

RIVERDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Toronto, Ontario.

In 2007 the Riverdale Historical Society was honoured to receive from Heritage Toronto a *Community Heritage Award* and the *Heritage Toronto Members' Choice Award*.

The Riverdale Historical Society was established in 1999 by a group of residents who were interested in discovering, interpreting and preserving the history and heritage of the Toronto neighbourhood known as Riverdale.

The formal settlement of Riverdale, or Riverside as the area was first known, began in 1796 with the first grants of land east of the Don River. It was the intention of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe that these grants would lead to the establishment of farms to supply the needs of the new village of York, later Toronto.

One of the first settlers east of the Don River was John Scadding, 1754-1824, the manager of Governor Simcoe's estate of Woford Lodge in Devon, England, and an adviser in Upper Canada. Scadding was granted some 200 acres of land between the Don and Mill Road, (later Broadview Avenue) and Lake Ontario and what was later Danforth Avenue. Modern Riverdale essentially comprises the first four land grants from the Don to the present Pape Avenue, late Robinson Avenue, and from



St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Club

the Danforth to the lake, some 800 acres in all. It is the story of the people who cleared and settled and developed these lands in the vale of the river and by the lake that forms the history of Riverdale.

John Scadding built a log cabin in the vicinity of the present Queen Street Bridge over the Don River. The cabin was moved in 1879 to the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition. It is Toronto's oldest surviving building.

The oldest inhabited house in Toronto is at 469 Broadview Avenue. The house, originally a log cabin, dates from the same period as the Scadding Cabin. It has been carefully restored to its mid 19th century state by its present owners. It has been visited twice by the Riverdale Historical Society.

The area of Riverside, north of Queen Street East, joined the city of Toronto in 1884 as St. Matthew's Ward. The heritage of Riverdale includes numerous residences of historical and architectural importance, notable public and commercial buildings and churches, all of which have played an important and varied role in the community. It is the objective of the Riverdale Historical Society to document and preserve the heritage of this notable Toronto neighbourhood.

The Society usually meets one Tuesday of each month, from September through June. An Annual General Meeting is also held each year to review the work of the

Society, elect members of the Board, and hear a keynote speaker. In summer the Society has, on occasion, held a picnic in Riverdale Park East. This park was part of John Scadding's original land grant. In 1856 the City of Toronto purchased 119 acres of land from the Scadding estate and in 1890 these lands, except for the Don Jail property, were set aside for park



469 Broadview Avenue purposes.

The monthly meetings of the Society include visits to historically significant homes or buildings in the Riverdale area, tours of interesting streets or historical sites, lectures on subjects of interest in Riverdale past and present and joint meetings with other organizations in the neighbourhood. The Society also offers a series of pamphlets on places of interest as well as walking tour guides.

The Society takes an active interest in promoting historical preservation and in the commemoration of Riverdale history and community heritage. To this end the Society raised the funds for three bronze plaques, which were placed on the new Queen Street bridge over the Don. These

Cabin, 1794, the straightening of the Don River, 1890 and early Don bridge designer William Berczy, 1744-1813. The Society also raises funds for Heritage Toronto plaques for listed or designated buildings in Riverdale. The first of these was unveiled in 2006 to commemorate the Don Jail. A second was unveiled in 2007 for the Poulton Block at 798 Queen Street East. Other heritage Toronto plaques are on the Thomas Hogarth House at 58 Hogarth Avenue, the Owen Staples house and studio at 69 Hogarth Avenue, the William Peyton Hubbard House at 660 Broadview Avenue, St Matthew's Anglican Church at 135 First Avenue and the Music Hall at 147 Danforth Avenue. Other plaques are in the planning stage.

Heritage plaque funds are raised by the Society through a variety of activities including an annual garage sale in June.

The Society maintains an extensive archive of written and photographic



The Ralph Thornton Centre



St. Matthew's Church

materials documenting the work of the Society and the history of Riverdale. The Society invites contributions of materials for inclusion in its archives. Members and supporters are invited to participate in a variety of research projects undertaken by the Society.



Our logo, the Riverdale railway station, DeGrassi St. near Queen, now lost.

The course of the Don River in Riverdale, 1876, from Danforth Avenue to Lake Ontario.