skills and energies fostered the beginnings of lasting sports organizations, not only in the Beach, but across the city.

This was happening in a different world. Not everyone had a car. There were still horses pulling delivery wagons. And, as the 1930s Depression deepened and money was scarce, local sport teams drew large crowds.

Commercial sports were not yet the force they would eventually become. Adults and kids played games, pick up or organized for exercise and enjoyment and the excitement of competing. The Beach had a growing reputation for its enthusiasm for many types of athletics... and for winning in a number of amateur and semi-pro leagues that were spreading everywhere.

This was also the era of attempts to legislate morality. Canada prohibited drinking with patchy laws that largely ended in 1927. Hollywood set up the Hayes office in 1930 to censor movies, and a local church bulletin, in 1932, noted a resolution that "motion pictures are degrading to the juvenile mind," perhaps because there were already several movie theatres in the neighbourhood.

Toronto had its own home-grown church-led restrictions on Sunday fun, even the infamous touch of tying up park swings. In 1924 the same church publication reported on a speech made in the city by Branch Rickey, President and Manager of the St Louis Cardinals, noting that, "He never has anything to do with the sport or business of baseball on Sunday. He is a real sport. Sport develops manhood. Sabbath breaking does not." Rickey

took his place in baseball history two decades later when, as President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, he hired Jackie Robinson, the first black player in the major leagues.

Among the many local sports clubs, The Balmy Beach Club led the way with its remarkable roster of Olympics and the Grey Cup champions. But the most fiercely fought and lively games were with local rival, the Kew Beach Club. That ended only in 1930 when the waterfront was rebuilt and Kew Beach closed its doors.

It was through these years that Balmy Beach held day-long regattas that drew 2,000 spectators and competitors. There were kids' races, both men's and women's teams and the formidable war canoe paddlers who competed in the big finish, often pitting Balmy Beach against its arch rival the Kew Beach Club. Beachers recalled as youngsters, running down the hills on Saturday mornings to find a spot in the crowds and share the excitement.

Kew Gardens was the finish line for the regattas but the competition didn't end there. The club's Land Committee organized something for everyone – races for girls under five, a handkerchief race for ladies, a boys' sack race, marathons for boys and men, as well as events for serious competitors.

Kew Gardens was a flourishing sports venue, with



Rum Runners captured at Ashbridges Bay

hockey pads and toboggan slides in the winter, tennis in the spring, and at its foot near the water, the venerable lawn bowling club. Its summer softball games could attract 6,000 fans. The Beach Softball League would play on for years, to become the oldest in the city.

Nearby Pantry Park had also been revamped with a hockey rink and playing field. It was given its name by Balmy Beach Club champion, *Toronto Telegram* sports writer and Beach idol, Ted Reeve. He was mourning the loss of the stadium and sports facilities demolished with the Scarboro Beach Park in 1925, and didn't consider the smaller space up to much.

The story goes that

he took one look at the new bleachers and said they looked like the shelves in his mother's pantry. Then according to a 1978 *Ward 9 News* story, when the mayor arrived for the formal opening, he said that



**Balmy Beach Club champion paddler
Roy Nurse in 1930**

Pantry Park was as good a name as any. The name stood for many years until a City Parks Committee decreed that a replacement sign should show its official name, Beaches Athletic Field unless there was some proof that the community liked Pantry Park

better. An opinion poll stirred up by Roy Merrens proved that it did, and Pantry Park it remained.

Reeve loved the Beach and trumpeted its charms and its athletic achievements for many years until his death in August, 1983.

A major source of amateur players and teams were the neighborhood churches. The Beach's well attended churches were all very much a part of the social fabric. In 1925, St John Norway had a congregation of about 2,000 families. The Kew Beach church had about 1,100. All of them had Sunday schools, choirs, mothers' groups, and parish associations attending to the work of their churches. They also had gymnasiums, auditoriums, bowling alleys and even billiard tables, and they made use of them.

St John Norway's February 1923 church bulletin announced proudly that the ladies basketball team "has been victorious over the Beech Avenue Methodist and Waverly Road Baptist, defeating the former by 19-12, and the latter by 10-3." In 1924 St John won the first game of the Inter Church Softball League with a score of 6 to 5 against Kew Beach.

In 1912 the Waverly Road Baptist Young Men's Club had played and lost a snowy hockey game, against the Coxwell Aces that is credited with being the beginning of the Beaches Hockey League. Frank Smith, the Baptist team's goalie, was a founder of the Beach league, and eventually president of the Toronto Hockey League which would evolve into the GTHL Smith is recognized in the Hockey Hall of



Ted Reeve



Fame.

There were other leagues playing at different levels. Both the hockey and rugby teams at St Aidans held Ontario titles and in 1921-22, an intermediate team won a city baseball title. There were tennis clubs, badminton and lacrosse clubs and ladies bowling tournaments. The St John Norway bulletin noted in 1927, "Our gymnasium with its marked courts is never idle for even a single hour during the winter months."

Another Beacher, Fred Norrhan, was elected to head another city-wide sports group. He was governor of the midget and bantam teams, 30 of them, in a Toronto and district basketball and lacrosse organization, and expressed what was probably reflected the goal of many of the church participants. "My whole object is to give the boys the best physical and moral training that I am in the position to give them."

Meanwhile, there were other locally produced amusements in those years. A reminiscence recalls when "the big stage at St John was the scene of plays, shows and operettas." A note in a 1938 bulletin says that "the ladies of the Parish Association are putting on a play, 'something really good'."

At Kew Beach United, from the 1930s, the Kew

Beach Players would provide entertainment for 45 years.

The churches were not, of course, alone in community activities. From the day it opened in 1916, the Beaches Library set a swift pace, guided by two remarkable women. The first chief librarian, Jessie Rorke, was in charge until 1929, the second, Louise Boothe, until 1948.

Jessie Rorke started early with exhibitions of the work of local artists, book lovers' evenings, and soon a Beaches Library Drama League featuring the work of Canadian poets and playwrights. At musical hour with the Beaches branch of the Toronto Conservatory also performed. There were practical talks and activities such as homemakers' evenings, and a children's story hour by the fireplace. In typical Beach competitive style, the Drama League took second place in the Central Ontario Region of the Dominion Drama Festival.

In 1927 the *Christian Science Monitor* read, "Some interesting experiments of community service are being carried out in the Beaches Branch of the Toronto Public Libraries. It exerts a real influence not only in the cultural, but in the social and business life of the area."

In passing, the *Monitor* also provided a snap shot of the local demographics, The Beach "has no foreigners, no very poor, and few really wealthy families."

The Beach did have a population of about 40 Jewish families who, in 1920, established a synagogue. It drew members from other areas of the city and the Beach



Beaches Library performance in 1928



Kew Beach Club Lawn Bowlers (taken near Lee Avenue)



East Toronto Band (taken on the Ames Estate)



Balmy Beach War Canoe 1924

Synagogue is now one of the oldest in Toronto.

The neighborhood wasn't all baseball and theatricals. It suffered a variety of problems during the 30s. One was a shadow the trouble growing in other parts of the world. It was the formation in 1933 of the Swastika Club whose members wore the emblem, painted it on rocks and boards, and harassed some visitors. Their actions also reflected the virulent anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant attitudes that infected Toronto at the time. In August police broke up a potential confrontation between Swastika members and some opposing young men. The mayor prohibited wearing the swastika symbol on the beach, but sadly the antagonism continued to simmer. The infamous Christie Pits riot happened a short time later that summer.

In February of 1936 the Balmy Beach Club's handsome old building burned down. Fortunately no one was killed, and the club lost no time in rebuilding, opening on the same spot about a year later.

Then in July, 1936, a record national heatwave brought people from across the city to the area seeking refuge on the beach and along the entire shore-

line. Even locals were dragging mattresses down to the waterfront to get some respite from temperatures in the 40s and higher.

A *Star* reporter looking for some good news wrote that there were a few groups of young people who turned up the music on their portable radios and spent the cooler night hours swimming and dancing on the sands.

The heat lasted a week, damaging crops and, in those pre-air conditioned days, killing people. The temperatures recorded on July 7, 8, and 9 set a record, of 40C in the shade that still stands in Toronto. By July 15 at least 200 Torontonians had died, when the temperatures finally eased.

Through it all, churches and citizen groups were working to help others as the Depression darkened. Seventeen per cent of Torontonians were unemployed, 25 per cent on relief. Many of the men working on the Eastern Beaches Park project were paid by a government relief fund.

Even the children were raising money for people in need. Girl Guide and Boy Scout groups were thriving in those years. St John Norway, for instance, hosted 60 Cubs and 70 Boy Scouts. Girl

Guide troops were, typically, putting together food baskets plus a coal supply. They dressed dolls to donate to the Fred Victor Mission. In 1934 they collected canned goods for the Scott Institute, holding open nights for canned goods showers.

The Beaches Lions Club, getting underway in 1935, sponsored a junior boys' softball team and a

charity benefit hockey game between Lions and local businessmen. They also provided cod liver oil, clothes, glasses and money for people in need, and they helped out the Scouts by donating musical instruments for a band. They also started a summer carnival tradition, and, in due course, their long lasting Beaches Easter Parade.

BEACH GIRL HOCKEY LEAGUE WAS "HOT-BED" OF COMPETITION

In February 1924 there was an epic hockey match in Kew Gardens played by teams of girls under the age of 14. It was covered by the *Star Weekly* under the head: Beaches Section Hotbed of Feminine Hockey.

The reporter covering the match wrote: "In the Beach district the natives are all enthused about the Beaches Girl Hockey League, composed of the Hectorines, Populars, Queen's, and Englands.... It has been circulated around that these four girls' hockey clubs are providing as much tobacco and ginger in their league games as their more robust male consorts have ever exhibited.

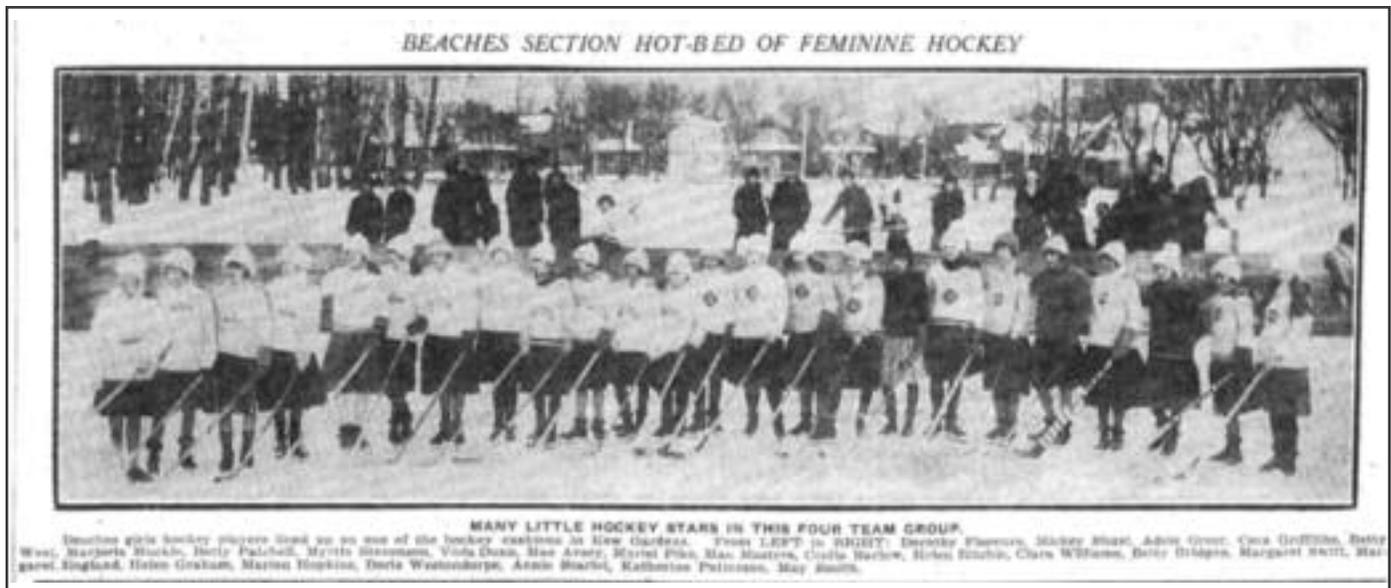
"The other night the Queen's whipped the Populars by a 1-0 score after 75 minutes of actual hockey. And every girl on both teams is 14 years of age or under. A well meaning gentleman suggested after 70 minutes of play to call it off; the girls one and all yelled, 'Come on! Let's finish it'. The game was started at 5:00 – half an hour late – and finished up close to 7:00.

"The Hectorines have a war whoop that is yodded thus:

Heck-Heck-Hectorine!
Where, where have you been?
Up the ice –
Down the ice –
S-c-o-r-e-Score"

Beaches Girl Hockey League Standings

	Won	lost	to play
Hectorines	4	2	0
Populars	3	2	1
Queen's	2	2	2
Englands	0	3	3



Chapter 4:

Infrastructure Key to Beach Development

Balmy Beach, the neighbourhood's eastern side has its own distinctive history. Until the city annexed Balmy Beach in 1908, Part of it was in the town of East Toronto. In 1875 Sir Adam Wilson deeded Balmy Beach Park, a green space at the waterfront at the foot of what is now Beech and Willow. He stipulated that it was for the pleasure of residents and visitors to the Beaches and East Toronto. In 1905 the Balmy Beach Club was built at its southeast corner.

Wilson was a distinguished jurist and two times mayor of Toronto who was one of the area's early estate owners.

When East Toronto joined the city, there was another stipulation, that the area south of Kingston Road must be a residential district, free of factories and hotels.

The two old amusement parks that had flourished in the area went out of business early in the century. Munro Park was subdivided for housing. For a while, the privately owned Victoria Park site had two tenants. One, from 1917 to 1927, was the T. Eaton Company which ran a summer camp for men and boys. It closed when the city expropriated the land for the planned new water filtration plant, paying its owner \$370,000 (\$561 million today).

The other was the Forest School, a seasonal sanatorium for children suffering from afflictions such as asthma, malnutrition, cardiac and pre-tubercular problems. It ran until 1932, closing not only because work on the water filtration plant was underway, but because medical approaches had changed.

About 1914, the swampy area around Willow and south of Queen had been filled, largely with ashes, and a stream between Willow and Silver Birch was siphoned off. A 1920 news report read, "Preparations for the laying of macadam on Fernwood Park, Willow and Neville Park avenues are now proceeding and a few weeks may see the Beaches district provided with three more good roads."

The scene was now set for the first stage in the construction of one of Toronto's most important en-

gineering and architectural projects, the water purification plant. The R.C. Harris Treatment Plant was proposed in 1913, an era when raw sewage was pumped into the lake, and when people died of drinking tap water. Harris and his wife Alice had themselves lost an infant child to complications from a strep infection. Public health ideas were just taking hold.

Except for a brief fling as a newspaper man, Harris was a high profile municipal civil servant who had moved up the ladder quickly. A news report said that in 1901 he was chief clerk, in 1905 he was Property Commissioner at a salary of \$2,000 (about \$58,000 today), and in 1912 Works Commissioner, at four times that salary. The *Mail and Empire* described him as "dean of all department heads." A number of the public projects he help build are still



R.C. Harris sitting a bench near his Neville Park Home

functioning across the city including the North Toronto treatment plant, the St Clair reservoir and the Prince Edward Viaduct among them.

He was a Beacher for 35 years, living with his family first on Balsam, then on Neville Park.

Throughout the years working for the city, he had his battles with politicians, including their doubts about financing the filtration plant in the midst of the Depression. But he had a large personality, and reporters seemed to dote on him.

One wrote, "From 9 in the morning to 6 in the evening, a good nine hour day, he finds no hardship. He likes to work – in his own words gets a good deal of joy out of it. To him the varied undertakings of his department, the laying of pavements, building of railways, putting down sewers and erecting bridges have just as much real, unalloyed pleasure in them as the small boy gets out of constructing all manner of wonderful works with his nursery blocks

"He is not an engineer by training. He holds no diploma from a technical school. Yet he knows a few things about engineering. His specialty is administration, and that, even above engineering qualifications, is what is needed for the proper handling of the duties of his office."

In another story, written to mark the Harris cou-



Ponys were used to haul muck out of the tunnels under construction.

ple's 30th wedding anniversary, a *Mail and Empire* reporter interviewed him at his "gracious yet unassuming home on Neville Park Boulevard." He describes Alice Harris as "the gracious lady who presides over the Harris menage," and Harris himself as "the suave, the imperturbable, the zealous yet effortlessly efficient 'Roly' Harris, always smiling and never at a loss for an answer."

Off duty, Harris was president of the Toronto Camera Club, and said he enjoyed photography principally for "its mechanical and chemistry and chemical aspects." He taught Sunday school and served as its superintendent at St. Aidan's church.

He was a member of the Beaches Gun Club but told the interviewer that he didn't hunt much anymore because he "lost the desire to kill" as he got older.

In 1922 city council had approved \$14.3 million (\$220.2 million today) for a plan that would improve the city's water system which included the filtration plant at Victoria Park. A 1925 report on what was involved,



The 'Palace of Purity' takes shape in 1933

began with a shaft and “an intake pipe reaching 1005 metres into the lake. In water nine metres deep, an initial capacity of 100 million gallons (nearly 400 million litres) per day with an inbuilt possibility of expansion.” Work would begin in 1932 and take nearly two years. Far under the surface of the water men blasted and shovelled, loading buckets of muck on the backs of animals to be carried back along the lengthening tunnel and lifted up and out of the shaft.



Track Construction on Kingston Road near Scarborough Road in 1922

Construction of the building itself began in August, 1932. In 1937 the cost, noted in a cost data report, of all “construction and related works (electrical, retaining walls, etc.) was \$4,006,620.18



A new bridge was constructed over the railway tracks at Main Street in 1932.



St. John's Training School. Neil McNeil School now occupies part of the St. John's site.

[\$73.4 million today].” The plant was officially put into operation in 1941 and added to and updated over the years. Its early nickname, disparaging its remarkable architecture, was the Palace of Purification, but it remains noted for its beauty as well as its efficiency. In 1992 it was designated a national historic civil engineering site by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering. It has been designated an historical building by Ontario Heritage, and appeared on a stamp in a series on important Art Deco buildings. It still purifies about 40 per cent of Toronto's water

Roly Harris worked without a holiday throughout the World War II years, concerned for the functioning of the city's underpinnings. He was faced at the end of his long career with politicians who opposed him, and created a bylaw requiring that public works commissioners must be professional engineers. He died in 1945 of a heart attack at age 69.

Meanwhile, improvements public transit to and from the Beach, and for that matter, in the Beach were underway, not without problems.

In its early days the Beach was regarded by the existing private transit operators as basically a bu-

colic outcropping of the city with a profitable summertime population, but not worth servicing in the cold weather. They provided changeable destinations at the best of times. At the turn of the century the Toronto Railway Company (TRC) ran a track on Queen as far as Balsam, and another along Kingston Road with, for

a while, an extension down Blantyre to Victoria Park. The TRC owned the Scarboro Beach Park, and profitably transported its customers right to the grounds.

Altogether, by 1920, Toronto had four private transit companies operating nine networks and facing passengers with the possibility of paying nine different fares in one

trip. So in 1920, city council voted to take over public transit. It was a move completed in 1921 when the TRC franchise reached its end when the Scarboro Beach Park was shut down.

Beach service improved. The TRC Munro Park loop moved to Neville Park, and the Queen Street line was starting to look much like the current 501. The Kingston Road-Bingham loop opened in 1922, and that encouraged major development around Bingham, Bracken and Victoria Park. A new subdivision came to life on 154 lots detached from the St John's Industrial School grounds. The school would move out of town in the 1950s.

In 1923 The *Globe* commented on the “very noticeable” development of the vacant lots and a filling in of the property along the Kingston Road within the city limits. “The installation of double trackage, and the frequent trolley services between King Street and the city limits has stimulated interest in building property in the neighbourhood of Kingston Road and Victoria Park Avenue, the terminal of the city car.

In spite of the economic downturn in the 1920s and the devastating Depression of the 1930s, the

Beach had blossomed. It had a number of new parks, improved roads, swampland filled in, new housing, and useful transit. The main streets were lined with businesses, and schools were in place and growing.

Soon, much of these developments in infrastructure were about to come to a standstill by World War II. The slowly growing awareness of the impact of world events was expressed in July 1938 by W.L. Baynes-Reed, rector at St John Norway. He had been a Chaplain in World War I, decorated for

his work. His words were a warning.

“We don’t realize in this country what our sense of security means, and we are not half thankful enough for it. The motherland is taking very strong steps to defend herself if attacked. May God bless all efforts to preserve the peace.”

He died in that year.

By 1940, the new reality was part of the election campaign of H.E. McCallum, about to become Alderman, and a few years later, Mayor of Toronto.

“Ward 8”, he said, “is the home of approximately

Another Noted Beacher

On Monday afternoon, August 2, 1920, a crowd of about 2,000 gathered on the east side of Kew Gardens for the unveiling of a monument to Dr. William D. Young. He had died in November 1918. The *Star* report said that he died of acute nephritis, inflammation of the kidneys. It said the Beach nearly shut down on the day of his funeral at St John Norway the Baptist Church.

It was Beachers who donated the money for the memorial to a doctor and philanthropist who was clearly loved and admired.

The *Toronto World* reported that Mayor Thomas Church, who presided at the ceremony, had known Dr. Young. The mayor told the people, “It is not only in times of war that men become heroes.... Dr. Young was a peace hero whose life work consisted of one noble action after another.... Dr. Young devoted his whole time to the welfare of the sick and needy...you residents of the Beach know how well he generously administered to the physical and spiritual needs of poor families without hope of reward or thought of glory.”

The memorial, described as a water fountain with four basins, was officially accepted by the mayor in the name of the city. The design, chosen in a competition, was by architect Maurice D. Klein. The words ‘Service Was His Aim’ are inscribed at the top of the memorial. It has been designated by the city under the Ontario Heritage Act, and there is a plaque on it that references a mystery. For a while, a small statuette by noted sculptor Florence Wylie replaced the fountain. It was stolen and has never been found.



MEMORIAL TO LATE DR. W. D. YOUNG UNVEILED.

Over 2,000 persons were present in Kew Gardens yesterday afternoon when a beautiful fountain was unveiled in memory of the late Dr. W. D. Young of the Beaches. The bottom picture is of Mrs. (Dr.) Young, his father, mother, brother and other relatives.

East Toronto

The town of East Toronto was incorporated as a village in 1888. The village of 700 to 800 people stretched from Kingston Road to the Danforth, from east Woodbine to west of Victoria Park and included a strip of Balmy Beach from Balsam to Beech.

The village's commercial centre was Main Street and Gerrard (then named Lake View Street) and its main industry was the Grand Truck Railroad. The railroad built its marshalling yards on the northeast corner of Main and Gerrard which included a train station and a 32-stall roundhouse.

The railroad employed hundred of workers who lived in railroad owned row-houses built along many local streets such as Gerrard, Main, Swanwick, many still occupied today. Local landowners, such as Benjamin Morton and George Stephenson, also constructed row-houses for railway workers on neighbouring streets. The landowners and other professionals in the community also lived in the neighbourhood, building three-storey houses on large lots on streets such as Lyall.

As East Toronto grew from a village into a town (1903), so did its infrastructure. By 1900, the area had electric street lighting. The Toronto & Scarboro Light and Power Company ran a spur line connecting the

town to downtown Toronto. Water was provided through the Balmy Beach link to the lake and distributed by the powerhouse at Wayland and Gerrard (See left).

The town had a number of schools, a firehall (with a volunteer fire brigade), town offices, police station (and jail), and a YMCA built on Grand Trunk property on the northeast side of Main and Gerrard, which included a library and hospital.



By the time Toronto annexed the town in 1908, its population was about 5,000.

Shortly after annexation the Grand Trunk moved its marshalling yard to west Toronto and the area became home to people who commuted into Toronto to work.



First East Toronto Police Station and jail

Chapter 5: The Leuty, still serving after 100 years



August 3, 1920: Harbour police officers and lifeguards in front of the newly-constructed sub-station at the foot of Leuty Avenue.

80,000 loyal British subjects whose chief thought is that everything must be subordinated to our win-the-war effort.”

If you ask Beachers what landmark best represents the local spirit of the community, many would say the Leuty Lifeguard Station. It is certainly the most photographed structure in the area. Located at the foot of Leuty Avenue, the station was built in 1920. It is a clapboard structure with a rooftop lookout tower. It was commissioned by the Toronto Harbour Commission and designed by architects Chapman, Oxley and Bishop, who also worked on the Princes Gate and Palais Royale, and engineered by J. R. Wainwright, assistant chief engineer with the Toronto Harbour Commission.

The Leuty, originally named the Scarborough Beach Lifeguard Station, was one of three of the

same design built by the city in 1920. The other two, one at the western channel and the other at Humber River, have since been torn down. The lifeguard station at Cherry Beach was built later but of the same design.

The Leuty was designated as an historic site under



It is not surprising that capsized boats were a problem for Leuty lifeguards. There were a number of boat rental companies operating on the beach.

the Ontario Heritage Act in 1993. A Toronto Historical Board plaque was erected in 2020 to mark its 100 anniversary. The plaque mentions that over the years lifeguards stationed at the Leuty rescued more than 6,000 people.

LIFEGUARDS

While many love the Leuty as an iconic building, it was the hundreds of lifeguards who worked out of the station over the last 100 years that made it important to the Beach.

Just a few days after it opened in July 1920, lifeguards from the station rescued Mr. D. Blackwell, who was unconscious when taken from the water near Leuty. He was taken to the station where he regained consciousness and was able to return to his home on Waverley later in the day. At 5 p.m. on the same day, lifeguard Mahone was able to save three young girls when their canoe capsized at Scarborough Beach.

Throughout the 20s, 30s and 40s Toronto papers regularly reported on the many lifesaving efforts of the Leuty station team. Many of the rescues the lifeguards performed were not on swimmers, but on capsized boats and canoes.



Gord Lowry with his basket lunch



SUMMER LIFEGUARD DOUG BISHOP, 28, MAKES 30 A WEEK
A thoughtful policeman, he's usually checking Joan Potter, 24, of Malvern Ct.

On June 20, 1942, seven people were saved from overturned canoes. At 3:30 p.m. Jean Squire and Robert Corbett capsized half a mile off Wineva Avenue. They were saved by lifeguards Rupfield and Ogden. Shortly after 6 p.m. lifeguard Dennis Catford picked up two young teens when their canoe capsized off MacLean, then lifeguard Jim Allen rescued Harold Ellis off Balmy Beach from an overturned canoe. The next day two more boaters were saved half a mile off Woodbine Beach.

The Leuty station was certainly fulfilling its mandate. However there were issues. The Leuty station had supervision of the beach from Coatsworth Cut to Victoria Park, a distance of over three miles. In 1931, the *Toronto Star* reported that the number of lifeguards on the beach for the season was reduced by two and they were expected to work up to 15 hours a day.

At an inquest over a drowning child in 1940, Leuty lifeguard Peter Burger testified that “We lost track of the number of children were pulled out that afternoon.” The *Star* article went on to report, “We are

Photo Page 25 : The Leuty Lifeguard Station crew for 2000. (Melissa Faulkner is standing on the roof in the second line, far right).





Part of the Save Our Station campaign was a raffle of the small replica of the station called the Little Leuty. It was constructed and donated by company which developed the racetrack lands.

the custodians of thousands of children but we have no authority,” lifeguard Edward Blair told the corner. “We can warn them but they are not bound to obey.”

While working conditions were demanding, many former lifeguards have good memories of their experience at the Leuty. Gord Lowry was one of a crew of 11 lifeguards (plus a Captain). He was stationed at the Leuty for six years from 1930 to 1935. For \$25, he worked from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. six days a week.

In a *Beach Metro News* article from 1993, Lowry said that since he wasn’t allowed to take meal breaks, he really appreciated getting meals delivered. He remembered one neighbour woman who would cook Sunday dinner for the lifeguards for 75 cents. It included roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and coffee brought to them in a basket.

Doug Bishop, 19, was one of 170 students working as a lifeguard on Toronto beaches in 1965. He was stationed at the Leuty and got paid \$64 for a five-day, 40-hour work week. “To a great extent it’s how you get along with people when you ask them to observe the rules,” he told the *Star*. He said he loves what he is doing and holds Toronto and Ontario



schoolboy records for the 100 yards backstroke.

Former City Councillor Tom Jakobek, who was a lifeguard at the Leuty station for three years between 1977 and 1979, said “It was the greatest job of my life...It gave you a sense of discipline.”

However it did have its drawbacks. The salary? \$83.47 for a 44 hour week. And only one 15-minute break. If you needed a washroom, you used a bucket.

The perks. “After work there were all these babes waiting for the lifeguards to get off...and this is before BayWatch.” But you had to be careful. “If you were in the tower (a three hour shift), and got caught checking out the girls on the boardwalk, you had to spend another hour up on the tower.” Jakobek said, “some days I spent my whole shift on the tower”

And if you were caught with a transistor radio, “you got docked a week’s paid.”

“Of all our landmarks, nothing has been as much photographed and loved as this building,” he said.

Melissa Faulkner was just 22-years-old in 2000 when she started work for the Police Marine Unit as a lifeguard for the Leuty Station. While she had worked as a lifeguard at pools in the area, the quantifications to work at the Leuty included a lot physical testing, boating knowledge and well as superior lifesaving skills.

“Managing a rowboat in heavy water requires lots of upper body strength,” she said. Lifeguards would spend half the time manning the stations and half the time in

boats. The foot of Woodbine Avenue was particularly patrolled because “it’s easy to get caught in the undertow near the pool.” Former Toronto Mayo

She enjoyed her time at the Leuty because the lifeguard service was so well run. “Everyone knew what they had to do and how to adjust coverage of the area in an emergency....There was very good camaraderie among the crew.”

Her worst moments? “Someone reporting a young child missing...The first thing we did was to start dredging the water. Thank goodness everyone turned up safely.”

Looking back she said, “it was my favourite job.”

SAVE OUR STATION

In the 1990s, the station was beginning to show its age. Winter winds and beach flooding had made extensive repairs necessary and the city (actually Metro Council) wasn’t sure the Leuty was worth the cost.

Jakobek said he first heard that the station was in danger of being demolished at a meeting of Metro Council. Metro staff claimed that the station was in poor repair and would cost too much money to refurbish.

Jakobek talked to the head of Parks and Recreation for the city, Robert Bundy, who was a Beacher and convinced him to have the city take over the station’s maintenance. He also approached the Toronto Historical Board to have the station designated as a historic site.



Glenn Cochrane and Gene Domagala present a Save Our Station sweatshirt to former Toronto Mayor David Crombie

When Beach residents became aware that the station was at risk, a committee was formed in 1993 called the Save Our Station (S.O.S.) to raise awareness and, more importantly, money to help renovate the beloved structure. Led by Glenn Cochrane, Gene Domagala and Chris Layton, hundreds took part in the fundraising. There were barbecues and corn-roasts, Leuty t-shirts, coffee mugs and posters, and a great deal of community building. The campaign paid off. The S.O.S. raised \$75,000 of the \$80,000 needed to renovate the station.

Over the years, the structure has been moved a number of times due to flooding and erosion of the beach. In 2017, the underpinnings of the building had become damaged and the city spent



The Leuty was moved to more stable ground in 2017.



The Eastern Beaches on a typical summer day in the 1930s with the Leuty at the far right.

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