

THE DREAMS ATTACHED TO PLACES C. WHITZMAN 2003

**THE DREAMS ATTACHED TO PLACES:  
FROM SUBURB, TO SLUM, TO URBAN VILLAGE  
IN A TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOOD, 1875-2002**

By

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## ABSTRACT

I explore the relationships between successive images of a neighbourhood, social and housing conditions, and planning policy, using a longitudinal case study of one neighbourhood in Toronto. The neighbourhood, Parkdale, was developed as a politically independent suburb in the late 1870s and 1880s. At the time, it was described as a middle-class, residential “flowery suburb”, although it was also a working class industrial community. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it began to be described as a declining neighbourhood at risk of “becoming a serious slum”, although it continued to offer good housing conditions. By the 1970s, a third phase of image-making had begun: Parkdale began to be described as a revitalized “urban village” of historic homes, along with growing reportage as a “dumping ground” for psychiatric out-patients.

The research suggests that the images of suburb, slum, and urban village used to describe Parkdale bore more of a relation to changing societal norms than social and housing conditions.

However, the images had strong direct and indirect impacts on planning policy and mortgage lending, which in turn influenced social and housing conditions. The research contributes to historical and contemporary theories of neighbourhood transition, and the evolving analysis of the relationship between planning discourse and social conditions.



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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Suburbs, Slums, Urban Villages, and a Good Place to Live

“Grey matter is harder to move than concrete.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Locating the Case Study

When, how, and why do some neighbourhoods become labelled as ‘suburbs’, ‘slums’, and ‘gentrifying areas’? When, how, and why, in the continual process of conflict over neighbourhood change, does a decisive change in the perception of a neighbourhood take place? Do changing labels simply reflect the reality of local economic and housing conditions, as objectively reported by newspapers and government documents? Or are the changing evaluations of neighbourhoods based on evolving social norms and understandings of ‘a good place to live’? What is the relationship between a neighbourhood’s perceived past and its possible futures? In short, how are dreams attached to urban places?

Today, the central Toronto neighbourhood of Parkdale, like many older neighbourhoods in North American cities, simultaneously evokes descriptions of a revitalizing urban village and a declining slum.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1970, Parkdale’s houses with their charming period features, streets lined with mature trees, and history as a well-to-do suburb were being promoted by a new generation of urban developers keen to attract middle-class home buyers.<sup>3</sup> Also in the early 1970s, newspapers began to report some residents’ concerns about the growing number of “boisterous welfare recipients, drunks and drug addicts” inhabiting cheap apartments and rooming houses in the neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> In a two page *Globe and Mail* feature from 1987,

Parkdale was described as “shaped by city trends, but outpacing them” in a growing division between “costly enclave” and “dumping ground” for the poor.<sup>5</sup> By 1997, the *Toronto Star* could triumphantly proclaim the “bowery to bohemia conversion” of the neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> Three years later, however, the *Globe and Mail* ran another two page feature on growing disparities between and within neighbourhoods, and used Parkdale, with its repeated juxtaposition of “an elegant reno next to a rundown rooming house” as an example of a neighbourhood that was simultaneously ‘bowery’ and ‘bohemia’, ‘ghetto’ and gentrified ‘urban village’.<sup>7</sup>

Although now considered part of Toronto’s downtown, Parkdale was, from 1879 to 1889, a politically independent suburb five kilometres (three miles) due west of City Hall. Parkdale continues to have a strong sense of neighbourhood identity, partly because of its clear boundaries. The historic boundaries of Parkdale are identical to the ‘North Parkdale’ and ‘South Parkdale’ planning districts used today [Figure 1]. The lake to the south provides one clear boundary, as does the industrial district east of Dufferin, whose existence predates Parkdale’s development. North of the rail underpass at the intersection of Dufferin and Queen Streets, the neighbourhood’s boundary curves westward along the tracks of what were once four mighty railroads. Parkdale’s western boundary is only a little less clear: starting at a complicated intersection where King, Queen, Roncesvalles, and the Queensway intersect, it moves northward up Roncesvalles Avenue, which has long been a ‘50 cent’ (cheap commercial) street on its ‘Parkdale’ east side and a ‘dollar’ (mostly upscale residential, with doctor’s offices) street on its ‘High Park’ west side. The northern boundary along Wabash and Fermanagh Avenues, a jumble of small industries, and semi-detached homes, is perhaps the most difficult for the casual observer to discern. Queen Street, Parkdale’s major commercial artery, divides the

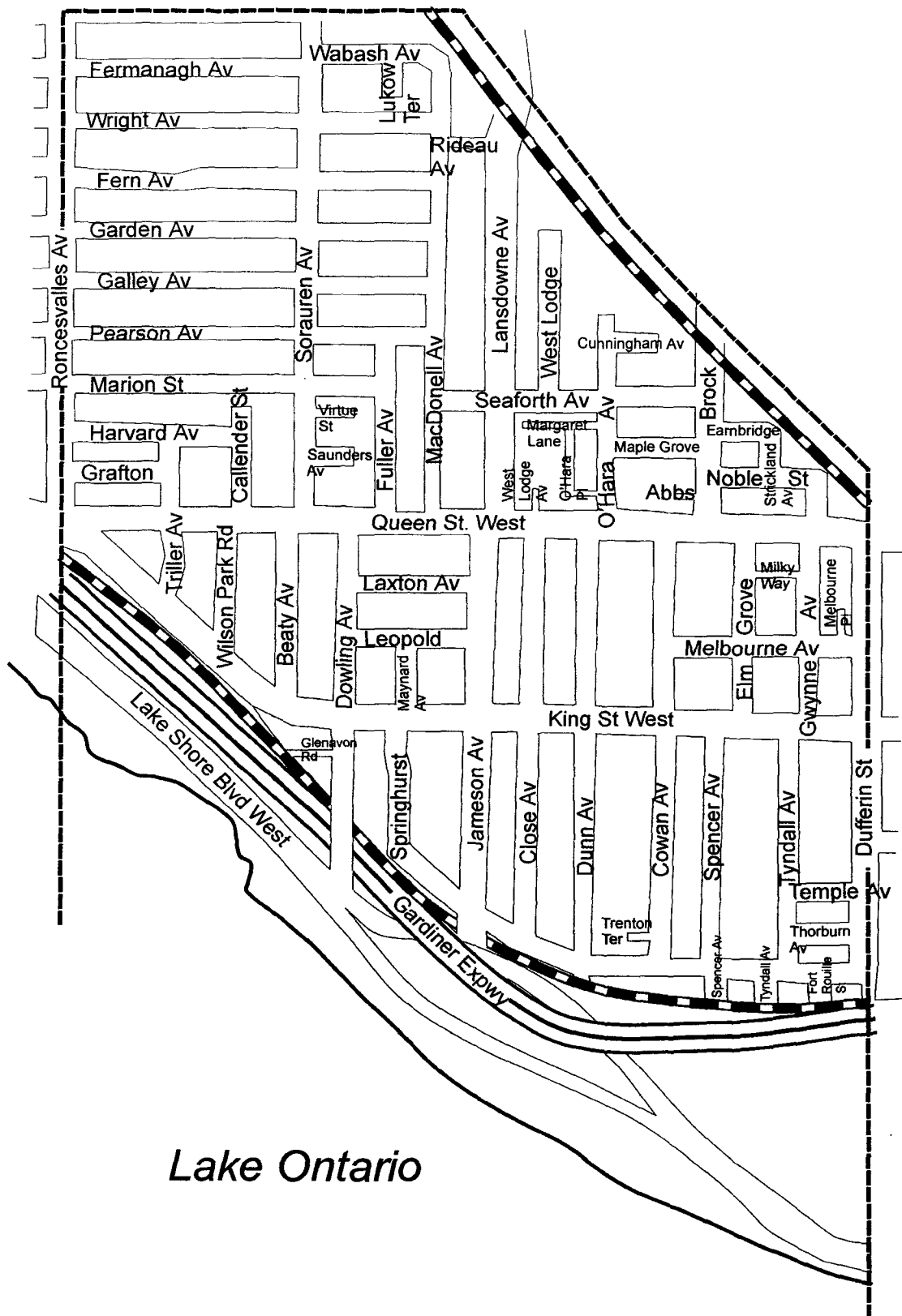


Figure 1. Parkdale, Toronto, 2002.

Source: MapArt Publishing, Map 119 (West Toronto), 2002.

neighbourhood into two roughly equal halves, South and North, each with its own distinct character.

According to the 1996 census, the 33,663 residents contained within Parkdale's boundaries are, on average, among the poorest in Toronto: the median annual household income of the neighbourhood is \$24,673, approximately half of the median for Greater Toronto.<sup>8</sup> South of Queen Street, 90% of Parkdale's housing stock is rented. The majority of rental units consist of one-bedroom and bachelor apartments in approximately 40 post-World War Two apartment buildings, ranging from eight to 18 storeys, which line the wide north-south avenues of Jameson, Dowling, Spencer, Dunn, and Triller. There are an equal number of smaller three to five storey apartment buildings, dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, along the east-west arteries of Queen and King and on some of the smaller side streets. Approximately 150 of the larger houses in South Parkdale have been converted into small apartments. The casual observer of South Parkdale can thus see a cluster of high-density housing, much of it visibly poorly maintained, and a preponderance of dollar stores, doughnut shops, and cheque-cashing establishments along King and Queen Streets east of Jameson. But, depending on the street you visit, you can also view about 800 detached, semi-detached, and row houses, with single family homeowners, some of which represent the grandest Victorian architecture in Toronto. These houses command prices well beyond \$400,000, in a market where the Greater Toronto median house price hovers in the \$250,000 range.

North Parkdale, in contrast, has a roughly equal mix of rental and owned housing units. With the exception of the 18-storey, 720 unit behemoth that is West Lodge Apartments, and a handful of other highrise apartment buildings, the vast majority of the housing stock north of

Queen consists of a mix of semi-detached, detached and row houses, along with duplexes and low rise apartment buildings. Quite often, examples of all these house forms are found on a single street. There are also several dozen small industrial buildings along the rail lines that have recently been converted into 'loft style' condominium dwellings. The visitor alert to the signs of gentrification might see them by walking west of Jameson along Queen Street and then north: the well-designed cafes and art galleries in the 'Antique Alley' stretch of Queen Street east of Roncesvalles, elaborate gardens and expensive cars in front of some of the houses, a gourmet shop or two, a video store on Roncesvalles that calls itself 'The Film Buff', as opposed to the 'Blockbuster' on Queen Street. According to a regular report distributed by a local real estate agent, house prices just east of Roncesvalles doubled between 1996 and 2002.<sup>9</sup>

The resultant situation bears some resemblance to the 'dual city' model proposed by Manuel Castells and John Mollenkopf, with rich and poor living in close proximity but in different perceptual worlds.<sup>10</sup> More precisely, it resembles two of the four sectors of the 'quartered city' in Peter Marcuse's modification of the dual city metaphor: the 'gentrified' alongside the 'tenement' city.<sup>11</sup>

### The Case Study in Context

There have been excellent works about unique parts of Toronto<sup>12</sup> and Toronto as a unique place.<sup>13</sup> This case study is not about a unique place, except in the sense that all neighbourhoods, like all people, are unique. Parkdale is not a fabled neighbourhood of literature or film. It is not Hollywood or Whitechapel, the Upper West Side of Manhattan or Back of the



Yards in Chicago, Westmount in Montreal or the Downtown East Side in Vancouver. What interests me is how Parkdale is like so many other places I have seen and read about in the English-speaking world, places that were supposedly developed as middle class suburbs, then seemed to decline to the point where they were called slums, and now are apparently being revitalized as gentrifying neighbourhoods, or urban villages. These places include: St. Kilda and Fitzroy in Melbourne, Jamaica Plain in Boston, Society Hill in Philadelphia, Clifton in Cincinnati, and of course the ur-examples, Greenwich Village in New York City and London's Islington.<sup>14</sup>

As the literature written on these places suggest, the neighbourhood trajectories were not at all so clear cut as is generally assumed. Alexander Von Hoffman, for instance, takes a part of Boston whose development as a middle class residential suburb was documented in Sam Bass Warner's classic 1961 urban history *Streetcar Suburbs*<sup>15</sup> and contends that "although it contained suburban elements, Jamaica Plain never conformed to the usual notions of a suburban community".<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Renate Howe contends that inner suburbs in Melbourne re-labelled as slums in the early twentieth centuries did not have particularly dangerous or unhealthy housing or social conditions. Instead, the slum "label was freely applied to those areas which did not meet the criteria of the suburban ethos as it was defined in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>17</sup> In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, she continues, as the supposed "'dysfunctions' of city life [were] reconstructed as advantages," and "what was once termed slum housing now became 'heritage' property".<sup>18</sup> In other words, the evolving image of a neighbourhood was related to changing societal norms, as much as or more so than 'real' housing or social conditions.

This is an intriguing proposition, particularly given the continuing impact of the Chicago

School of Sociology and, particularly, Ernest Burgess' mapping of 'concentric zones' in that city.<sup>19</sup> According to the Chicago School's paradigm of city structure and growth, cities sorted themselves into a moral and social order of concentric rings, which expanded outwards as the city grew. The 'laws' of human ecology dictated the natural inclination of families to move to the outer edges of the expanding city. There, they would be far from the hazards that polluting industries, the crime and greed associated with capitalism, and the 'promiscuous' dense and close-grained mix of land uses and social classes might pose to the male head of household's wife and children. Surrounding the central business and industrial district lay a "zone of transition", where once grand houses were being converted into multiple units for new immigrants and down-and-outers as part of those buildings' inexorable decline into obsolescence and inevitable absorption into the central district. Peripheral rings contained progressively lower densities, newer houses, and richer and more nativized families. Burgess was explicit about the norms that informed its model: American suburban family life was considered the apogee of social evolution. But the Chicago School and their successors did not doubt that they were describing real, measurable, and inexorable changes in social and economic conditions within these zones, despite a reliance on ethnographic qualitative research over statistical comparisons.<sup>20</sup>

The Chicago School drew upon an Anglo-American tradition of distrust and dislike of urban life that led many middle and upper class families in Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand to establish suburban residences at the outskirts of rapidly expanding industrial cities of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> As Peter Goheen, David Harvey and others have pointed out, Burgess was merely elaborating on a structure first described in Manchester by

Frederick Engels, and expanded upon in Charles Booth's accounts of London's slums and Jacob Riis' similar accounts from New York City.<sup>22</sup> Burgess and his contemporaries codified a consensus on suburbs and slums that had emerged by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Burgess concentric ring model bore no relation at all to the largest non-English speaking cities of the 1920s, such as Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Buenos Aires, or Tokyo, where the poor and immigrants were generally found in the outskirts.<sup>23</sup> It also did very little to explain the structure and growth of what were then the world's two largest cities, New York City and London, where large sections of the central city housed the wealthy and middle class. A full-scale attack on Burgess' assumptions and findings existed as early as 1948, when Walter Firey pointed out that slums had been transformed into middle-class areas in Boston, and that the landuse pattern had little to do with concentric rings.<sup>24</sup> But despite being a simplistic model that became even more simplified over the years, the Chicago School's explanation of 'why suburbs were rich and white' and 'why central cities were poor and ethnic/racial minority' underlay endeavours as disparate as American federal mortgage guarantees<sup>25</sup> and the study of urban history.<sup>26</sup> The Chicago School was considered the dominant mode of sociological thought into the mid 1980s.<sup>27</sup> Although no longer the dominant discourse, the dichotomy continues to inform North American urban theory, planning discourse, and popular opinion.<sup>28</sup>

The changing image of Parkdale in historic and current newspapers, planning reports, and books about Toronto has been inextricably linked to the notion of concentric rings. From the first promotion of Parkdale as a place for "those whose avocations require them to spend much of their time amid the bustle of Toronto [yet desire] a quiet home in an agreeable locality",<sup>29</sup> this westernmost edge of the developed city continued to be portrayed as a stable, wealthy,

residential outer zone suburb during the period of its initial development. The current standard two-volume scholarly history of Toronto speaks of Parkdale as a “well to do residential retreat” by the 1880s,<sup>30</sup> and an article in *City Planning* magazine, the Toronto Planning Department house organ, contains this thumbnail sketch: “Developed at the turn of the century, South Parkdale was originally an upper middle class residential suburb”.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when the spatial growth of Toronto had left Parkdale closer to the centre than the periphery [Figure 2],<sup>32</sup> the neighbourhood was attracting very different descriptions. The 1934 *Lieutenant-Governor’s Report on Slum Conditions*, known then and now as the ‘Bruce Report’, is considered to be Canada’s “bible for social housing” and urban redevelopment.<sup>33</sup> It said Parkdale was “becoming a serious slum”, due to the influx of immigrants and industry into a “formerly prosperous district”.<sup>34</sup> In 1959, the proposed metropolitan region master plan was using a concentric ring model to illustrate that Parkdale, simply because it was in Toronto’s “inner ring”, needed significant urban renewal.<sup>35</sup> The second volume of Toronto’s standard history, published in 1985, agrees that by the 1930s, “in a very real sense, Cabbagetown [a part of Toronto traditionally considered a ‘slum’] was moving up to South Rosedale, to the Annex, and out to South Parkdale” and by the 1980s, Parkdale was a “notable poor area”.<sup>36</sup> Dear and Wolch, in their 1987 book on ‘institutional service ghettos’, credit Parkdale’s remarkable concentration of rooming houses (48% of Toronto’s total beds by the early 1980s) to its location in the “zone of transition”, close to the centre of the city and near psychiatric services.

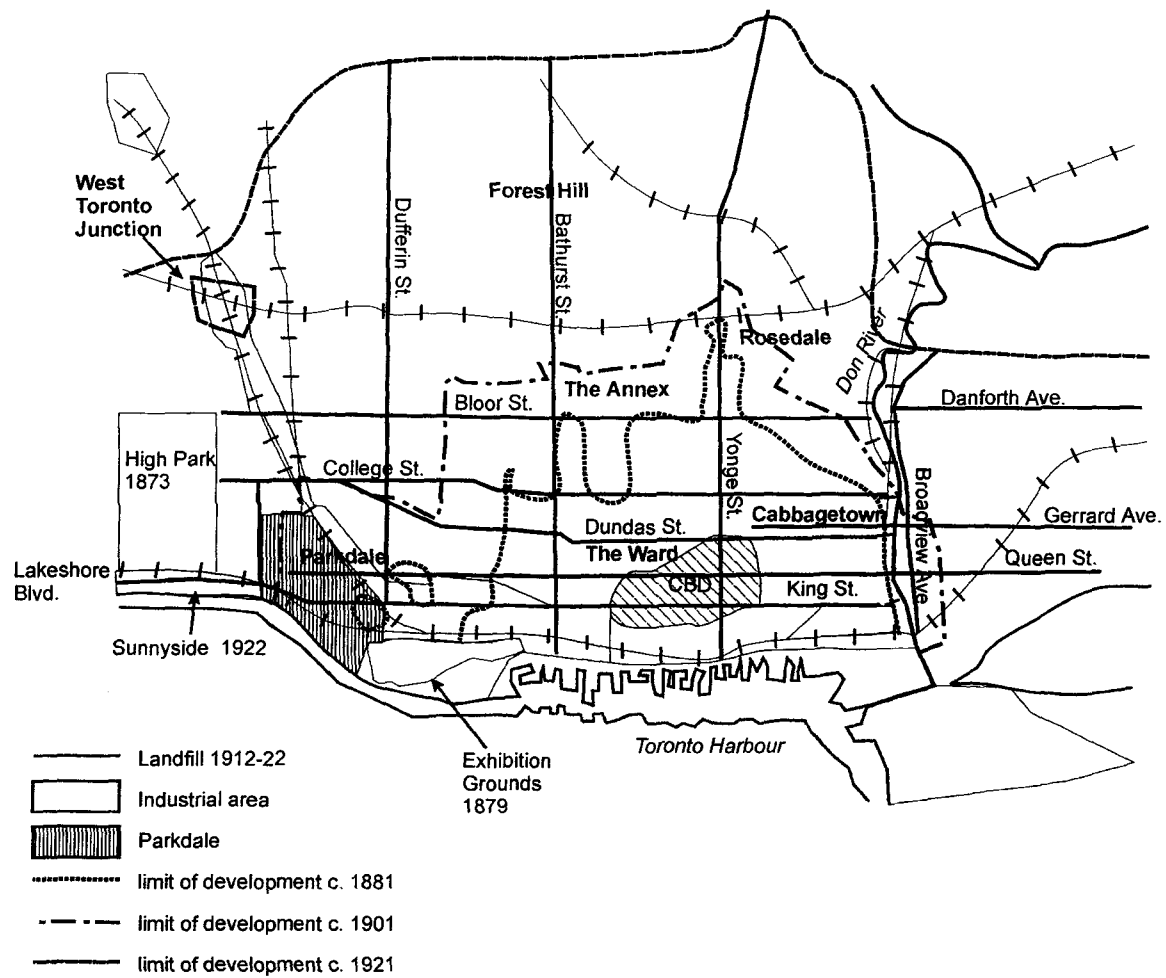


Figure 2. Parkdale within the context of central Toronto 1922

Sources: Harris and Luymes 1990, Lemon 1985: map 2.

Parkdale's initial attraction as a well-to-do suburb, and its deterioration from suburb to slum, has thus been seen as an inevitable outcome of its relative location within the larger city. The explanations of its rise and fall parallel famous North American studies of urban development and change, from Homer Hoyt's *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago* (1933) and Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs* (initially published in 1961), to Larry Bourne's *Internal Structure of the City* (1971), and John Stilgoe's *Borderlands* (1988). Although Marxists criticized the human ecology explanations and liberal positivist perspectives of the Chicago School and their followers, early Marxist explanations of urban structure applied the concentric ring model, at least until the 1980s.<sup>37</sup> But to return to the Toronto example for the moment, the Annex and South Rosedale, two neighbourhoods roughly equidistant to downtown, had successfully resisted decline by the 1980s. Similar examples of neighbourhoods that resisted decline could be found in the cities described by these writers: Chicago, Boston, New York City, Baltimore.

Why did Parkdale get an expressway and high rise apartment corridors while similar projects were being successfully opposed in other parts of Toronto's 'zone of transition'? Caulfield, in his book on gentrification in Toronto, contends that Parkdale was a "less fortunate middle class area", somehow "unluckier" than other districts who were able to turn back the tide of urban renewal.<sup>38</sup> But are there explanations for neighbourhood decline that fit somewhere between the inexorable structuralism of 'concentric rings' and the pure agency of 'luck'?

Now Parkdale, like so many older districts, is in a new phase of transition. It is no longer simply called a 'suburb' or a 'slum', but is 'something else', a place where decline seemingly coincides with revitalization. A binary view (going up/going down) of neighbourhood transition

no longer suffices, which raises the question: did a binary view of neighbourhood transition ever suffice? Can a comparison of Parkdale's images and social conditions over time lead to reconsideration, not only of one neighbourhood's history, but of the way we generally look at neighbourhood transition over time?

### The Research Questions and Why They Matter: Purpose and Significance of Research

There have been many excellent case studies of neighbourhood transitions, both within the tradition and critical of the Chicago School. From the early 1960s work of H.L Dyos and Warner onwards, neighbourhood case studies have been commonly used to elaborate on an increasing understanding of how cities grew and became more complex in form and structure.<sup>39</sup> There are, however, very few studies that pay equal attention to a neighbourhood's development, decline, and possible redevelopment, let alone research that examines the relationships between each phase.

Dyos and Warner presented two very different kinds of late 19<sup>th</sup> century suburbs. While Dyos focussed on a mixed use and mixed income neighbourhood in Camberwell, South London, Warner provided a case study of the "weave of small decisions" that created a middle-class residential streetcar suburb. For the subsequent twenty years, Warner's work was more influential, at least in North America. There tended to be an emphasis among scholars on the origins of what they saw as the greatest issue facing cities: the divide between the poor, visible minority inner city and the 'white' middle class suburb.<sup>40</sup> In the last decade, as the pricing out of poor and even middle class households from many central city housing markets and the decline

of many post-World War Two suburbs, became apparent, a more nuanced portrait has emerged. This includes a revisiting of the past, one that challenges the simplistic suburb= rich, central city = poor divide by paying attention to the development of working-class, ethnic minority, and heterogenous suburbs.<sup>41</sup>

The years between 1960 and 1990 saw many historical case studies of former middle-class suburbs declining into slums.<sup>42</sup> In the past decade, some urban historians' research has turned to a critical analysis of how the slum 'label' got attached to what were often viable and vital communities.<sup>43</sup> After the 1960s, two very different streams of research on contemporary redevelopment of the central city became common: one celebratory,<sup>44</sup> the other highly critical.<sup>45</sup> Once again, recent years have seen case studies that explore both positive and negative outcomes of gentrification, and which seek to make the trajectories of gentrification more complex<sup>46</sup>. In general, these re-examinations have come from Canadian, British, and Australian writers, as opposed to those writing on American cities, perhaps because the transformation of central cities is close to complete in Toronto, Vancouver, London, Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>47</sup> There, the battle between gentrification and inner city decay seems to be over, at least for now, with "islands of decay" retaining a precarious hold within "seas of affluence".<sup>48</sup>

Despite this plethora of historical and contemporary case studies, there are few recent case studies of neighbourhood transition that cover the life of a community from development to the present. This seems odd to me, since Firey made a study of the development, decline, and revalorization of Beacon Hill the centre piece of his 1948 attack on the Chicago School. Yet there were no followers in his footsteps, at least not for the next 40 years. Howe, in her article "Inner Suburbs: from slums to gentrification", provides an overview of changing images of



Melbourne's central city.<sup>49</sup> Richard Rodger, in a recent article on "Suburbs and Slums", gives a broad-brush history of British urban development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that focuses on the evolving meanings of these two terms; in doing so, he elaborates on a famous article by Dyos and D.A. Reeder that was also entitled "Suburbs and Slums".<sup>50</sup> Michael Doucet and John Weaver provide many case studies of suburban development and changing cultural attitudes towards the city within their history of North American housing from 1880 to 1980, but there is not much material on gentrification or long-term change within neighbourhoods.<sup>51</sup> Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen provide a history of neighbourhood succession in Long Island, New York that takes the reader from development of a wealthy outer suburb in the late nineteenth century, to a far more mixed community, in terms of income, race/ethnicity and land use, in the late twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> Christopher Mele describes a century of characterizations of New York's Lower East Side as it moved from slum to gentrification.<sup>53</sup> Of all the recent works that I have found, only two take a neighbourhood from development, through decline, and into gentrification, while paying equal attention to changing images and social conditions: veteran urban historian Zane Miller's book on Cincinnati's Clifton, and an article by Marian Morton on Cleveland Heights.<sup>54</sup>

In short, there appears to be that situation so beloved of doctoral candidates, a 'research gap'. Moreover, it is a research gap that matters. Sharon Zukin, Neil Smith, and David McFarland all show how the past of a neighbourhood can be re-imagined to justify present and future urban policy.<sup>55</sup> The revisionist histories of Alan Mayne, Richard Harris and Alexander von Hoffman give us new models of viable communities that, in their opinion, were respectively unjustly condemned, forgotten, or misrepresented by others.<sup>56</sup> The simplicities of an earlier era of research on industrial cities are being revised to reflect a more complex understanding of

cities as they face the 'post industrial' 21<sup>st</sup> century. Of course, it is also possible that urban studies are in a period of transition towards a new and equally simplistic paradigm.<sup>57</sup> As E.H. Carr has pointed out, it is arrogant enough to presume to know the 'reality' of the past, let alone to predict the future based on one's understanding of the past. The most anyone can expect from history is greater understanding of the past in light of the present, and perhaps, greater understanding of the present in light of the past.<sup>58</sup>

Using the case study of Parkdale within a context of other theories and studies of neighbourhood change, the dual purposes of this research are to:

1. At a theoretical level: explore the relationships between perceptions of a place's past, present, and future, and its evolving social and physical conditions, and thus contribute to the literature on neighbourhood transition;
2. At an empirical level: Compare the changing images of a single neighbourhood with social and housing conditions over time, in order to ascertain (for instance) whether Parkdale was a residential upper middle class suburb at the time it was being so described; and whether Parkdale contained poor people who were poorly housed when it was being described as a slum.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of theories regarding the relationship between perceptions and realities of place. I also describe several historical and contemporary case studies that outline the development of suburbs, the decline of some former suburbs into slums, and the gentrification of some former slums. After the literature review, I outline the historical research tools I use to compare images of and conditions in Parkdale over time. In the subsequent three chapters, I elaborate on three phases of conflict over the 'character' of Parkdale.

During its initial development, Parkdale was described by some as a stable, middle-class residential suburb, while hailed by others as a working-class haven, combining inexpensive homes with proximity to industrial employment. As Parkdale's houses began to be redeveloped into multi-unit residences, a new phase of conflict commenced: between developers and residents who sought to take advantage of its relatively cheap housing options, and those who condemned these housing options as immoral and leading to 'decline'. The most recent phase of conflict once again pits advocates of cheap housing (both developers seeking to maximize profit, and residents with no other choice) against those who want to 'save' the 'urban village' character of Parkdale. The final chapter includes a set of conclusions and further research questions for urban historians and policy-makers.

## Notes to Chapter One

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<sup>1</sup> Blumenfeld 1975:147.

<sup>2</sup> Beauregard 2003: vii.

<sup>3</sup> Toronto Star, August 8, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Globe and Mail, April 7, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Globe and Mail, September 13, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Toronto Star, January 16, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Globe and Mail, August 5, 2000.

8. Parkdale consists of six 'regular' census tracts and one 'special' tract (the Toronto Rehabilitation Hospital, whose 247 residents are not included in income or housing calculations). Median income and other statistics for the neighbourhood are derived from census tract figures.

<sup>9</sup> Chaddah 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Mollenkopf and Castells 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Marcuse 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Eg. Gibson 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Eg., Fulford 1995.

<sup>14</sup> Respectively: Howe 1994; von Hoffman 1994; Smith 1979 and 1996; Miller 2001; McFarland 2001; P. Williams 1978.

<sup>15</sup> Warner 1974.

<sup>16</sup> Von Hoffman 1994: 24.

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- <sup>17</sup> Howe 1994: 149.
- <sup>18</sup> Howe 1994: 155-157
- <sup>19</sup> Burgess 1974.
- <sup>20</sup> Park 1974, Zorbaugh 1976.
- <sup>21</sup> Jackson 1985, Fishman 1987, Rybczynski 1995.
- <sup>22</sup> Riis 1957, Engels 1969, Goheen 1970, Booth 1971, Harvey 1973.
- <sup>23</sup> Jackson 1985: 7-10, Hall 1998.
- <sup>24</sup> Firey 1948.
- <sup>25</sup> Jackson 1985: 197-207.
- <sup>26</sup> Harris and Lewis 1998, 2001.
- <sup>27</sup> Gottdiener 1985: 12.
- <sup>28</sup> Recent U.S examples include Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001 and Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2001; Leo and Shaw 2002 provide a Canadian perspective on depressed inner cities and rich suburbs.
- <sup>29</sup> Scott 1881.
- <sup>30</sup> Careless 1984: 124.
- <sup>31</sup> Young 1987: 15
- <sup>32</sup> Harris and Luymes 1990.
- <sup>33</sup> Bacher 1993: 10.
- <sup>34</sup> Bruce 1934: 23.
- <sup>35</sup> Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1959: 23.
- <sup>36</sup> Lemon 1985: 65, 177.
- <sup>37</sup> Harvey 1973, Castells 1977, Dear and Wolch 1987.
- <sup>38</sup> Caulfield 1994: 33.
- <sup>39</sup> Dyos 1961, Warner 1974.
- <sup>40</sup> Wright 1980, Edel, Sklar, and Lauria 1984, Hayden 1984, Jackson 1985, Teaford 1986, Fishman 1987, Weiss 1993.
- <sup>41</sup> Von Hoffman 1995, Harris 1996.
- <sup>42</sup> Sennett 1974, Philpott 1978, White 1986.
- <sup>43</sup> Mayne 1993, Metzger 2000, Beauregard 2003.
- <sup>44</sup> Rapkin and Grigsby 1960, Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975, Little et al 1975, Teaford 1990.
- <sup>45</sup> Smith and Williams 1985, Zukin 1989, Smith 1996.
- <sup>46</sup> Rose 1984 and 1989, Beauregard 1986 and 1990, Bondi 1991, Caulfield 1994, Ley 1996, Lees 2000, Robson and Butler 2001.
- <sup>47</sup> Ley 1996: 81.
- <sup>48</sup> Wyly and Hammel 1999, commenting on Berry 1985.
- <sup>49</sup> Howe 1994.
- <sup>50</sup> Rodger 2000, Dyos and Reeder 1973.
- <sup>51</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991.
- <sup>52</sup> Baxandall and Ewen 2001.
- <sup>53</sup> Mele 2000a.
- <sup>54</sup> Miller 2001, Morton 2002.
- <sup>55</sup> Zukin 1989, Smith 1996, and McFarland 2002.
- <sup>56</sup> Mayne 1993, Von Hoffman 1995, Harris 1996.
- <sup>57</sup> Dear 2002.
- <sup>58</sup> Carr 1961.

## Chapter Two

### A Good Place to Live? Perceptions and Realities of Suburbs, Slums, and Urban Villages

“Now he was warming to his theme: to chart the life of each word, he continued, to offer its *biography*, as it were, it is important to know just when the word was born, to have a record of the register of its birth... And after that, and for each word also, there should be sentences that show the twists and turns of meaning - the way almost every word slips in its silvery, fish-like way, weaving this way and that, adding subtleties of nuance to itself, and then perhaps shedding them as the public mood dictates...” Simon Winchester, on James Murray and the birth of the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I provide the theoretical underpinning for the case study of one community’s journey as a suburb, slum, and urban village. I describe how the relationship between perceptions of a place and social conditions has been understood within three traditions: urban ecological, Marxist, and current post-modern discourses on difference. I then describe changing definitions of the terms ‘suburb’ and ‘slum’, and also outline the origins of some recent terms used as urban locality describers, such as ‘bowery’, ‘bohemia’, ‘ghetto’ and ‘urban village’. Finally, I outline a composite history of the development of the suburban ideal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, central city decline in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the growth of a new rhetoric of city versus suburb in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, illustrated by case studies that examine the material development of neighbourhoods that were affected by these three phases of urban imagery. My

emphasis in this chapter is on English-speaking nations that urbanized during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia.

### Perceptions and Realities of Places

As Edward Relph posits, “Places have meaning: they are characterized by the beliefs of man [sic]”.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as developed English-speaking nations became more urbanized, cities and the components of cities attracted considerable description and analysis. Both statistical and perceptual descriptions sought to discover meaning in these urban spaces.

For some theorists, their descriptions were an uncomplicated dissection of an underlying reality that could be universally discerned and applied. An example of this point of view was the writings of sociologists associated with the University of Chicago in the 1920s. The Chicago School was influenced by the great German and French sociologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Karl Marx.<sup>3</sup> They were also influenced by evolutionary theory, especially these biological theories as they had been adapted to human society by writers such as Herbert Spencer.<sup>4</sup> They sought to apply the sociological traditions of Europe to American cities, while removing any hint of class struggle that might attach the label ‘red’ to them in the highly politicized university environment of the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

For the Chicago School, urban growth and differentiation are a result of “sympathy, rivalry and economic necessity”. These forces are neutral, structural, and essentially unchangeable. Rich and “fashionable residential quarters” simply “spring up”, “from which the

poorer classes are excluded because of the increasing value of the land”. Slums arise because some people are weaker than others: “there grow up slums which are inhabited by great numbers of the poorer classes who are unable to defend themselves from association with the derelict and vicious”. Communities within the city change through a natural and inevitable progression: “The past imposes itself upon the present, and the life of every locality moves on with a certain momentum of its own”.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of urban research is to facilitate the process of business and state planning, although the agency of planners is inherently limited to small interventions such as the creation of settlement houses and playgrounds in some “evil neighbourhoods”.<sup>7</sup> The prognosis for particular neighbourhoods was bad: as cities were “invaded” by waves of immigration, neighbourhoods would inevitably become “junked” as they aged and were overtaken in popularity by newer communities on the periphery. However, the prognosis for urban society was good: these urban forces of “disorganization and organization may be thought of... as co-operating in a moving equilibrium of social order toward an end vaguely or definitely regarded as progressive”.<sup>8</sup> As the city grew outwards, more and more families would attain homeownership, and more immigrants would become Americanized. Vice, crime, and poverty would remain as a “natural, if not normal part of city life”, but only among those who were “peculiarly fit for the environment in which they are condemned to exist”.<sup>9</sup>

As David Sibley points out, “a model like Ernest Burgess’ representation of the organization of social space in the western city attained the status of a universal statement, with the effect that other readings of the city, representing other world-views, were not seen”.<sup>10</sup> For the next 50 years, the Chicago School’s moral map of the city dominated discourse on urban

differentiation and growth. Although the Chicago School accepted that the “city is... a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions”,<sup>11</sup> it maintained that this urban mind and body were universal, able to be mapped, understood, and analysed across cultures. Descendants of the Chicago School perfected tools to dissect the urban form. In the 1930s, Homer Hoyt modified the concentric ring model of the city to accommodate the notion of growth along radial sectors. Hoyt also developed a quantitative methodology for studying the structure and growth of cities, ranging from the use of insurance atlases to building permits. He elaborated on the uses of this knowledge: how city planning and zoning, slum clearance, and mortgage providers could use the rules and maps he provided.<sup>12</sup> For Hoyt, as for many others who followed in the footsteps of the Chicago School, the role of the urban analyst, whether based in academe, government, or business, was to provide rational and scientific advice, based on a notion that there was an underlying reality that could be perceived and understood. Throughout, this reality was informed by a binary moral order. The central city was bad for people, and people who were left there after ‘natural selection’ had removed the most fit to live in the suburbs were bad.

David Harvey’s *Social Justice and the City* was a disruption of the relationship between perception and reality posited by the Chicago School, and an influential text for a new school of urban analysis. Published in 1973 by someone previously known as a torch-bearer for scientific modernism, the book reinserted class conflict into the discussion of urban growth and structure. According to Harvey, the ruling class provides the ruling ideas,<sup>13</sup> and that includes ideas about where rich and poor ‘should’ live. Harvey sees post-war suburbanization (the movement of the majority of city-dwellers into politically separate suburbs) as a logical outgrowth of middle-class movement after jobs which have decentralized, along with a desire to avoid negative externalities



associated with poor people, such as degraded public services and depressed property values. The provision of new residential and industrial space in suburbs allows excess capital to be used to create new products, “new wants and needs, sensibilities and aspirations”.<sup>14</sup> Discriminatory practices, including the ‘zoning out’ of low-income housing, stop the poor from moving outwards to follow the jobs.<sup>15</sup> Spatial structure is thus derived from the economic basis of society,<sup>16</sup> and perceptions and values arise as a function of the prevailing social and political norms.

For Harvey, and many of the critical urban theorists who followed in his footsteps,<sup>17</sup> perception is mediated by a largely invisible and taken-for-granted power system called capitalism. The role of the critical analyst is to strip away the veil of ‘natural’ behaviours, in order to reveal the exploitative system that lies underneath. Despite the omnipresence of this underlying structure, there are opportunities for urban agents to subvert power and make positive changes. The most eloquent explanation of this urban agency is found in the work of Harvey’s contemporary Manuel Castells.<sup>18</sup> However, Marxist urban analysis of the late 1970s and early 1980s was a continuation, rather than a disruption, of several assumptions behind ‘modern’ quantitative research. For a Marxist of that era, there is a reality to be uncovered, and furthermore, a reality which is universal, largely structural, and rational.

A ‘third wave’ of theories on urban growth and structure began to be popularized in the 1980s under the umbrella title of post-modernism. Post-modernists consciously reject the notion that there is a simple or universal reality that can be perceived through research and analysis. Indeed, the role of the researcher, according to Sibley, might be seen as showing “how exotic [the previous] constitution of reality has been”, to “emphasize those domains most taken for granted

as universal... [and] make them seem as historically peculiar as possible”.<sup>19</sup> Like Marxists, post-modernists tend to assume that divisions within space are a reflection of unequal power relations. Unlike Marxists, post-modernists generally see that superstructure as encompassing ‘power-over’ on the basis of other forms of oppression as well as class: gender, ‘race’/ethnicity, sexuality, and abilities. Thus Sibley begins his book on *Geographies of Exclusion* by contending that “power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments”.<sup>20</sup> In one way, this echoes Burgess and Harvey in their formulations of urban succession: the strong overcoming the weak in an eternal struggle over living space. However, like Harvey, Sibley places ‘power’ as the motivator, not ‘nature’. Power is socially constructed and thus mutable.

Unlike Harvey, Sibley posits a complex face to power. Attempts to create a “totalizing” or “universalizing” critique of the city based on a binary underlying ‘reality’, however progressive or even radical in nature, are wrong. Christine Boyer adopts Michel Foucault’s aphorism, “Against the plague, which is one of mixture, discipline brings into play its power, which is one of analysis”, to urban studies. “So too”, says Boyer of the birth of modern planning, “against the chaos of the city with its simultaneity of land uses, jumble of vehicles, multitudes of people, corrupt politicians, and labour unrest, there stood an ideal: the city as a perfectly disciplined social order.”<sup>21</sup> In this world-view, the first order of the researcher is to uncover past “myths” and “constructs of the imagination”, as Mayne calls the historical slum,<sup>22</sup> not to create a new layer of urban mythology. Complexity is not only inevitable, it is good. Simple solutions do not work. If we say, for instance, that a century of urban planning was dead wrong, what claims allow us to say that an alternative path is right? Can we still say, as Jane Jacobs did 40

years ago in the *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, that it is possible to create maxims for successful cities based on “how cities work in real life”, if there is no shared understanding of ‘real life’?<sup>23</sup>

Post-modern writers on the city have been critiqued, perhaps most effectively by Harvey, as theorists who privilege arcane analyses of discourse over concrete issues of social disparities and what to do about them. After all, says Harvey, if is “impossible to say anything of solidity and permanence in the midst of this ephemeral and fragmented world, then why not join in the game?”<sup>24</sup> Ironically, emphasis on unpacking perceptions was pioneered by several cultural analysts who came from a Marxist perspective, such as John Berger and Raymond Williams. As the latter wrote in *Keywords*, changes in the meanings of words both reflect and can shape changes in a society.<sup>25</sup> The question for Harvey, and for myself as a researcher, is how this case study of the changing meanings of words within a particular neighbourhood can lead to some form of positive social change.

In order to talk about positive social change, I believe it is necessary to accept that there is some level of social reality, however imperfectly discernable. As Mayne says in his dissection of slum discourse in English-speaking societies between 1880 and 1914, “deplorable life choices available to inner-city residents were real in material and absolute senses”, although “the term slum, encoded with the meanings of a dominant bourgeois culture, in fact obscured and distorted the varied spatial forms and social conditions to which it was applied”.<sup>26</sup> The prevalent discourse shapes which statistics are used and which voices are heard, a point also made by Robert Beauregard in his analysis of a century of popular writing on the American city.<sup>27</sup> Discourse analysis also allows hitherto obscured voices to have a say. Sibley resurrects the relatively

neglected writings of Jane Addams and W.E. Dubois, two contemporaries of the Chicago School, Beauregard uncovers surprising ambivalence within a predominantly anti-city American discourse, and Wilson shows how cities offered women pleasure as well as danger.<sup>28</sup>

In order to discuss positive social change, there must also be a generally accepted goal against which progress can be measured. Current feminist and post-modernist writers are developing a 'politics of difference' which posits tolerance of the 'other' as a basis for a just urban society.<sup>29</sup> Tolerance evokes, for these writers, not only an end to exclusionary practices that seek to discipline and punish those who do not fit societal norms. Tolerance also connotes a commitment to inclusion, choice, diversity, and rights to a basic set of urban goods, including housing, food and rewarding work..<sup>30</sup>

I am writing this thesis as a feminist and a socialist within a broad philosophical framework of post-modernism. Within that framework, the relationship between perception and reality contains the following elements:

1. Perceptions of reality are not based on simple, universal, self-evident truths. Perceptions are the result of powerful voices and institutions making their voices heard above others.
2. There is a continual and evolving conflict over the power to shape perceptions. These struggles are shaped by 'power over' and exclusionary practices on a number of levels, including economic class, gender, 'race'/ethnicity, sexuality and ability.
3. Dominant perceptions, including discourses and the changing meanings of words within discourses, shape both the understandings of realities and concrete social conditions. The definition of a 'problem' shapes ideas for 'solutions' to that problem.
4. While 'reality' may be imperfectly knowable, social conditions are real.

5. It is both possible and desirable to challenge practices of dominant power, by dissecting the ways in which perceptions have been developed, and by disseminating alternative perspectives.

### The Rhetoric of Suburbs and Slums

As discussed in the previous section, cities and their component parts are often described in binary terms. For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most popular rhetorical comparison in talking about cities was to compare them to the countryside.<sup>31</sup> This was hardly surprising, since most migrants to the city were from rural areas and small towns, and thus had to accommodate themselves to a significantly different way of life from the one known by themselves and their parents. Sociologists like Simmel and Durkheim compared urban and rural mindsets; while visionaries like Ebenezer Howard proposed a new form of community, garden cities, that would combine the best of both worlds.<sup>32</sup> With increasing suburbanization in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, the suburb/city dichotomy received a great deal of attention from scholars, who compared political representation, taxation levels, access to jobs and services, urban form, and again, ways of life.<sup>33</sup>

In this section, I propose to analyse a third aspect to the 'rhetoric of urban space':<sup>34</sup> the relationship between the terms 'suburb' and 'slum'. I will argue that for a period of about one hundred years, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, these two terms were used as binary opposites in attempts to explore and describe 'a good place to live'. Slums were seen as urban problems; suburbs as solutions. 'Suburbs' represented the urban dream for individuals and

for the city as a whole: families owning homes and thus having financial and emotional incentives to improve their communities; separation of workplace and residence (for men at least); and the expertise of architects, planners, and enlightened developers promoting the best housing and community designs. ‘Slums’ represented the urban nightmare: a shifting and shiftless population of renters and slum lords who destroyed the urban fabric; a mixture of noxious industries and a diseased and immoral underclass; a place to be avoided and feared; a cancer that might spread if not contained. Suburbs were, in short, stable, healthy and good; slums unstable, unhealthy, and bad.

Forty years ago, Warner summarized the “central event of the 1870-1900 era” as the “creation of a two part city, an old inner city and a new outer city, a city of slums and a city of suburbs, a city of hope and failure and a city of achievement and comfort”.<sup>35</sup> Dyos and Reeder take a far more critical view of the ‘reality’ of late 19th century suburbs and slums, but echo the rhetoric: “the convulsions of the city became symbolic of evil tendencies... while the serenity of the suburbs became a token of natural harmony”.<sup>36</sup> Even today, there are traces of these powerful metaphors in the way we see cities. For instance, Toronto’s new Master Plan designates broad swathes of inner suburbs as ‘stable areas’, although most of these neighbourhoods were farmland less than two generations ago, and are receiving the lion’s share of immigration, industrial employment losses, and social change.<sup>37</sup>

Despite a vast literature on suburbs, and an equally impressive literature on slums, few writers have tried to come to grips with the historical trajectory of this rhetoric. Dyos, in his pioneering case study of an English 19th century suburb, and more recently, Kenneth Jackson,

Robert Fishman, John Stilgoe and Witold Rybcynski in their U.S.-focussed overviews of the origins of suburban life, have all provided examples of the change in valorization between pre-1800 descriptions of ‘suburbs as slums’ to late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20th century descriptions of ‘suburbs as opposites of, and solutions to, slums’. The change coincided with the increase in large-scale industrialization and urbanization of cities in Europe and the United States (followed by Australia and Canada). These writers also grapple with the future of suburbs, coming to dissimilar conclusions about their popularity and viability.

Similarly, writers on slums such as Gareth Stedman-Jones, Thomas Philpott, Terry Copp, and Alan Mayne have all provided short histories of the origin of the word ‘slum’ in the early 19th century, and its adoption as a problem with local, national, and international dimensions “during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the prewar years of the twentieth century”.<sup>38</sup> Philpott, Copp, and Mayne use overlapping time frames (from 1870-1880 to 1914-1930) to discuss the heyday for government reports, surveys, and sensationalist literature on slums. Robert Beauregard describes the second flourishing of slum literature in the United States, the series of slum reports during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the integration of slum stereotypes into post-World War Two urban renewal schemes, even as the term ‘slum’ was superseded by ‘inner city’.<sup>39</sup>

The rhetoric of suburbs and slums has lingered as gentrification has brought on the “class remake of the central urban landscape”.<sup>40</sup> According to Beauregard, “the image of a city and its neighbourhoods are manipulated in order to reduce the perceived risk and to encourage investment”.<sup>41</sup> Peter Williams describes how the ‘original features’ and ‘period charm’ of 19th

century suburban housing are highlighted for Melbourne and Sydney gentrifiers,<sup>42</sup> while Caroline Mills gives a similar example in a case study from Fairview Slopes, Vancouver.<sup>43</sup> It is suggested that certain artifacts associated with slums, such as abandoned industrial buildings<sup>44</sup> or a 'heroic' immigrant past,<sup>45</sup> can also inspire nostalgic longing from potential middle-class homebuyers. These 'safe' versions of the older city (the industries no longer spew out smoke, the period charm of older houses has been altered to provide indoor toilets, the descendants of 'heroic' immigrants are now second and third generation citizens) are contrasted with the supposed "anonymity and homogeneity" of current suburbs.<sup>46</sup> Gentrification can be seen as a way to restore a past order to the current 'urban wilderness', wherein a new generation of 'pioneers' harvests what is best from the central city past, leaving the now 'old-fashioned' outer suburbs to those with less courage and foresight.<sup>47</sup> Gentrification can also be described as a cyclic reversal of the centre-periphery dichotomy: now it is the 'urban village' which is the repository of community spirit and civic virtue, while the 'bad city' is embodied in Los Angeles- type sprawl.<sup>48</sup>

The rhetoric of suburbs and slums can be seen through several lenses in urban theory:

1. The Chicago School and their successors see suburbs and slums as a 'natural', evolutionary, structural response to competition between individuals for space;<sup>49</sup>
2. Positivists like Hoyt and Hoover and Vernon, and Marxists like Harvey and Smith in their early works, posit that the divide between suburbs and slums is an economically rational outgrowth of conflict within industrial capitalist economies;<sup>50</sup>
3. Feminists like Gwendolyn Wright, Dolores Hayden, Margaret Marsh, and Elizabeth Wilson see suburbs and slums as a socially constructed and not particularly 'rational'



product of struggles over gender roles;<sup>51</sup>

4. Post-modernists of various stripes claim that the division between suburbs and slums is a discontinuous, fluid, and highly contingent reflection of 'power over' which encompasses class, gender, 'race'/ethnicity, and other grounds of 'difference'.<sup>52</sup>

However, there are many ways that theories about urban patterns and process can be differentiated. There are writers who focus on the producers of urban land (subdividers, builders, investors), and those who concentrate on the consumers (individual buyers of the product). Materialist writers look at how cities grew outwards (railway and streetcar, cheaper building technologies) and upwards (steel frame construction and elevators), while idealist writers look at the beliefs and value systems that drove both producers and consumers to create particular cities and neighbourhoods. Some writers take the perspective that current cities are the acme of civilization, and examine how societies attained that ideal, while other writers hold a far more critical perspective, and detail where society went wrong and how fundamental injustices can be wronged. Like the labels put on neighbourhoods themselves, all of these philosophical labels do injustice to complex theories and theorists. Harvey and Smith began as structuralist, materialist, production-side critical theorists but have since incorporated a stance that incorporates changing ideologies and consumer demands, along with a more complex analysis of agency.<sup>53</sup>

### The development of the suburban ideal

The term 'suburb', adopted from a Latin term meaning 'beyond or below the city', has a

long history. The suburban ideal is even older. Jackson cites a letter from a nobleman to the King of Persia in 539 B.C.: “Our property seems to me the most beautiful in the world. It is so close to Babylon that we enjoy all the advantages of the city, and yet when we come home we are away from all the dust and noise.”<sup>54</sup> Like the anonymous Persian, a few wealthy people throughout European and Asian history could afford to spend weekends in a villa, near the commerce and culture of walled cities, but far away from their noise and pollution. The combination of proximate access and psychological distance would remain a common theme in the suburban dream for the next 2,500 years.

More commonly, suburbs housed those on the fringes of urban society. This included, in medieval Europe, the craftsmen not associated with guilds, ‘obnoxious trades’ such as leather working, immigrants not yet accepted into their adopted societies, and places of amusement beyond taxes and moral laws. In suburbs as well as the city, “by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the poor were living cheek by jowl with the rich to an extraordinary degree”.<sup>55</sup> Even in the first stages of the industrial revolution in Britain, immigrants to cities tended to settle in outer districts. It was only with the concentration of industries within cities in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries that the demand for casual labour brought a wave of impoverished newcomers into the heart of the city, while the proliferation of wharves, warehouses, stations, and offices began to cut into housing and increase land rents, expelling those residents who had any choice about where to live.<sup>56</sup>

A great deal of the imagery later associated with central city slums was developed to describe pre-industrial suburbs. Six hundred years ago, in *The Canterbury Tales*, an alchemist’s

servant could describe his “sly” and “crafty” master living in “the suburbes of a toun”, “lurkinge in hernes [hedges] and lanes blinde/ Whereas thise robbours and thise thieves by kinde/ Holden hir pryvee fereful residence”.<sup>57</sup> Suburbs were the home of the outlaw, a hidden and sinister landscape of dark dead ends. The mephistophelean alchemist has the capacity to “infect al a toun” if allowed within its safe and regulated boundaries.<sup>58</sup> Suburbs were also described in feminized and sexualized terms. In 1548, Nash, who wrote an early travelogue of Britain’s capital city, asked: “London, what are they Suburbes but licensed Stewes [brothels]?”, and ‘suburb sinner’ was a common synonym in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries for prostitute.<sup>59</sup> In Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*, we find: “There’s a trim rabble let in/ Are these your faithfull friends o’ th’ Suburbs?”. Mobs of unstable and dangerous poor people, as Hall, Wilson and others have pointed out, were a common fear in cities of the industrial era, and the mob, like the pre-industrial suburb, was often described as a debased female.<sup>60</sup>

During the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the use of the term ‘suburb’ went through a radical, although gradual, change. Stilgoe contends that 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English literature drew upon a classical thread that contrasted the ‘morality’ of country life with the sinful city. American intellectual leaders like Thomas Jefferson propounded the belief that democracy would only flourish in smaller communities. And as basic knowledge of the origins and spread of infectious disease grew, densely packed urban centres were seen as less healthful.<sup>61</sup> By 1752, the novelist Samuel Richardson could receive a ‘get well’ note that stated “I hope that... the air of your agreeable suburban North-end, will restore you”. The *Oxford English Dictionary* uses this example and others to support its statement that by the 1820s, suburbs were associated with

“professional men and artists”. But negative imagery still lingered: in 1820, another writer of travelogues, the aptly named Crabbe, observed “Suburban prospects, where the traveller stops/To see the sloping tenement on props”. Fishman says that it was only in the 1840s that ‘suburb’ lost its predominantly negative connotation.<sup>62</sup>

The British were the “first predominantly urban-dwelling people in the long history of human settlement”,<sup>63</sup> so it is hardly surprising that England, Scotland, and Ireland were experimenting with new urban forms in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. St. John’s Wood in London saw the introduction of semi-detached houses, a compromise between villa and row house, in 1800, and Regent’s Park in 1820 introduced the concept of a suburb planned around a green space.<sup>64</sup> However, it was Manchester, the ‘shock city’ of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Briggs’ famous phrase, which drew most attention from contemporary writers. Manchester’s growth was phenomenal: from a town of 17,000 in 1750, it grew to 70,000 by 1801 and 303,000 by 1851. And Manchester suburbanized as it grew. By the 1830s, a pattern was discernable: a central business core, surrounded by an industrial zone with working-class dwellings interspersed, in turn surrounded by the homes of the new middle class.<sup>65</sup> The development of middle-class suburbs in Manchester was supported by a combination of low land prices in the periphery combined with capital from hyper-inflated central city land prices. There were also push factors that drove the middle class from the central city: fear of industrial riots, which translated into a fear that lower classes would follow the middle class to the periphery and depress the value of their new homes.<sup>66</sup>

Frederick Engels, who lived and worked in Manchester, wrote in 1845 that: “The town

itself is peculiarly built, so that a person may live in it for years, and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers... The facades of main thoroughfares mask the horrors that lie behind from the eyes of factory owners and the middle class managers who commute into the city from outlying suburbs".<sup>67</sup> A little more than a century later, but in the same vein, Dyos and Reeder spoke of "the middle class suburb" as

"an ecological marvel. It gave access to the cheapest land in the city to those having most security of employment and leisure to afford the time and money spent traveling up and down; it offered an arena for the manipulation of social distinction to those most adept at turning them into shapes on the ground; it kept the threat of rapid social change beyond the horizon of those least able to accept its negative as well as its positive advantages".<sup>68</sup>

It is thus possible to see the growth of suburbs as a successful example of middle class control over space, a symbolic wall to protect the middle class from "the foul-smelling environment of the poor, the smell of the poor - and the poor themselves", in the words of Sibley.<sup>69</sup>

There are, of course, many ways to divide the city by class, and Sibley is actually referring to the radical urban replanning of Paris by Haussman in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Haussman's wide boulevards, lined with luxury apartments and exclusive stores and theatres thanks to generous government loan assistance to developers, allowed the central city to become 'safe' for the middle class, by clearing out slums and effectively banishing the poor to the periphery.<sup>70</sup> The contrasting experience of Paris indicates that another factor needs to be taken into account to understand the flourishing of the middle class suburb in Anglo-American cities during this period: the growing cult of the nuclear family.

The rise of a new set of meanings for suburb in Anglo-American culture coincided with the rise of new meanings for family.<sup>71</sup> According to Raymond Williams, the term family evolved from meaning everyone living in a household (including servants) in the Middle Ages to a small kin-group sharing a house by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus in 1631, a description of a family could read “himself and his wife and daughters, two mayds and a man”; while in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, James Mill, the economist, defined a family as “the group which consists of a Father, Mother, and Children”.<sup>72</sup> Sibley talks of “sites of nationalist sentiment, including the family, the suburb, and the countryside, all of which implicitly exclude [others]”,<sup>73</sup> while Wright devotes an entire book to describing the intertwined relationship between the development of a “‘model’ or typical house and the notion of the model family”.<sup>74</sup> Influential designers of pattern book homes and early planned suburbs doubled as moralists for suburban family life. A.J. Downing, the Beecher sisters, and Frederick Law Olmsted all held that they were the only way for women and children to be protected from the evil influences of the city. Suburbs also provided opportunities for women to exert positive influences on society through their moral leadership in the home.<sup>75</sup> Fishman contends that the main difference between Anglo-American and continental European cultures was a religious (primarily Evangelical religions such as Methodism and Presbyterianism) concern in the former cultures with the ‘sin’ found in the city.<sup>76</sup> Wilson elaborates: “Nineteenth century planning reports, government papers and journalism created an interpretation of the urban experience as a new version of Hell, and it would even be possible to describe the emergent town-planning movement - a movement that has changed our cities almost beyond recognition - as an organized campaign to exclude women and children, along with other

disruptive elements - the working class, the poor, and minorities - from this infernal urban space altogether.”<sup>77</sup>

Thus there was a tension within the new meaning of suburb, between those developers and property holders who valued exclusivity and increasing land values, and those evangelical visionaries who wanted everyone living in the suburbs for the sake of their souls (not to mention their acquiescence and productivity as workers and begetters of the next generation of workers). Brooklyn is an example of the latter type of ‘big tent’ community. *The Brooklyn Star* proclaimed in 1815 that the suburb “must necessarily become a favorite residence for gentlemen of taste and fortune, for merchants and shopkeepers of every description, for artists, artisans, mechanics, laborers, and persons of every trade in society”, while Walt Whitman, writing of his ‘Brooklyn the Beautiful’, observed 150 years: “men of moderate means may find homes at a moderate rent, whereas in New York City there is no median between a palatial mansion and a dilapidated hovel”. Brooklyn developed its own commerce, industry and culture.<sup>78</sup> In 1870, Brookline, outside Boston, called itself the “richest town in the world”, with only 25% of its household heads executives, professionals, or manufacturers, and 40% being blue-collar first generation Irish, most working in nearby industries.<sup>79</sup> Another Boston suburb, Jamaica Plain, had streets where affluent businessmen and their families lived adjacent to parks, but also streets that housed every other occupational group, including industrial workers and labourers working small market gardens.<sup>80</sup>

While the ‘big tent’ suburb may have been the norm, other pre-existing settlements at the periphery of large U.S. cities tried to maintain or increase their exclusivity, through early

attempts at zoning and residential restrictions. Cambridge's town council promoted residential over commercial or industrial expansion by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, while newer developments like Beacon Hill in Boston, Gramercy Park and Washington Square in New York, Germantown in Philadelphia, and Nob Hill in San Francisco, marketed themselves to an exclusive group of home buyers.<sup>81</sup> Restrictive covenants on subdivided land became increasingly common in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Restrictions could cover everything from excluding non-residential uses and subdivision, to prescribing a minimum value of a house along with nature and colour of materials and architecture style, to excluding particular racial or ethnic groups (most commonly, Blacks and Jews) from buying property.<sup>82</sup> New methods of design were incorporated to add value to the suburban home product. Highbury New Park in Islington, London used curving streets and a large central park to attract buyers in the 1850s,<sup>83</sup> and Riverside outside Chicago was designed in the same fashion by Frederick Law Olmsted, the famed landscape architect behind New York's Central Park, in the 1860s.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginning of a corporatization of the urban land process, although corporate suburbs were not the norm until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas subdividers, home builders, estate agents, and mortgage financiers worked separately, now these functions began to be brought together within one firm. A more efficient housing production process allowed much more efficient social segregation by the developers themselves.<sup>85</sup>

Mixed suburbs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were often the result of a land marketing process that bore a resemblance to today's discount fashion stores, where the worth of a product decreases rapidly with time. A developer would lay out multi-acre lots. If a few choice lots were taken,



but the majority remained unsold, the developer (who often had borrowed short-term money on high interest to purchase, subdivide, and market a property) would further subdivide lots in order to sell them at a cheaper price. Builders, in turn, would buy lots on speculation, but if there was a glut in the middle-class housing market, they would erect two or three rowhouses rather than one villa on a lot. This process was seen in Manchester in the 1830s,<sup>86</sup> Islington in the 1860s,<sup>87</sup> and most North American suburbs until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>88</sup> Clifton, a hilly suburb three miles north of Cincinnati's municipal boundary, was comprised of multi-acre country estates in the 1840s. By the 1890s, there was a much more varied mix of housing and apartments, lived in by blue-collar and white-collar workers and small businessmen, as well as merchants. Still, the image of "park like grounds, splendid residences, magnificent prospects" and inhabitants of "American stock" remained, long after Clifton had become a mixed community.<sup>89</sup>

Although a preponderance of small scale developers made sense in the highly unstable housing market, some developers realized that profits could be accrued by buying land while it was cheap and then marketing it over a longer period of time.<sup>90</sup> Potter Palmer used his influence as a member of Chicago's elite to make the Gold Coast the wealthiest section of Chicago in the 1870s. This involved draining and land filling marshy land, and then changing the whole high-value commercial orientation of the city from an east-west to a north-south street.<sup>91</sup> William Harmon of Cincinnati and Samuel Gross of Chicago are usually credited with being the first homebuilder/developers to provide 'installment plan' mortgages for more modest home buyers, in the 1880s.<sup>92</sup> Gross was also a pioneer in 'place selling', providing picnics at new home sites,

and lushly illustrated advertisements in newspapers and magazines extolling the virtues of suburban home ownership. Owning a home in the suburbs would ensure that children grew up with clean air and water, and women were protected from immoral influences. Images of the 'good women' were common in illustrations marketing suburbs, just as illustrations of 'bad women' were common in slum literature: an 1891 Gross advertisement shows a young lady, dressed in white, pointing at 'virgin soil'.<sup>93</sup> Freed from the depredations of 'house renting sharks', families would enjoy personal and financial security by buying a house on virgin soil. New suburban houses were advertised as having the latest in modern, labour-saving devices, and as being connected to central cities by efficient public transportation (railways and streetcars). Subdivisions were advertised as being on higher land, closer to nature, and upwind from smoke (which meant, generally, to the west of the city in the northern hemisphere, and east of the city in the southern hemisphere). Signifiers such as 'park', 'heights', 'hill', 'west' embodied these attributes in the very names of subdivisions. Gross brought a particularly American 'melting pot' sensibility to the fore: he targeted ads to immigrant families in German, Swedish, Italian, and even Yiddish newspapers, while excluding Black Americans from his working class suburbs.<sup>94</sup>

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Anglo-American culture had fully embraced the notion of the suburban future, while developers provided a range of suburbs, from industrial working-class to exclusive to minority-culture.<sup>95</sup> The problem with the future is that it kept on becoming the present, and the highly valued periphery had a tendency to merge into the central city with dizzying speed. While by the 1890s, a British observer noted that "the process of urbanisation has been modified by one of suburbanisation", Eric Lampard adds that the "Late

Victorian belief in suburban 'purity' was belied by the fact that the suburbs of one generation were often indistinguishable from the town of the next; sometimes yesterday's suburb became today's slum".<sup>96</sup> In 1925, Harlan Douglass' *The Suburban Trend* pointed out what was becoming increasingly obvious, that suburbs were "intermediate in form. They are parts of evolving cities". The corollary to this statement was that "nearly all suburbs are either being made or being unmade."<sup>97</sup> Development was followed by decline as surely as birth led to death.

### Slums and the devaluation of the central city

As suburbs rose in stature as good places to live, living in the central city was increasingly derided by commentators. Compared to the word 'suburb', 'slum' is comparatively young, emerging along with the industrial city in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Slums in their original meaning were associated with rooming houses. The first written mention of a slum is in a British 'flash [slang] dictionary' of the 1810s where it derived from 'slumber' and meant a short-term rental 'room'. The term 'back slum' gradually widened in the 1820s to encompass "a street, alley, court in a crowded district of a town or city, inhabited by the poor", then, by the 1840s, "a number of these streets or courts forming a thickly populated neighbourhood or district where the houses or conditions of life are of a squalid or wretched character".<sup>98</sup>

Suburbs were associated with 'good' women, virtuous daughters and wives, separated from the paid work force; 'good' hard-working immigrants and migrants, people of European origin who were anxious to assimilate; and 'healthy' children. Slums were associated, from the

first, with their binary opposites: ‘bad’, immoral, working women; despised ‘races’ such as Gypsies, Irish, Blacks, and Chinese; physically and mentally ‘stunted’ children and adults. In an 1824 history of gaming, cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we find the early use:

“Regaling... in the back parlour (*vulgo* slum) of an extremely low-bred Irish widow”. By mid-century, the term ‘slum’ was also being used to describe ‘gypsy jargon’ (the origin of cockney), begging letters, and as a verb ‘to do substandard work’. Mayne provides a lexicon of dehumanizing terms used to describe slum-dwellers in the late 19th and early 20th century:

‘savage nations’, a ‘degenerate race’; in Birmingham, ‘trollops... idle around; in San Francisco, Chinese immigrants ‘live like prairie dogs’ and are ‘human scum’.<sup>99</sup> An 1894 U.S. report on *Slums of Great Cities* (New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Chicago) defined them as “an area of dirty back streets, especially when inhabited by a squalid and criminal population”.<sup>100</sup>

These attitudes lingered among those who focused on the physical and social ‘problems’ of slums. Wilson quotes a 1963 textbook, *New Towns for Old: the Techniques of Urban Renewal*:

“The Dwellers in a slum area are almost a separate race of people, with different values, aspirations, and ways of living... Most people who live in slums have no views on their environment at all... When we are dealing with people who have no initiative or civic pride, the task, surely, is to break up such groupings, even though the people seem to be satisfied with their miserable environments and seem to enjoy an extrovert social life in their own locality”.<sup>101</sup>

Even a progressive and ‘scientific’ observer like Charles Booth contended that “the lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers, and semi-criminals [which he estimated as 1 1/4%

of London's population]... are perhaps incapable of improvement".<sup>102</sup> But although some slum-dwellers would not change, it was considered increasingly necessary for late 19<sup>th</sup> century governments to destroy their habitations, under the rationale of social and economic progress. A mid century British observer of slums hyperventilated: "We fear them for what they are - beds of pestilence, where the fever is generated which shall be propagated to distant parts of town... not only the lurking places, but the *nurseries* of felons. A future generation of thieves is there hatched from the viper's egg".<sup>103</sup> The Medical Officer of Health from Glasgow told the parliamentary Dwellings Committee in 1873: "The destructive part of the duty of the authorities is of more importance, if possible, than the constructive; the first and most essential step is to get rid of the existing haunts of moral and physical degradation, and the next is to watch carefully over constructing and construction, leaving, however, the initiative of these usually to the law of supply and demand".<sup>104</sup> From the 1830s onward, slums in London were being 'ventilated' by putting in wide new roads. These were supposed to help slum-dwellers by bringing in air, light, and police supervision, but the underlying impetus was to assist commercial growth.<sup>105</sup> Between 1830 and 1880, approximately 100,000 people were displaced from central London by a combination of road, railway, and dock construction, with virtually no new housing constructed to accommodate those made homeless.<sup>106</sup> Similar case studies of the destruction of working class slums in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are provided by Mayne for Birmingham, Sydney, and San Francisco, and Philpott for Chicago. In every case, regulation and demolition of 'substandard housing' was favoured over construction of low-cost housing in the central city. In the few cases of low-cost housing being constructed by the state or private philanthropists, the

rents were too high for the poor displaced by slum removal.

Unsurprisingly, there was enormous pent-up demand from working-class people for housing close to central city workplaces in large cities. Booth pointed out in the 1870s that the middle class “demand is for new houses, not old”, which meant that they constantly migrated to peripheral areas where “streets are wider and houses have gardens of some sort”. This ‘centrifugal action’ left ‘inner ring’ neighbourhoods to become increasingly filled up with ‘workshops and extensions’, and eventually to become ‘overcrowded’.<sup>107</sup> Jacob Riis, writing at the turn of the century about New York City, distinguished between purpose-built ‘rear house’ slums, and ‘tenant houses’ that had once been ‘decorous homes’. As middle class “residents moved out, once-fashionable streets along the East River fell into the hands of real estate agents and boarding house keepers”. While “in the beginning, the tenant house became a real blessing to that class of industrious poor” who needed to live near work, further subdivision resulted in a “class of tenantry living from hand to mouth, loose in morals, improvident in habits, degraded, and squalid as beggary itself”.<sup>108</sup>

Jerry White describes the origins of the “worst street in North London, Campbell Bunk, Islington”. While Campbell Road’s six-room houses were built initially for clerks and artisans in the 1860s, speculative overbuilding for the lower middle class combined with pent-up demand from workers at nearby industries to result in one or two houses being converted to lodgings. By the 1871 census, only 26 of the 63 occupied houses on the street were home to a single household, while five households contained 18 people each (an average of three people per room). A few years later, one lodging house keeper named John King obtained a license to lodge

90 men in his six room house.<sup>109</sup>

An even more spectacular decline is recorded in Richard Sennett's case study of Union Park, Chicago. At the edge of Chicago in the early 1870s, Union Park housed "only the best families". By the 1890s, "only the worst families" would live there.<sup>110</sup> Considerably simplified by Hoyt as an example of housing filtering downwards as the middle class moves on, the story of Union Park's rise and fall is presented by Sennett as a considerably more complex story. In the 1830s, the area west of the Chicago River in what was then the tiny settlement of Chicago had stockyards and a tavern, but it also had the mansion and extensive grounds of Philo Carpenter. Carpenter was forced to sell his land at a loss to a bank where he held loans in 1837, and the bank commenced to develop the area as an exclusive neighbourhood for the upper middle class. A park and broad commercial avenues were laid out, and volunteer improvement societies, made up predominantly of women, began to develop 'family entertainments' such as Saturday afternoon concerts and good works with female inebriates and foundlings. By 1860, there were between 600 and 800 mostly upper middle class residents of the suburb.

But in the late 1860s, Potter Palmer began to promote the 'Gold Coast' just north of the city as an elite commercial and residential hub. Some properties on Lake Street, Union Park's main commercial thoroughfare, became warehouses and bars. A more precipitous change occurred with the Great Fire of 1871, when tens of thousands of temporary 'refugees' moved west of the river while the central city was rebuilt. Inevitably, most of the central city housing was lost, and developers wedged in smaller houses between mansions and in the back streets and alleys of Union Park. By 1880, there were 12,000 people living in the same 40 block area that,

two decades before, had accommodated a hundred socially homogenous households. While there was “no sudden break from affluence to poverty”, the ‘suburban’ character of the area was lost. By the turn of the century, Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* lived near the new elevated railway in Union Park, trapped with her ‘respectable poor’ family in the owned home that had eaten up most of their savings and was now declining in value.<sup>111</sup>

The decline of Union Park can be seen as the result of aggressive marketing of a competing new elite area, along with an intensification process exacerbated by a natural disaster. But neither development industry boosterism, nor the impacts of the Great Fire, is mentioned in subsequent accounts of the rise and fall of residential areas by members of the Chicago School. Instead, Park talks of “the inevitable processes of human nature [that] proceed to give these regions and these buildings a character”. Slum residents are drawn to particular neighbourhoods, not because of cheap rents or because there is nowhere else to go, but because “they are particularly fit for the environment in which they are condemned to exist”.<sup>112</sup> The process of housing filtering to ever-lower classes is described by Burgess in biotic terms: immigrant “invasion of the city has the effect of a tidal wave inundating first the immigrant colonies, the ports of first entry, dislodging thousands of inhabitants who overflow into the next zone, and so on and on until the momentum of the wave has spent its last force on the last urban zone”. Although there is a “relative degree of the resistance of communities to invasion”, resistance is futile. All that urban planners or social reformers can do is provide settlement houses to Americanize slum inhabitants, and speed them on their generational progress towards the outer suburban zones. Change is inevitable, yet change is bad. Neighbourhoods in the process of



‘disorganization’ are associated with “juvenile delinquency, boys’ gangs, crime, poverty, wife desertion, divorce, abandoned infants, vice”.<sup>113</sup>

A decade later, in the depths of the 1930s Depression, Hoyt sought to give the insights of the Chicago School a more ‘scientific’ basis. He was more specific than his predecessors in three ways. First, he suggested “a series of techniques by which the ‘terra incognita’ of a city may be mapped and charted and the growth of its various parts measured” in 50 American cities, including survey maps, insurance atlases, birds-eye photographs, cities histories and newspaper accounts, building permits, real property surveys, and the testimony of older inhabitants.<sup>114</sup> His findings suggested one major amendment to concentric zone theory, namely, the importance of sectoral paths in the outward movements of high-rental, industrial, and some low-income neighbourhoods. But, to Hoyt, the equation of the periphery with high status and centrality with low status remained largely unchanged: “From the high rental areas that are frequently located on the periphery of one or more sectors of American cities, there is a downward gradation of rents towards areas near the business centre. The low rent areas are usually large and may extend from this center to the periphery on one side of the urban community”.<sup>115</sup>

Second, Hoyt was more specific about the causes of decline, while maintaining the basic thrust of the Chicago School argument: the proportion of buildings requiring repairs negatively affects the value of adjacent residential property, as do older buildings and centrality in general, a low proportion of owner occupiers, and ‘overcrowding’, for which Hoyt used the common measure of more than one person per room.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps most important, “the presence of even one non-white person in a block otherwise populated by whites may initiate a period of

transition”, and as was already clear from the Chicago School, transition equals decline.<sup>117</sup>

Third, Hoyt was specific about the uses of his theories: “city planning or zoning, slum clearance, and market surveys all require a knowledge of the patterns formed by types of neighbourhoods within the urban community”.<sup>118</sup>

And indeed, urban planners, real estate developers, and mortgage guarantors were hungry for this kind of ‘scientific’ information. The American federal government set up the Home Owners Loan Corporation in 1933 to refinance long-term home mortgages. The initiative was intended partly as economic stimulation for the home construction industry, and partly to stimulate growth of suburbs, which by now was seen as the panacea for all urban evils. The Home Owners Loan Corporation used maps based on the works of Burgess and Hoyt, which divided cities into four classes of neighbourhood. First grade neighbourhoods consisted of new and homogenous homes, resided in by ‘American business and professional men’.

Neighbourhoods, no matter how well to do, that had ‘infiltration of Jews’ were never ‘best’ or ‘American’. The second grade of neighbourhoods had ‘reached their peak’ but were stable. The third class of neighbourhoods were ‘definitely declining’, with an apparent ‘appearance of congestion’ due to factors like a lack of front yards. The fourth class, or ‘D’ rating, were refused mortgage guarantees. New and good quality homes in St. Louis were given a ‘D’ rating (popularly known as ‘redlining’, based on the colour code used in the maps) because they had “little or no value today, having suffered a tremendous decline in values due to the coloured element now controlling the district”. Later programs such as the mortgage insurance offered by the Federal Housing Administration and the mortgages provided under the GI Bill used these

maps as well.<sup>119</sup> By 1944 in New York City, it was assumed that the “almost complete removal of upper middle income groups from the city and their replacement by unskilled coloured people” had occurred.<sup>120</sup> Edgar M. Hoover and Herbert Vernon, in their analysis of the same city in 1959, gave five stages of “residential evolution”: from new single family homes, to apartment buildings and other sources of increasing density, through a ‘slum invasion’ by immigrants and nonwhites, to a ‘thinning out’ due to abandonment of ‘obsolete housing’, and finally, urban renewal.<sup>121</sup> In the 1970s, guides to urban revitalization would reiterate these inevitable stages of housing decline.<sup>122</sup>

The assumption of inevitable house cost decline, with its ‘scientific’ maps and formulas, was devastating to the individual homeowner. As Matthew Edel, Elliot Sclar and Dan Luria point out, “filtering penalizes each group of investors”, entrapping the majority of their savings into a highly depreciable asset, whose value is determined as much by neighbourhood perception as maintenance.<sup>123</sup> White homeowners in Chicago frightened of loss of their equity threw themselves into ratepayer associations, advocated for zoning, restrictive covenants and other conservative measures, and when all else failed, smashed windows and set off bombs in Black homes.<sup>124</sup> Both active terrorist and passive redlining acts created Black ghettos in American cities, ghetto inhabitants being differentiated from slum-dwellers by their total, involuntary and perpetual segregation from movement to better housing and neighbourhood conditions.<sup>125</sup>

In the latter years of the Second World War, governments in all Anglo-American societies began to plan for a post-war period of massive central city reconstruction and suburban expansion. It is argued by John Bacher<sup>126</sup> and Jane Jacobs<sup>127</sup> that Canada’s traditional suspicion

of government intervention, along with a variant history of immigration and racism, spared Canadian central cities the worst depredations of the U.S. ‘federal bulldozer’. It is true that the U.S. government-funded expansion of the urban expressway system in the 1950s and 1960s, a vital aspect of urban renewal, was fuelled by cold war plans to move troops and evacuate cities.<sup>128</sup> But there is no doubt that the understanding of neighbourhood transition in Canada, and resultant plans and government policy, was influenced by American reports that claimed to show how slums were draining civic coffers through costing more in fire prevention, police and public health services than they were bringing in through property tax,<sup>129</sup> or the notion that central city blight would inevitably spread unless checked.<sup>130</sup>

Few central city neighbourhoods were untouched by the assumption of decline. Melbourne’s central city was divided into three zones by a 1937 slum report, all with negative connotations: congested areas, where houses were built on narrow lots; blighted areas, where factories mixed with housing; and decadent areas, districts with once fashionable houses now converted to apartments and boarding houses.<sup>131</sup> By the late 1930s, Clifton had moved in relative space to central Cincinnati, where planning reports of the 1940s called it a “once exclusive residential section, a suburb of mansions and huge estates”, now “middle aged” and facing inevitable decline.<sup>132</sup> Society Hill in Philadelphia, a wealthy neighbourhood in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, was threatened with destruction in a 1959 urban renewal plan, shortly before the housing became upgraded,<sup>133</sup> and Boston’s West End was demolished in the 1950s, just as a similar neighbourhood, the North End, was beginning to be rehabilitated by its residents.<sup>134</sup>

By the 1960s, urban renewal was under sustained attack, in influential books written by

Jane Jacobs and Herbert Gans, and more 'expert' (quantitative) policy analysis as well. Martin Anderson argued that urban renewal is an inefficient use of government resources, since land was usually sold to private developers for about 30% of what it cost the city to acquire, clear and improve it in preparation for sale. Urban renewal was racist in impact if not in intent, since "approximately two-thirds of the people forced out of their homes are Negroes, Puerto Ricans, or some other minority group". It was also a disaster for low-income city-dwellers, since over 90% of newly created housing commanded rents that could not be afforded by displaced residents.<sup>135</sup>

A 1968 Canadian federal taskforce on urban renewal echoed these concerns:

"In order to eradicate the 20 to 30 per cent of buildings that were rotting beyond repair, whole blocks were demolished. Thousands of sound houses capable of being rehabilitated at reasonable cost, together with thousands of others in perfectly good conditions were destroyed. The economic waste was enormous. But far more important, the sense of community, that certain intangible something that gives a district life and meaning, was eradicated."<sup>136</sup>

Sense of community, economic rationalism, and avoiding racism were suddenly being used as grounds for a complete turnaround in policy. In order to understand some reasons behind these attacks on urban renewal, it is necessary to back up once again, and look at the growing re-valorization of the Anglo-American central city in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Re-valorization of the central city

A consensus had built by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that central city neighbourhood change was inevitably downward. The only solution offered by researchers and policy-makers was to entirely replace ‘obsolete’ housing stock with more modern buildings. In cases where there was a perceived need for commercial uses, offices, or expressways, the process was straightforward: expropriate, demolish and rebuild. Piecemeal philanthropic efforts to provide central city housing for low-income people displaced by slum removal was replaced after World War Two with large-scale public housing efforts: led by Great Britain (who were already creating large scale public housing estates in the suburbs), and the U.S., and followed in a less ambitious fashion by Australia and Canada.<sup>137</sup> Unfortunately, post-war efforts almost always led to neighbourhoods with even worse housing, employment, and health conditions, and greater marginalization of the poor and racialized, than the places that had been destroyed.<sup>138</sup>

There were a few dissident voices that questioned the inevitability of central city decline. One of the most insightful was Walter Firey, who published a critique of the Chicago School in 1947. For Firey, space is a “neutral arena”, rather than a “determinate and invariant influence”, and he disputes both Burgess and Hoyt’s assumption that high-income households would eventually all migrate to the periphery.<sup>139</sup> His case study of the growth of Boston emphasizes the “importance of cultural values in determining space”, and he stressed the agency, or “positive human volition” as he called it, of both individuals and local governments in attributing values and symbolic meanings to neighbourhoods and places.<sup>140</sup>

Firey uses the example of Beacon Hill, which was subdivided by a development syndicate in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-19th century, Beacon Hill was adjacent to the central

business district. Despite its central and ‘congested’ location, the eastern (uphill) part of the neighbourhood attracted and maintained an elite set of residents, while the western (downhill) part of the neighbourhood “gradually lost its families and the dwellings [were] taken over by landladies who rented out rooms to single men”, followed by redevelopment into tenements.<sup>141</sup> By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the eastern portion of Beacon Hill had successfully resisted the encroachment of apartment buildings. It was still considered an elite district, largely because of the “weight of past history”, and despite the proximity of a lower-class district and non-residential uses.<sup>142</sup> Of course, Beacon Hill was but one of the elite central city neighbourhoods that successfully resisted decline during the era of mass suburbanization. Baltimore’s Roland Park, Philadelphia’s Chestnut Hill, Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill, Cincinnati’s Hyde Park and Mount Lookout, and Minneapolis’ Lake District are a few U.S. examples.<sup>143</sup> Mayfair and Kensington in London, Westmount in Montreal, Rosedale in Toronto, are among a long list of other elite neighbourhoods that retained or heightened their status during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Moreover, Firey points out that becoming a slum is not a terminating phase in a neighbourhood’s life, even if the housing is not demolished for a ‘higher use’. He uses the example of the North End, often considered the “worst part of Boston” in terms of density and house repair.<sup>144</sup> Here, in the late 1940s, the residents were attached to the place, and many were renovating their buildings. Firey believes that this private sector rejuvenation should be encouraged by local government, instead of the neighbourhood being threatened with demolition.

Firey is perhaps most radical when he spoke of the need for housing to accommodate a low-income, transient population. This was a significant break with the Chicago School and

Hoyt, who continued the quasi-medical metaphors of earlier slum literature, such as ‘growths’ and ‘cancers’, when describing areas with cheap apartments and rooming houses. While Firey speaks of the need to enforce housing standards and ameliorate vice, he does not suggest tearing down viable multi-unit housing. Rather, he suggests small improvements that might retain their functions while making the lives of their inhabitants ‘better’ (more moral). For instance, he is in favour of requiring parlours in all rooming and boarding houses, so residents do not have to entertain their friends in their small rooms or in the tavern.<sup>145</sup>

Whereas Firey’s work was largely ignored, Jacob’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, was enormously influential in its “attack on current city planning and rebuilding”.<sup>146</sup> According to Jacobs, “cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error”, but instead of looking at cities, practitioners and teachers of urban issues ignore “success and failure in real life”, while elaborating simplistic theories in a false science of separating people and land uses.<sup>147</sup> Like Firey, Jacobs recognizes that density and centrality could be construed as advantages by some housing consumers, and that some neighbourhoods, regardless of income or adjacent land uses, retained people because they liked living there. She re-uses the example of Boston’s North End, whose housing was rehabilitated using local money (since the area was ‘redlined’ and effectively off-limits for institutional mortgages). By the 1950s, the neighbourhood had a low rent to income ratio, safe streets, and good public health indicators despite its high density and older housing.<sup>148</sup> San Francisco’s North Beach and Chicago’s Back of the Yards were two other examples of what she calls “unslumming”, working-class neighbourhoods generating their own money for housing and commercial rehabilitation<sup>149</sup>. In



successful districts, she says, “old buildings filter up”, in part through residents getting wealthier while remaining in the same place.<sup>150</sup>

Jacobs goes much further than Firey in her attack on the principles of urban planning as they had developed by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. For her, mixed land-uses and mixed incomes, what she called “intricate and close-grained diversity”, were to be treasured, not separated: they are part of what makes a city diverse, healthy, and safe.<sup>151</sup> Small, narrow streets do not cause traffic congestion, they cure it, by making the sidewalks more pedestrian-friendly.<sup>152</sup>

Jacobs does not deal much with housing per se, partly because she sees housing in the larger context of a city’s economic life, and partly because she believes wholly residential areas are boring. She also does not deal much with the issue of class, or at least, she discusses it in a way that in hindsight seems problematic. At one point, she contends that “unslumming” is not an issue of “bringing back the middle class as much as it is retaining people who become middle class”, that “gradual money” rather than a sudden influx helps a neighbourhood more.<sup>153</sup> Yet she takes issue

“with a common belief about cities - the belief that uses of low status drive out uses of high status. That is not how cities behave... People or uses with more money at their command, or greater respectability (in a credit society the two often go together), can fairly easily supplant those less prosperous or of less status, and commonly do so in city neighbourhoods that achieve popularity. The reverse seldom happens.”<sup>154</sup>

Given the potential problem of the rich supplanting the poor in the successful districts, she does not offer much in the way of prescriptions for maintaining income mix over time. She

suggests that governments should subsidize dwelling units rather than buildings.<sup>155</sup> This was a measure that was successful in non-profit co-operative housing in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, and perhaps has some applicability in a city with strong rent controls (New York City had rent controls on apartments built before 1947 at the time Jacobs was writing).<sup>156</sup> But it is hard to see, with 40 years hindsight, how subsidizing dwelling units would not contribute to rent inflation, and how this measure alone could maintain a large stock of dwellings affordable to lower-income people once central city neighbourhoods had begun to become popular, and housing prices had started to rise rapidly. This was already beginning to happen, as Jacobs concedes, in some places by the late 1950s: the “rich and near rich” were moving in and “crowding out” middle income and poor people in “Yorkville and Greenwich Village in New York... Telegraph Hill in San Francisco... [and] Georgetown in Washington”.<sup>157</sup>

The incipient gentrification of Greenwich Village, where Jacobs lived and worked at the time, offers an interesting example of how central city housing stock could become revalorized. Gerald McFarlane describes how Greenwich Village had been developed as a suburb in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when there was a buffer of fields between the former agricultural settlement and the northern outskirts of New York City. While there were fine houses around Washington Square, the majority of inhabitants were middle or working class. By the 1850s, Greenwich Village was surrounded by development, and during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was “left to decay into a picturesque... slum”, with its row houses and tenements settled by successive waves of Irish, German, Jewish, and Italian immigrants.<sup>158</sup>

By the eve of World War One, U.S. magazines like *Collier's* began applying the term

“American Bohemia” to Greenwich Village. The term ‘bohemia’ was originally applied in Paris to the immigrant suburbs of Montparnasse and Montmartre, where artists and ‘free thinkers’ were drawn to the combination of cheap accommodations and a sort of working class ‘authenticity’ they felt was lacking in the wealthy quarters.<sup>159</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greenwich Village had become a hotbed for similar political and cultural activism, where ‘free love’, feminism, and new writing and art were being promulgated in a heady mix.<sup>160</sup> Traditionally, there had been tensions between the patricians who were still associated with the Washington Square Association and the settlement house-led Village Improvement Society, which articulated a commitment to represent every ethnic community but excluded Americans of African origin.<sup>161</sup> However, the two groups worked together to promote a zoning plan in 1913 that would keep the Village’s core area a residential and small business zone, with height limitations and restrictions on large manufacturing uses.<sup>162</sup> Real estate developers based in the immigrant community, like Vincent Pepe, began remodelling older homes into studio apartments. Their marketing efforts included a 1914 pamphlet, advertising the cheap and accessible units to single and married office workers, entitled: “How Would You Like to Open a Door to This - Ten Minutes After You ‘Punch the Clock’?”.<sup>163</sup> The fact that these developers also emphasized the existence of good schools in the area suggests that they were also trying to attract families to this central city neighbourhood. Thus by the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was at least one place in the U.S. where heterogeneity and centrality was being used as a selling point to what would later be termed ‘the new middle class’.

The example of Greenwich Village shows how a new lexicon was being developed to

combat the conflation of 'central city' with 'slum'. The notion of 'bohemia' gradually lost its counter-cultural connotations as it was approvingly taken up, both by developers and the popular press. The Chicago School had an equivocal and somewhat patronizing attitude towards Bohemia and Bohemians. Burgess referred to Chicago's zone of transition as containing the "mainstem of 'hobohemia', the teeming Rialto of the homeless migratory men of the Middle West" along with the "Latin Quarter, where creative and rebellious spirits resort",<sup>164</sup> while Harvey Zorbaugh sneeringly referred to Towertown as a "Bohemia" of students, artists, and writers "whose radicalism runs to long hair, eccentric dress, lilies, obscenity, or a Freudian interpretation of dreams" as well as "free love".<sup>165</sup> By the 1920s, it was becoming apparent that the term bohemia could also be used as a valuable marketing tool for an area in transition. In Chicago, Towertown's rising land values and rents were making it too expensive for young artists and students by the end of the 1920s, and Greenwich Village became unaffordable to a new generation of artists by the 1950s.<sup>166</sup> In more recent times, as innovation and creativity have become posited as the motors of growth in an information economy, a Bohemian index used by Richard Florida has been positively correlated to urban wealth.<sup>167</sup> People - artists, immigrants, sexual 'outsiders' - who once were considered peripheral have now become central to growth in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the places where they live have correspondingly become admired.

In the meantime, the notion of 'village' was being unhitched from its rural connotations. Transported to the central city, it became a signifier of 'community spirit' in a heterogenous yet socially integrated neighbourhood,<sup>168</sup> a Sesame Street for grown-ups, a place 'where everybody

knows your name'. Developers in the Lower East Side also used centrality and heterogeneity to market new apartment buildings to clerks, professionals, and corporate workers in the 1920s. Images of the 'heroic' immigrants of past decades were contrasted with the current "queer, unadjusted, radical, bohemian and criminal... neighbourhood of lost souls" to justify tearing down tenements. But the 'quaint' Eastern European and Jewish stores remained, to serve those who had moved outwards as well as the "logical future residents of the East Side", the new middle class.<sup>169</sup> By the 1950s, the term 'East Village' was being used instead of 'Lower East Side', first by 'bohemian radicals' known as Beats fleeing the high rents of the former generation's countercultural paradise, then by real estate agents who liked the implied link to what had now become the pricey enclave of Greenwich Village.<sup>170</sup>

As some former 'slums' began to gain a certain cachet, there needed to be new terms for central city places that could be literally and figuratively condemned. The terms 'slum' and 'ghetto' are often used interchangeably, but they have quite different connotations. Slums have been considered to be creatures of poverty, places where poor housing and health conditions combine with a 'different' and possibly 'dangerous' population (such as 'foreign' immigrants) to evoke a mixture of sympathy and fear in authorities, generally leading to 'reform'. Ghettos, whether for Jews in Europe, or African-Americans in the United States, were and are places of total, involuntary and perpetual segregation of a group considered inferior by the dominant society.<sup>171</sup> They are not necessarily places of deep poverty, although poor living conditions are almost inevitable given an expanding population and limited land and capital resources. But they are places of entrapment. An individual or family can, with luck and effort, move out of a slum.

In ghettos, external discrimination (edicts in European Jewish slums, restrictive covenants in the development of early 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. Black ghettos) meant that personal and family mobility is extremely limited.<sup>172</sup> Ghettos may be torn down, as they were in many U.S. central cities in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but they immediately reappear, for instance as public housing projects. Barriers to escape may no longer be as blatant as restrictive covenants, but a combination of single family zoning in 'better' neighbourhoods, poor educational and employment opportunities within ghettos, non-existent public transit to good jobs, and other less obvious methods of discrimination seem to operate effectively to keep people in the ghetto. It can be argued that the ghetto is the obverse to the ideal of the middle class residential suburb. Suburbs were supposed to keep unwanted land uses and people out, but the underlying purpose of a ghetto is to keep a particular group within a tightly confined space, in order to avoid contaminating the rest of the city. The ghetto is a 'landscape of power', created by powerfully inequitable social relations. The ghetto is also a 'landscape of despair' for those who live within it, and cannot escape.<sup>173</sup>

It has been argued by Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch that the deinstitutionalization of people with physical and/or mental health disabilities in the 1960s led to "service dependent population ghettos" in many North American cities. To look at the development of these service dependent ghettos in classic economic terms of supply and demand, a supply of established low cost rental accommodation, preferably close to established support networks, meet a demand of increasing migration to these sites, through formal referral and simple lack of other options. But the lack of options does not happen by accident. Rather, the situation is the result of political choices made by people with more power that govern the extremely limited

'choices' of those with little power. In Marxist terms, the development of these ghettos represents the meeting, not of neutral forces of supply and demand, but of particular social processes and evolving spatial forms.<sup>174</sup> Dear and Wolch use Parkdale, along with east downtown Toronto, as a case study of the development of such a ghetto.

The idea of a ghetto based, not on discrimination by race or religion, but on disability, does have its precedents. New York's Bowery was the city's "last stop on the way down"<sup>175</sup> for alcoholics and chronically ill men from the early 20th century onwards. This area, and Seattle's Skid Row (where inland logs were rolled down to seagoing vessels)<sup>176</sup> became shorthand terms for streets of extreme poverty, usually associated with single men in poor health having no long term housing options other than 'leftover buildings', many of them in substandard condition. Paul Groth documents the largely hidden history of residential hotels, which have been characterized as the homes of those who are "friendless, isolated, needy, disabled, marginal, on welfare, psychiatric, alcoholics or drug addicts, drifters or transients, elderly men or welfare mothers with three kids", but which have offered a range of conditions and options.<sup>177</sup> He posits that the growth of homelessness in the US is at least in part a function of the wholesale destruction of these options (23,000 units lost in Chicago alone between 1973 and 1984), just as the need for them was increasing. For poor single women, there were even fewer options. Boarding houses were a significant source of income and housing for single women (as can be seen in various negative descriptions of 'landladies' cited above), but institutionalization always loomed as threat for those too old or too ill to pay the rent, or for those judged 'immoral' in their coping strategies with poverty

The post-World War Two period is usually remembered as the time when mass suburbanization was provided by mass production in Levittowns and their successors. Perhaps in reaction to the majority, the growing 'counterculture' in the U.S. began to speak with contempt of suburbia (contempt towards suburbia has a much longer history in Britain, possibly because mass suburbanization had occurred in large cities by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine carved out a consumer niche from 1953 onwards by vociferously rejecting suburban values embodied in suburban wives. Instead, Hefner proclaimed his 'bohemian' values in the first issue of the magazine: "We like our apartment... we like mixing up cocktails and an hors d'oeuvre or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting in a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex".<sup>178</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich contrasts this vision of bachelor paradise with that of the Beat authors, such as Kerouac, who extolled "the underworld and underclass invisible from the corporate 'crystal palace' or suburban dream homes". Yet there were meeting points between these masculine 'rebels': love of jazz and Black culture in general (at least in the abstract), a disdain for the nuclear family and its seeming home in the suburbs.<sup>179</sup> Then, in the *Feminine Mystique* of 1963, an equally unlikely ally joined in, the suburban wife herself. The 'housewives' described by Betty Friedan may have suffered from 'the problem without a name', but the problem certainly had a place, and that was at the periphery of the city.

The 1960s were a time of immense social change. Women entered the paid work force in ever growing numbers. Heterosexuals tended to marry later, divorce more often and have fewer children. There was an expansion of women-led households, with and without children, which



increased demands for childcare, public transit, restaurants, and proximate work. People lived longer, and lived alone for longer periods. Immigration brought new tastes and new housing needs, especially in Canada and Australia, which were unaccustomed to high levels of non-European immigration. Alternatives to the nuclear (heterosexual) family began to be openly discussed, with singles using bars and restaurants for sexual searching. The 1960s were also a time of rapid economic change, with central city industries languishing, while jobs in corporate business, education, the arts, and the public and non-profit sectors grew rapidly. Many industrial and service workers followed their jobs to the periphery of the city, while growing numbers of the 'new middle class' followed corporate, governmental, media, cultural, and academic jobs into the central city. As suburbs continued to grow, housing prices and transportation costs increased to a point where they were in many cases higher than the costs of central city housing.<sup>180</sup>

It was during this period, the early 1960s, that the term 'gentrification' was first used. It was the invention of a London sociologist named Ruth Glass, meaning "the movement of middle class families into urban areas, causing property values to increase and having the secondary effect of driving out poorer families".<sup>181</sup> 'Gentrification' is an odd and perhaps deceptive term. The first people to renovate houses in poor or working class neighbourhoods, or former industrial areas, are often artists and other people on the margins of the middle class; they are hardly 'gentry'.<sup>182</sup> But it was a term that stuck with most critical commentators, containing within it the ideas of displacement and potential class conflict, as opposed to the purely positive 'revitalization'.

Gentrification has an ideology, a set of beliefs that seem diametrically opposed to the

consensus that had grown over the previous hundred years. Central city neighbourhoods are not bad places to live or metaphors for the failures of industrial capitalism. It is moral and healthy, not immoral and unhealthy, to be able to walk or quickly commute to work and shopping (of course, this is assuming that work is an office, not a smoke-spewing factory). Old houses are beautiful, not obsolete. Families belong in the city. Children should play on the street (that is, the sidewalk). Diversity is good, not dangerous or evil. Rehabilitating older housing and walking are part and parcel of the ecological movement that began in the 1960s: reuse and save, not consume and destroy.<sup>183</sup>

In a deeper way, pro-urbanism and pro-suburbanism share essential elements. They both represent ‘utopian quests for community’. They both remain fixed in a simplistic vision of the past, only now it is the dense, polyethnic, centralized ‘urban village’ of the railway age, not the ‘traditional’ rural village, which is the ideal.<sup>184</sup> And of course, every utopia needs its dystopia. The virtues of the central city are now contrasted with the vilified periphery. By the 1980s, central city housing could not be considered cheaper than suburban housing, at least in Canada. These places were “being selected *despite* cost disadvantages compared with the suburbs”. The suburbs, however, were associated with “negative values” that these consumers wished to avoid: standardization, homogenization, blandness, conformism, conservatism, patriarchy, ‘straightness’.<sup>185</sup>

Jon Caulfield’s interviews with ‘gentrifiers’ in central Toronto reveal a remarkable dependence on stereotypes of suburbs and suburbanites. One respondent had internalized the lessons of the *Feminine Mystique*: “I’m of a generation that equated going to the suburbs with

putting my head down, having many babies and never thinking again for the rest of my life.” A single woman equated suburbs with “couple life”. A third respondent was apparently immune to the contradiction in the following statement: “People who move to the suburbs are pulverized by a dominant culture that defines what the normal, acceptable lifestyle is... for us to go and live in a suburb would be, in our circle, abnormal.”<sup>186</sup> A recent book co-written by the renowned ‘new urbanist’ architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk confidently asserts that in a landscape of “cookie cutter houses” and “mindlessly curving cul-de-sacs”, “you would not be welcome there, not that you would ever have reason to visit its monotonous moonscape”.<sup>187</sup> At some point in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, for some decision-makers at least, ‘we’ had moved back to the central city, and ‘you’ had ended up stuck in the ‘burbs. Clever ‘us’, bad ‘you’.

Was the central city so different from the suburbs? And if so, how did they differ? In 1961, the residents’ association in Cincinnati’s Clifton, the former late 19<sup>th</sup> century suburb turned declining central city neighbourhood in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, began to advocate for the preservation of what it called an “in town suburb”.<sup>188</sup> The Clifton Town Meeting began to organize house tours of its ‘historic properties’, advocate for more recreational space, and oppose any attempts to tear down older buildings.<sup>189</sup> Clifton was successful in marketing itself as a good choice to professors from nearby educational institutions. However, despite the liberal intentions of the residents association, there were continuing tensions over residential segregation, particularly any feared encroachment from a nearby Black community’ (“Negroes Next Door No Cause for Panic”, read a panicky-sounding 1960s community newspaper headline).<sup>190</sup> In Clifton, at least, gentrification involved a return to the original suburban marketing strategy, albeit with a

new, slightly more diversified twist.

Demand-side changes in taste were sweetened by the supply side: institutional mortgage providers, governments (with grants for rehabilitation), developers, and real estate agents. Peter Williams, in an early study of gentrification in Islington, London, speaks of the role of financial institutions in supporting neighbourhood change.<sup>191</sup> Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the housing in Islington had been owned by absentee landlords, who sold to other absentee landlords at low prices: usually ten times the generally low annual rent for the property. Despite rent controls, rental property was felt to be a suitable investment, and sales were not frequent: approximately ten sales per year over a large area. There was only one estate agent who specialized in Islington.<sup>192</sup>

In the late 1950s, three changes rapidly increased house prices and homeownership rates in Islington. The first was a change in borough housing policies: the local government now wished to support investment in houses. Accordingly, rents were decontrolled in 1957. The second was an increase in immigrants, many of whom were forced to buy property because of discrimination in the rental housing market. The third was an increase in demand from middle class home buyers, actively encouraged by a new generation of estate agents who scented profit in what was then called the 'Chelseafication' of Islington.<sup>193</sup> The architecture of older houses met with aesthetic approval by both consumers and agents, but there was also a correct assumption that neighbourhood house prices were rising. The number of properties on the market rose from 45 properties in 1965 to 114 in 1969 and 323 in 1972; sale prices increased from an average of £L2,750 in 1959 to £7,154 in 1969 and £19,392 in 1972. Institutional lenders

were increasingly inclined to lend larger sums, as the investments proved sound.<sup>194</sup>

Neil Smith based his influential explanatory theory of ‘rent gap’ on the early work of Harvey. According to the theory, housing suppliers note places where actual rent falls below potential rent, and market them accordingly. The state supports profits made on the commodity of housing, by direct subsidization of renovators and by indirect measures such as the abolition of rent controls. But Beauregard, among others, argues against the oversimplification of the rent gap theory. According to him, the potential for gentrification is not simply equal to a ‘rent gap’: “capital cannot annihilate space”, gentrifiers are not simply “yuppies”, and gentrification is rarely simple in form, cause or effect.<sup>195</sup> He uses four case studies of Philadelphia neighbourhoods to illustrate the ‘chaos and complexity of gentrification’. City government was heavily implicated in the process of ‘revitalizing’ Society Hill in the 1950s and 1960s, subsidizing the construction of new luxury housing to replace demolished ‘blighted’ structures, renovating older housing themselves for resale, and providing loans to owners for rehabilitation. This ‘urban renewal success story’ can be seen as a classic example of the rent gap in action, as well as government-directed gentrification.<sup>196</sup> Another neighbourhood, Spring Garden, rapidly gentrified in only one portion, where a hospital was converted to luxury apartments, using ‘heritage’ tax credits. Here the process was developer-driven, with some government assistance. Newcomers and the working class Hispanic community formed a ‘common front’ to combat drug activity.<sup>197</sup> A third neighbourhood, the Northern Liberties, was developed in mixed land uses during the 1860s. A century later, there had been considerable population decline. Some of the vacant, abandoned buildings were rehabilitated by artists, which in turn led to some new residential construction

(again, using tax credits), but change had been slow. A fourth community, Fishtown, had not gentrified during the 1980s, despite proximity of other gentrifying neighbourhoods and the new virtue of centrality.<sup>198</sup>

In some older industrial cities, like Manchester and Detroit, there is not enough excess capital to drive investment in wholesale gentrification.<sup>199</sup> There, gentrification looks like “islands of renewal in seas of decay”, in Brian Berry’s famous phrase.<sup>200</sup> But in many other cities, the ‘marketing’ of the central city to lure both middle class ‘settlers’ and tourist dollars has been in place for several decades at this point, with profound impacts on local government politics, taxation, and spending. Anglo-American central cities begin to resemble seas of renewal with small islands of decay.<sup>201</sup> In the meantime, suburbs are changing. Industrial jobs that moved out of the central city have now moved out of the region. New immigrants often settle directly in suburbs, often because they are the only place where there is affordable housing. Along with the visible signs of a new economy, such as industrial parks and superstores, there is a hidden army of suburban workers, primarily women and visible minorities, struggling within an invisible economy.<sup>202</sup> David Ley may have been correct when he predicted in 1984:

“with the revitalization of the past decade, sections of the post-industrial city have begun a transformation from the home of the labouring classes toward a zone of privilege reminiscent of the innermost ring in Sjoberg’s model of the preindustrial city. If present trends continue, the social geography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial city may even appear to urban scholars of the future as a temporary interlude to a more historically persistent pattern of higher-status segregation adjacent to the downtown core”.<sup>203</sup>

It is also possible that future cities will be the multinucleated sprawling conglomeration of central and edge cities posited by the 'LA School'.<sup>204</sup> What is certain is that the rhetoric of suburbs and slums has shifted yet again.

### Conclusion: the Case Study in Theoretical Context

This chapter has focused on the importance of changing images of place to the growth and differentiation of Anglo-American cities over the past two centuries. Toronto fits the larger pattern of Anglo-American urban development. Although there are significant differences in governance and values between U.S. and Canadian cities, they are no more significant than the differences between 'big cities' and 'small cities', the Northeast and Southwest U.S., or particular differences between cities like Montreal and Toronto. In short, I would agree with Harris and Doucet and Weaver in placing Toronto within a North American context, and also in making comparisons with Australian and British urban development.<sup>205</sup> I would disagree with the particularist approach of Jim Lemon, who unequivocally states that Toronto, as the 'city that works', had no "slums or blighted neighbourhoods" in 1975, with the possible exception of Parkdale.<sup>206</sup> On the contrary, Parkdale is not terribly unusual, in the Toronto context or internationally. In Toronto, Parkdale can be compared to Regent Park and Alexandra Park, two central city public housing projects with considerable gentrification at their edges, or with St. James Town, a mostly privately owned group of high rise apartments with rapidly increasing rents that combines poor living conditions for first generation immigrants with a growing cachet

for the new middle class.

As Fishman, Rybcyznski, Hall and many others point out, ideas about urban problems and their solutions disseminated quickly within an international network even before the creation of the planning profession in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>207</sup> The impact of London's 1851 Industrial Exhibition and Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exhibition on ideas about cities cannot be overemphasized. Local newspapers reported about problems and progress in other cities; many urban reformers and writers traveled widely; designs for model houses were carried in national magazines; and of course, Canada and Australia's 19<sup>th</sup> century elite were usually no more than one generation removed from Britain.

An important asymmetry between suburbs and slums was that slums were almost entirely described by outsiders, who presented themselves to the rest of 'us' (middle-class society) as intrepid explorers and knowledgeable experts on the problems of 'them'. There was a pretty straightforward subject/object relationship between slum litterateurs and slum inhabitants, which in turn led to easy stereotypes. In contrast, 19<sup>th</sup> century suburbs were described, at least in North America and Australia, by people who lived in and promoted suburbs. Beginning in Greenwich Village and the West End of London in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the voice of 'progress' begins to shift from periphery to centre. Political power may still be retained in the sprawling suburbs of North America and Australia, but that power is resented and derided by an increasingly powerful central city intellectual elite. It is this intellectual elite that has denigrated postwar suburbs, just as their suburban predecessors condemned slums.

The ideal of proximate access yet psychological distance became associated with



development at the periphery of the industrial city by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Nineteenth century suburbs were intended to inject some of the social stability and 'family values' of village life into a rapidly changing urban system, while providing the best of the modern world. The virtues of suburbs were contrasted with the vices of central city 'slums'. As demand grew for central city housing, many places that were once suburbs became engulfed within the central city. Densities in these areas increased, as did ethnic and social signs of difference from the norm. This process of decline, or 'becoming a slum', became codified in theory, although of course there were many different kinds of central city neighbourhoods, just as there were many different kinds of peripheral neighbourhoods.

As successful cities grew outwards, there came a point where proximate access to the central city became problematic for some people living on the periphery. Central city housing demand, in contrast to the dominant concentric zone theory, always remained high for some higher-income households as well as the industrial poor. When industries moved to the periphery while knowledge economy jobs grew in the central city (a process which, like 'suburbanization', is sometimes erroneously assumed to have started in the post-World War Two era), there were a new set of demand factors for housing suppliers to respond to. Demand became rationalized by reversing theory and values to support central city housing choices. Now it was the central city that was the 'village', the place that epitomized positive 'post-modern' societal values of 'diversity' and 'liveability'. In contrast, the suburbs were trapped in values of the past, in this case boring homogeneity and excessive energy consumption. The city was 'revitalized' as the suburb became seen as 'devitalized'. While actual housing and

neighbourhood patterns and process are more complex than prevalent theories, in the new rhetoric of urban space, the central city has become the moral core, the suburbs the rotten cancerous growth. The question of 'a good place to live' remains as vital as it ever was.

## Notes to Chapter 2

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- <sup>1</sup> Winchester 1998: 92-93.
  - <sup>2</sup> Relph 1976: 3.
  - <sup>3</sup> Chorney 1990: 100-102.
  - <sup>4</sup> Sibley 1995.
  - <sup>5</sup> Chorney 1990: 102.
  - <sup>6</sup> Park 1974: 5-6.
  - <sup>7</sup> Burgess 1974: 48; Park 1974: 8-9.
  - <sup>8</sup> Burgess 1974: 54-58.
  - <sup>9</sup> Park 1974: 45.
  - <sup>10</sup> Sibley 1995: 127.
  - <sup>11</sup> Park 1974: 1.
  - <sup>12</sup> Hoyt 1939.
  - <sup>13</sup> Harvey 1973: 147.
  - <sup>14</sup> Harvey 1973: 311.
  - <sup>15</sup> Harvey 1973: 57-66.
  - <sup>16</sup> Harvey 1973: 293.
  - <sup>17</sup> I am referring here to Marxist formulations of the city in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as Walker 1981.
  - <sup>18</sup> Castells 1983.
  - <sup>19</sup> Sibley 1995.
  - <sup>20</sup> Sibley 1995: ix.
  - <sup>21</sup> Boyer 1983: 60.
  - <sup>22</sup> Mayne 1993: 1.
  - <sup>23</sup> Jacobs 1992: 4.
  - <sup>24</sup> Harvey 1989: 291.
  - <sup>25</sup> Williams 1976: 9-10.
  - <sup>26</sup> Mayne 1993: 1-2.
  - <sup>27</sup> Beauregard 2003: 239.
  - <sup>28</sup> Wilson 1991, Sibley 1995, Beauregard 2003.
  - <sup>29</sup> Fincher and Jacobs 1998.
  - <sup>30</sup> Young 1990.
  - <sup>31</sup> Williams 1975.
  - <sup>32</sup> Hall 1988.
  - <sup>33</sup> egs., Jackson 1985, Teaford 1986, Sewell 1993, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2000.
  - <sup>34</sup> Wilson 1995.
  - <sup>35</sup> Warner 1974: vii-viii.
  - <sup>36</sup> Dyos and Reeder 1973: 370.
  - <sup>37</sup> see Bourne 2000.
  - <sup>38</sup> Copp 1974, Philpott 1978, Steadman-Jones 1984, Mayne 1993.

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- <sup>39</sup> Beauregard 2003; see also the recent debate between Metzger 2000 and critics Downs, Galster, and Temkin.
- <sup>40</sup> Smith 1996: 39.
- <sup>41</sup> Beauregard 1986: 36.
- <sup>42</sup> Williams 1986: 56.
- <sup>43</sup> Mills 1993.
- <sup>44</sup> Zukin 1989: 73.
- <sup>45</sup> Mele 2000b: 643.
- <sup>46</sup> Howe 1994: 157; see also Caulfield 1994.
- <sup>47</sup> Smith 1996.
- <sup>48</sup> Peel 1995.
- <sup>49</sup> Park 1926, Burgess 1974, Zorbaugh 1976.
- <sup>50</sup> Hoyt 1933, 1970[1939]; Hoover and Vernon 1959; Harvey 1973; Smith 1979.
- <sup>51</sup> Wright 1980, Hayden 1984, Marsh 1990, Wilson 1991.
- <sup>52</sup> Boyer 1983, Harvey 1989, Mayne 1993, Sibley 1995, Smith 1996.
- <sup>53</sup> Harvey 1973 and 1989; Smith 1979 and 1996.
- <sup>54</sup> Jackson 1985: 12.
- <sup>55</sup> Dyos 1961: 34.
- <sup>56</sup> Stedman-Jones 1984.
- <sup>57</sup> Chaucer 1974: 90.
- <sup>58</sup> Chaucer 1974: 103.
- <sup>59</sup> Fishman 1987: 7.
- <sup>60</sup> Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'suburb'; Hall 1998, Wilson 1991.
- <sup>61</sup> Stilgoe 1988: 38-45.
- <sup>62</sup> Fishman 1987: 62-63.
- <sup>63</sup> Williams 1975.
- <sup>64</sup> Fishman 1987: 64-65.
- <sup>65</sup> Fishman 1987: 74-75.
- <sup>66</sup> Fishman 1987: 81-87.
- <sup>67</sup> Engels 1969: 78-79.
- <sup>68</sup> Dyos and Reeder 1973: 369..
- <sup>69</sup> Sibley 1995: 24.
- <sup>70</sup> Harvey 1985.
- <sup>71</sup> Marsh 1990: xii.
- <sup>72</sup> Williams 1985: 108.
- <sup>73</sup> Sibley 1995: 108.
- <sup>74</sup> Wright 1980: 1.
- <sup>75</sup> Wright 1980.
- <sup>76</sup> Fishman 1987: 110.
- <sup>77</sup> Wilson 1990: 6.
- <sup>78</sup> Jackson 1985: 27-32.
- <sup>79</sup> Jackson 1985: 100.
- <sup>80</sup> Von Hoffman 1995: 7, 33.
- <sup>81</sup> Jackson 1985: 21-25.
- <sup>82</sup> Fishman 1987: 151; Doucet and Weaver 1991: 100-101.
- <sup>83</sup> Hinchcliffe 1981.
- <sup>84</sup> Fishman 1987.
- <sup>85</sup> Weiss 1987, Doucet and Weaver 1991.
- <sup>86</sup> Fishman 1987: 89.
- <sup>87</sup> Hinchcliffe 1981: 33, White 1986: 12.
- <sup>88</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991: 33.

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- <sup>89</sup>. Miller 2001: 1-20.  
<sup>90</sup>. Doucet and Weaver 1991: 81, 44.  
<sup>91</sup>. Keating 1988: 66.  
<sup>92</sup>. Doucet and Weaver 1991: 84; Ward 1998: 83.  
<sup>93</sup> Ward 1998: 120.  
<sup>94</sup>. Ward 1998: 90-91, 120-131.  
<sup>95</sup>. Harris and Lewis 2001.  
<sup>96</sup>. Lampard 1973: 29.  
<sup>97</sup>. Douglass 1970: vi, 164.  
<sup>98</sup>. Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'slum'.  
<sup>99</sup>. Mayne 1993: 167, 181, 188.  
<sup>100</sup>. Cited in Philpott 1978: 22.  
<sup>101</sup>. Cited in Wilson 1991: 100.  
<sup>102</sup>. Booth 1971: 54-56.  
<sup>103</sup>. Cited in White 1980: 9.  
<sup>104</sup>. Stedman-Jones 1984: 198.  
<sup>105</sup>. White 1980: 9-10.  
<sup>106</sup>. Stedman-Jones 1984: 167.  
<sup>107</sup>. Booth 1971: 51-52, 421-422.  
<sup>108</sup>. Riis 1957: 5-6.  
<sup>109</sup>. White 1986: 8-10.  
<sup>110</sup>. Sennett 1974: 9.  
<sup>111</sup>. Sennett 1974: 12-50.  
<sup>112</sup>. Park 1974: 4,45.  
<sup>113</sup>. Burgess 1974: 57-58, 52, 59.  
<sup>114</sup>. Hoyt 1939: 3, 97.  
<sup>115</sup>. *ibid*: 112.  
<sup>116</sup>. *ibid*: 31-44.  
<sup>117</sup>. *ibid*: 54.  
<sup>118</sup>. *ibid*: 81.  
<sup>119</sup>. Jackson 1985: 197-204.  
<sup>120</sup>. Swan 1944: 1.  
<sup>121</sup>. Hoover and Vernon: 192-202.  
<sup>122</sup>. Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975: 6-9.  
<sup>123</sup>. Edel, Sklar and Lauria: 1984: 30, 7.  
<sup>124</sup>. Philpott 1978.  
<sup>125</sup>. *ibid*: xv.  
<sup>126</sup>. Bacher 1993: viii.  
<sup>127</sup>. in Sewell 1993: x-xi.  
<sup>128</sup>. Fishman 2000: 199.  
<sup>129</sup>. Bacher 1993: 72.  
<sup>130</sup>. Sewell 1993: 150.  
<sup>131</sup>. Howe 1994: 149.  
<sup>132</sup>. Miller 2001: 50-54.  
<sup>133</sup>. Smith 1996: 53.  
<sup>134</sup>. Gans 1962; Jacobs 1992: 8-11.  
<sup>135</sup>. Anderson 1964: 2-3, 7, 93.  
<sup>136</sup>. Cited in Bacher 1993: 227.  
<sup>137</sup>. Fishman 1987; Howe 1993; Bacher 1993; Hall 1988.  
<sup>138</sup>. Teaford 1990, Jacobs 1992.

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- <sup>139</sup>. Firey 1948: 3.  
<sup>140</sup>. *ibid*: 45, 53, 170.  
<sup>141</sup>. *ibid*: 45-49.  
<sup>142</sup>. *ibid*: 94, 63.  
<sup>143</sup>. Teaford 1990: 309.  
<sup>144</sup>. Firey 1948: 172.  
<sup>145</sup>. *ibid*: 336-337.  
<sup>146</sup>. Jacobs 1992 : 3.  
<sup>147</sup>. *ibid*: 5.  
<sup>148</sup>. *ibid*: 8-11.  
<sup>149</sup>. *ibid*: 271, 297-300.  
<sup>150</sup>. *ibid*: 193.  
<sup>151</sup>. *ibid*: 14.  
<sup>152</sup>. *ibid*: 222.  
<sup>153</sup>. *ibid*: 281.  
<sup>154</sup>. *ibid*: 97.  
<sup>155</sup>. *ibid*: 321.  
<sup>156</sup>. Mele 2000a: 117.  
<sup>157</sup>. Jacobs 1992: 70-71.  
<sup>158</sup>. McFarland 2001: 1-3.  
<sup>159</sup>. Hall 1998.  
<sup>160</sup>. McFarland 2001: Chapter 6.  
<sup>161</sup>. *ibid*: 105.  
<sup>162</sup>. *ibid*: 215.  
<sup>163</sup>. *ibid*: 212.  
<sup>164</sup>. Burgess 1974: 54-56.  
<sup>165</sup>. Zorbaugh 1976: 87, 91.  
<sup>166</sup>. Zorbaugh 1976: 103; Mele 2000a: 143.  
<sup>167</sup>. Florida 2002.  
<sup>168</sup>. Peel 1995.  
<sup>169</sup>. Mele 2000b.  
<sup>170</sup>. Mele 2000a: x-xi.  
<sup>171</sup>. Philpott 1978, Marcuse 1997.  
<sup>172</sup>. Philpott 1978: xv.  
<sup>173</sup>. Dear and Wolch 1987: 9.  
<sup>174</sup>. Dear and Wolch 1987: preface, 8-9.  
<sup>175</sup>. Sante 1991: 14.  
<sup>176</sup>. Ford 1994: 65.  
<sup>177</sup>. Groth 1994: 10.  
<sup>178</sup>. cited in Erenreich 1983: 44.  
<sup>179</sup>. *ibid*: 55-56.  
<sup>180</sup>. Beauregard 1986; Ley 1996: 8; Smith 1996: 52.  
<sup>181</sup>. Oxford American Dictionary, cited by Smith and Williams 1986: 1.  
<sup>182</sup>. Rose 1984, Zukin 1989.  
<sup>183</sup>. Allen 1984.  
<sup>184</sup>. Allen 1984.  
<sup>185</sup>. Ley 1996: 205.  
<sup>186</sup>. Caulfield 1994: 189.  
<sup>187</sup>. Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2000: x.  
<sup>188</sup>. Miller 2001: 68.

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- <sup>189.</sup> *ibid*: 86-118.  
<sup>190.</sup> *ibid*: 81, 131.  
<sup>191.</sup> P. Williams 1978.  
<sup>192.</sup> *ibid*: 73.  
<sup>193.</sup> *ibid*: 73-78.  
<sup>194.</sup> *ibid*: 74.  
<sup>195.</sup> Beauregard 1990: 856.  
<sup>196.</sup> Smith 1979; Beauregard 1990: 859-863; Teaforde 1990: 115-117.  
<sup>197.</sup> Beauregard 1990: 864-866.  
<sup>198.</sup> *ibid*: 866-870.  
<sup>199.</sup> Ley 1996: 81.  
<sup>200.</sup> Berry 1985.  
<sup>201.</sup> Wyly and Hammel 1999.  
<sup>202.</sup> *eg.*, Baxandall and Ewen 2000.  
<sup>203.</sup> Ley 1996: 201.  
<sup>204.</sup> Dear 2002.  
<sup>205.</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991; Harris 1996.  
<sup>206.</sup> Lemon 1996: 287.  
<sup>207.</sup> Fishman 1985, Rybczynski 1995, Hall 1998.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology: Tracking Image and Social Conditions over Time

“The study will first suggest a series of techniques by which the ‘terra incognita’ of a city may be mapped and charted, and the growth of its various parts measured.”<sup>1</sup>

As discussed in the two previous chapters, case studies are a common form of urban historic research. At best, a neighbourhood case study allows a “deep understanding of one place which is transferable, with modifications, to others”.<sup>2</sup> At worst, case studies can become local history, interesting in its details, but resistant to generalization. Longitudinal case studies can run into difficulties in finding comparative data over time. This chapter sets out how I track the relationship between images and social conditions over time in one neighbourhood, Parkdale in west central Toronto.

#### Boundaries of the Study Area

As mentioned in the first chapter, I use the present boundaries of the ‘South Parkdale’ and ‘North Parkdale’ planning districts, which correspond with the historic boundaries of the incorporated municipality of Parkdale between 1879 and 1889. After annexation by the City of Toronto, Parkdale was briefly a separate city ward. From 1891 to 1951, the majority of the study area was covered by the southern portion of ward 6, and assessment district 6.1 is used as the equivalent of ‘Parkdale’ for social and housing

statistics from 1901 to 1951. Unfortunately, assessment district 6.1 deletes eight blocks in North Parkdale, west of Sorauren Avenue, approximately one eighth of the study area [Figure 3]. This results in population figures being slightly underestimated from 1901 to 1951. The omission also may skew the occupational classification. Most of the houses in this area date from the 1906-1913 building boom, and are similar in size and quality to the Galley Avenue sample (see below). Street directories confirm that heads of households tended to have similar occupations to the Galley Avenue sample: salespeople, clerks, and skilled industrial workers.

From 1951 onwards, there is detailed census tract information that allows a comparison between 'Parkdale' and the rest of the census metropolitan area. The current boundaries of South and North Parkdale encompass six regular census tracts from 1971 onwards. It also includes one 'special' tract, consisting of the approximately 300 residents of the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute (formerly known as the Home for Incurables, then the Queen Elizabeth Hospital), whose social characteristics are not included in census information.

### Constructing Time Periods

The temporal scope of the thesis begins with Parkdale's initial marketing and development as a suburb in the mid-1870s, and extends to the present day. Part of my methodology consists to dividing Parkdale's history into three distinct eras. These eras are based on changing perceptions of the neighbourhood, as shown in newspapers and magazines, government reports, academic studies, and marketing materials.



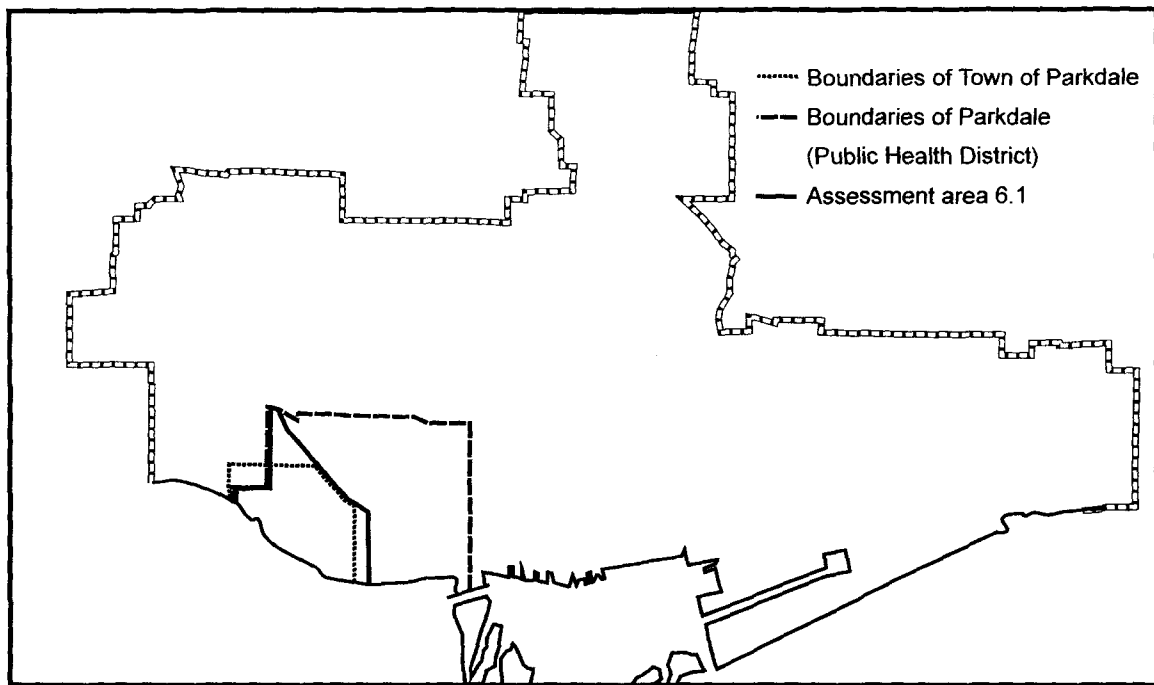


Figure 3 Boundaries: Village of Parkdale, assessment area 6.1, Parkdale Public Health District.

I have chosen 1875 as a starting date, when the term 'Parkdale' was first used by the Toronto House Building Association, to distinguish its 50 acre subdivision from the adjacent Irish working class suburb of Brockton. Parkdale was developed during a period, 1875 to 1912, when Canadian urbanization and industrialization began to resemble trends in Britain, the United States, and Australia. Parallels will be made between these four English-speaking societies, although Britain had a stronger tradition of government intervention in the housing market,<sup>3</sup> and Canadian suburbs would seem to have had a higher level of homeownership than the U.S., with more reliance on affordability strategies such as self-building and taking in lodgers.<sup>4</sup> Parkdale was also one product of a change in house production and marketing in North America, from small-scale individual developers to the beginning of a transition to corporate involvement.<sup>5</sup>

A turning point for Parkdale can be detected from the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the rhetoric of decline began to be applied to the neighbourhood. In 1912, a Toronto City Council debate over a by-law to ban apartment buildings, which were described by local politicians as "breeders of slums", placed a spotlight on Parkdale, which contained a third of Toronto's larger (20 or more unit) apartment buildings by 1915.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the First World War, housing demand had begun to shift to smaller units, lower densities, and for the upper middle class, more 'exclusive' districts, than Parkdale. This was true not only for Toronto, but across Canada,<sup>7</sup> the United States,<sup>8</sup> and Britain.<sup>9</sup> The largest residential developer in Toronto, Home Smith, planned to eradicate houses in lakeside Parkdale for a highway leading to his new suburban developments in the Toronto Harbour Commission's master plan for the waterfront, released in 1913.<sup>10</sup>

As planning interventions in North American societies increased in the post-World War Two era,<sup>11</sup> Parkdale became a target for urban renewal experiments characteristic of the time.<sup>12</sup> Parkdale's status as a declining area was by then taken for granted in planning documents.

A third era for Parkdale's image begins in the late 1960s. The last 35 years in Parkdale have seen the neighbourhood described as both gentrifying and becoming a social service ghetto. There has been considerable reinvestment. Unlike the urban renewal of the 1950s and 1960s, the emphasis of investors has been on renovating and reselling existing housing stock, rather than tearing down and replacing buildings. Therefore, I use a starting date of 1967, when a neighbourhood plan recommending further urban renewal was rejected by City Council as a result of community opposition, for a third era of 'becoming an urban village'. The 1967-2002 period has been marked by increasing disparities within the neighbourhood. The number of poor people has rapidly increased in relation to the Toronto average, while local house prices have increased to exceed the Toronto average, and the proportion of business and professional workers has risen to just below the Toronto average.

Lemon's short history of the neighbourhood in Toronto which most resembles Parkdale, the Annex, uses similar time periods, although the current era of what Lemon calls the 'politics of protection' is dated back to 1959.<sup>13</sup>

## Sources - General

In 1939, Hoyt set out nine sources for studying urban growth and change, which bear considerable resemblance to the sources I use for Parkdale's changing social and housing conditions in relation to the rest of Toronto. These sources are:

- Survey maps
- City atlases
- Development maps with location of structures
- Early photographs
- City histories and newspaper accounts
- Building permits
- Property surveys such as assessment rolls
- Appearance and style of remaining buildings
- Testimony of older inhabitants

The historical records of building permits at the City of Toronto proved to be impossible to access, but all other sources listed by Hoyt proved to be of value. I also used land registry records, which provided sale prices, and mortgage amounts, sources, and repayments. City directories from 1879 to 1921 often listed places of employment for householders, and were an additional source of information.

For the changing images of Parkdale, I rely on both the writings of 'outsiders'—journalists, civil servants, academics—and on neighbourhood oral histories and memoirs.<sup>14</sup> Representations of the community, in photographs, maps, advertisements for new and renovated property, and historic markers have also been used as evidence of changing perceptions.<sup>15</sup> While I have made particular efforts to search out and use the

narratives of as wide a variety of residents as possible, in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity, the quotations from memoirs, oral histories, and newspaper articles are of necessity selective and unrepresentative.

#### Qualitative Sources: Secondary, Local history, Government Documents

Information sources for Parkdale's history are rich and varied, in part due to a recent revival in local history interest. Secondary sources include an excellent local history of Parkdale before its annexation by the City of Toronto in 1889,<sup>16</sup> and mentions of Parkdale in numerous books and articles written about planning, history, and neighbourhoods in Toronto.<sup>17</sup>

The changing perceptions of Parkdale residents towards their community can be found in a large collection of local history materials dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, at local libraries (Parkdale and High Park), and the Toronto Reference Library's Baldwin Room. These include oral histories on audiotape, autobiographies and memoirs, local business and company records, and community newspapers. Perceptions of the larger Toronto community, especially decision-makers such as urban planners, public health officials, investors and mortgage providers, developers, and politicians, can be found in reports, by-laws and correspondence in the Toronto City Archives and the Urban Affairs Library (including minutes, by-laws and correspondence from the independent municipality of Parkdale 1879-1889, found in the Archives).



### Qualitative Sources: Newspapers

The most important source for changing perceptions of Parkdale has been community and city-wide newspapers. Newspapers repeat the opinions of decision-makers (politicians, high ranking bureaucrats, business leaders) and of residents. They also help mould public opinion, through the way that certain issues are presented or ignored. Although Parkdale has been served by at least one community newspaper since the 1880s, only a few individual copies of pre-1970 community newspapers remain at Parkdale Public Library and the Baldwin Room. Post-1970 community news clippings are found in Parkdale Public Library's large local history collection.

In contrast, there are thousands of separately preserved clippings on Parkdale from the 10 daily newspapers that have served Toronto from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward. Parkdale Public Library has a bound collection of almost 3,000 items, mostly dating from 1878 to 1890, when 'Parkdale correspondents' reported in the daily suburban news sections of *the Mail*, *The Telegram*, *The Empire*, and *The Globe*. There is a scrapbook of indexed newspaper clippings dating from approximately 1910 to 1930 in the Baldwin Room. The Urban Affairs Library has several hundred newspaper clippings on 'Parkdale Planning District' dating from 1965 to the present. The Urban Affairs Library also has a large set of clippings on debates over the Gardiner Expressway in the 1950s. *The Toronto Star's* "Pages of the Past", a searchable web database, came on-line during the course of my research and proved invaluable in tracking down mentions of Parkdale. I checked the indexes of City Council minutes from 1900 to 1960 for 'Parkdale' related debates, and then looked in Toronto newspapers for the dates that these items were discussed. This method turned up the debate over the South Parkdale signage by-law in

1931-1932, as well as reaction to the Bruce Report in 1934. Police commissioner reports from 1880 to 1950 were also scanned, both to ascertain whether Parkdale crime rates were higher once it started to 'decline', and to find murder cases that might lead to newspaper reports on the state of the state of the neighbourhood (Commissioner's reports described the location of all murders, and some other serious crimes, until the 1950s). There were only three cases turned up by this method, but each proved to be a window into Parkdale social relations during their respective periods: the suspicious death of Robert Priestman, an insurance agent, in 1887, the murder of Frank Westwood, son of a wealthy industrialist, seven years later, and the murder of Martha Crooks, a rooming house keeper, in 1924. Toronto newspapers were scanned for coverage of these three murders.

### Quantitative Data Sources

Information on Parkdale's housing and social conditions in relation to the rest of Toronto has been gathered using existing sources and original research. In gathering indicators, I have been guided by popular stereotypes of 'suburbs' and 'slums' as they have evolved over the years:

- Suburbs: relatively high homeownership; stable in terms of population turnover; predominantly residential and far from industries and other workplaces; lower densities and more privacy than the city; relatively well-to-do and homogenous in terms of class, 'race', and ethnicity ("the middle class suburb of privilege", as Fishman calls the stereotype); healthy, with lots of green space; lived in by

nuclear families with young children and unwaged mothers; 'modern' in design but old-fashioned in values and virtues.<sup>18</sup>

- Slums: crowded, with high-density forms of rental housing; characterized by a transient, 'foreign', racial/ethnic minority, and generally outcast society; little privacy and much street activity, with subsequent crime, violence, and morality concerns; inhabited by people who are of a low social class and very poor; people are unhealthy and possibly genetically inferior; backward in social norms; suffering from 'abnormal' family life, such as adult men not in the paid labour force and mothers and/or children working for wages.<sup>19</sup>

Above all, I have been guided by Dyos and Reeder's dictum that suburbs and slums were defined in relation and in contrast to one another.<sup>20</sup> I therefore compare Parkdale with similar neighbourhoods in Toronto and other North American cities, and with Toronto as a whole.

Fortunately, there are good primary and secondary sources of information for possible indicators. Harris has a database, comprising a 1 in 20 sample for the 1901 and 1913 assessment records, and a 1 in 30 sample for the 1921, 1931, 1941, and 1951 assessment records, broken down by subdivision. This data base provides information on the following factors for Parkdale (assessment area 6.1) and Toronto:

- Occupational class of household head;
- Tenure;
- Subdivision of single-family housing;
- Multiple occupancy of buildings.



I have gathered the same factors, using the entire assessment roll for Parkdale in 1881, and a 1 in 10 sample for 1891, and can compare my data to similar information for Toronto during the same era.<sup>21</sup>

Assessment rolls, and samples based on them, are not unproblematic.

Assessments tended to underestimate the number of mobile and low-income transients, especially lodgers and other tenants.<sup>22</sup> The 'class' of household heads is based on simplistic categories. The occupation of other members of the household is not taken into account, and there is no occupation listed for female household heads, who are simply labeled by their marital status (single, married woman, or widowed) until 1951.

Further data can be gathered from primary and secondary sources:

- Density (assessment rolls give population estimates for each subdivision);
- Housing quality (insurance atlases from 1884 onwards give building materials, number of storeys, and building footprints over time; City Council reports in 1934 and 1942 map 'substandard houses'; housing quality is judged on a neighbourhood level by reports in 1946 and 1956);
- Land use mix (insurance atlases and assessment information) and journey-to-work information (from street directories);
- Public health (annual reports give information on death from infectious disease and child mortality, two common health indicators, broken down by district; although 'Parkdale' public health district is much larger than the boundaries I use, comprising all of west central Toronto from Bathurst to High Park);
- Ethnicity, 'race', and immigration: This is less of an issue in Toronto than it is for many U.S. cities in the pre-World War Two period. The 1951 census shows that

73% of the population in Toronto and in Parkdale were of British origin.

However, it is sometimes possible to identify the presence of ethnic minority individuals, and a few cases, communities in Parkdale by the last name in assessment records, some oral/local history sources, and insurance atlases (which mark places of worship).

From the 1951 census onwards, information is available by census tract for a wider range of factors:

- Occupational class of all people in the workforce;
- Tenure;
- Subdivision of single-family housing;
- Multiple occupancy of buildings;
- Density (population per hectare);
- Residential stability (proportion of households who have lived in their dwelling for over five years);
- Ethnic background of residents;
- Education;
- Median household income and number of households living in relative poverty/wealth;
- Average house prices and rents;
- Unemployment;
- Substandard houses.

There is less information on mortgages (only recorded in the census 1951 to 1981); and very little usable data on crime rates.

### The Six-Block Land Registry Sample

Because information on changing house prices and mortgage availability is so difficult to access before 1951, I have gathered 'housing histories' for all the buildings on six blocks in Parkdale. There are both practical and empirical reasons for sampling blocks, as opposed to random properties. Land registry records in Toronto have been archaic and difficult to use (the records are presently in the process of being computerized, which should facilitate searches considerably). Sales, mortgages, leases, and liens are hand-recorded in huge and heavy books by the number of the original plan of subdivision, undifferentiated by street name or address until the 1980s. What that means is that information on dozens of properties on a number of streets are recorded together, sorted simply by date in which a transaction was formally registered, which can be years after the actual sale or mortgage. There is an \$8 charge every time a book is used. I was given permission to use the land registry records free of charge for a six week period, but this meant I had to focus on a small number of subdivision plans, ignore the actual deeds for the most part, and gather all information about owners using assessment records beforehand, so I could track which property was being referenced. On the positive side, sampling blocks allowed me to show how the occupancy of streets changed dramatically at certain points in time; for instance, the influx of Eastern European immigrant families on Galley Avenue between 1949 and 1959. I have chosen the six blocks to represent the diversity of housing and land use types, development eras, and locations in Parkdale, and cross-checked tenure and household head's occupation for 1901, 1921, and 1941 to ensure that the information was broadly representative of the neighbourhood. The six blocks are:

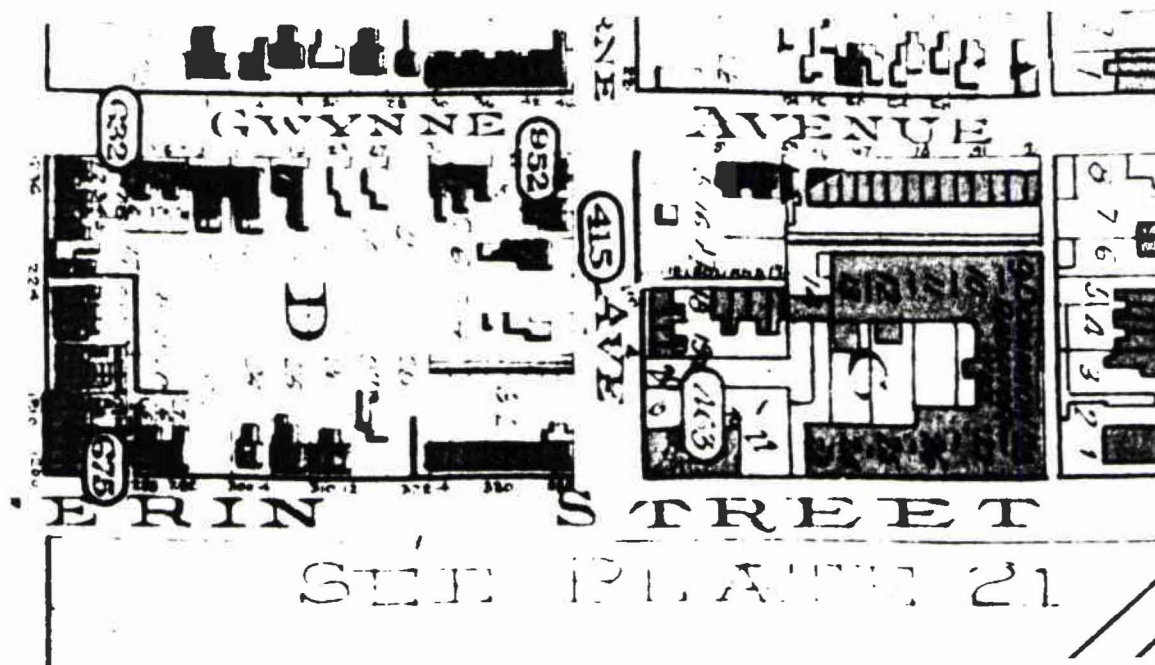


Figure 4. Gwynne Avenue in 1890. The north-east side of the street has been built out in a continuous row of houses, backing onto the Dominion Radiator Factory plant.

Source: Goad's Atlas 1890, Plate 36.



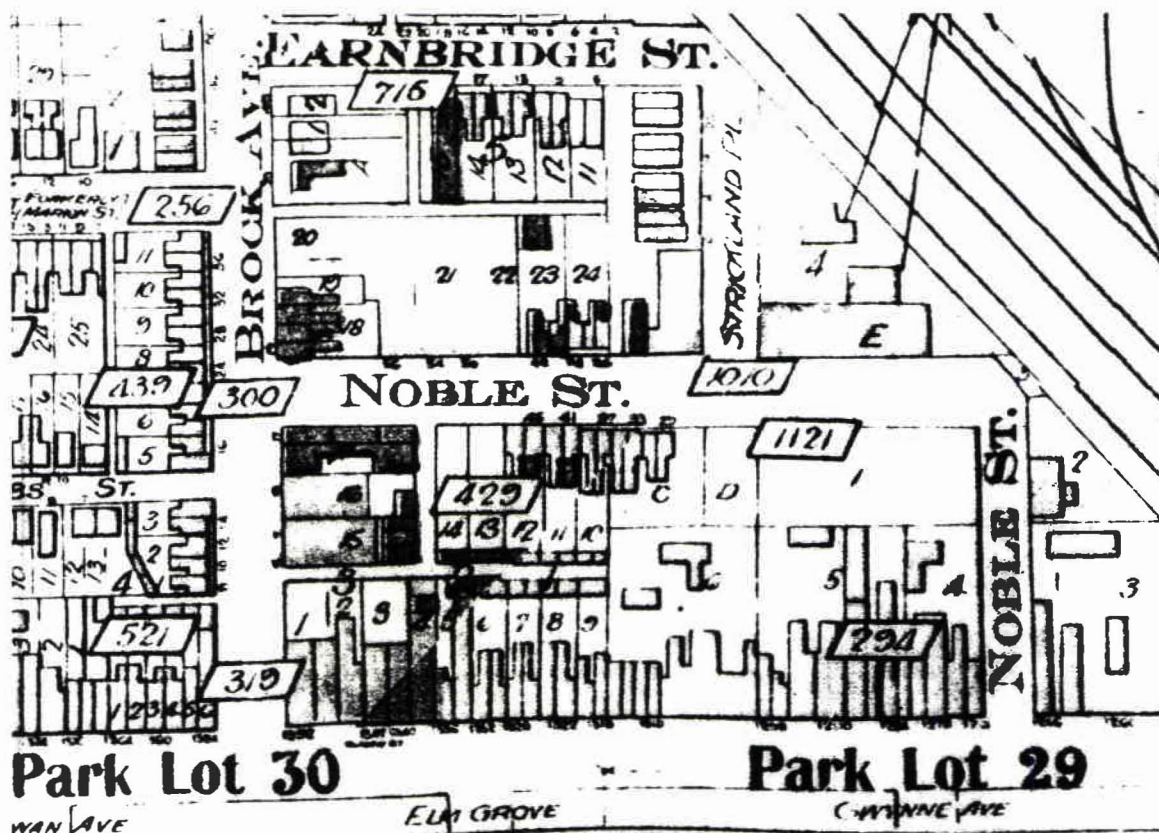


Figure 5. Noble Street in 1890. Four rowhouses have been constructed on the north side, but the lot just east of the rowhouses is still used as a lumberyard.

Source: Goad's Atlas, 1890, plate 43.

3. Queen Street West, north side, between O'Hara Avenue and West Lodge Avenue:

Subdivided in the 1870s, built up in the 1880s and 1890s, this is a handsome set of properties at the centre of Parkdale's main commercial street. The shops, and those who lived in apartments above the shops, reflect Parkdale's changing fortunes over the years. Figure 6 shows approximately half the 20 properties built upon in 1890. These buildings still remain, although the facades of several properties belie their historic origin.

4. Dowling Avenue, east side, between Lake Ontario and King Street West:

Subdivided in the 1880s, and built up intermittently between the 1880s and the 1910s, this block is typical of the 'grand avenues' lined with the villas of the wealthy, that were once taken to represent Parkdale as a whole. Conversion of the villas into flats was common from the 1910s onwards. In the 1920s, two low-rise apartment buildings were constructed on what had been empty lots. From the 1950s to the 1970s, a large developer bought up many properties in this block, resulting in the construction of two privately-owned highrise apartment buildings, and a controversial parcel of land eventually developed as public housing. Today the block consists of three original villas, all converted into single room occupancy apartments, along with two low-rise and three high-rise apartment buildings. Figure 7 shows Dowling Avenue in 1923, by which time several villas had been converted into apartments.

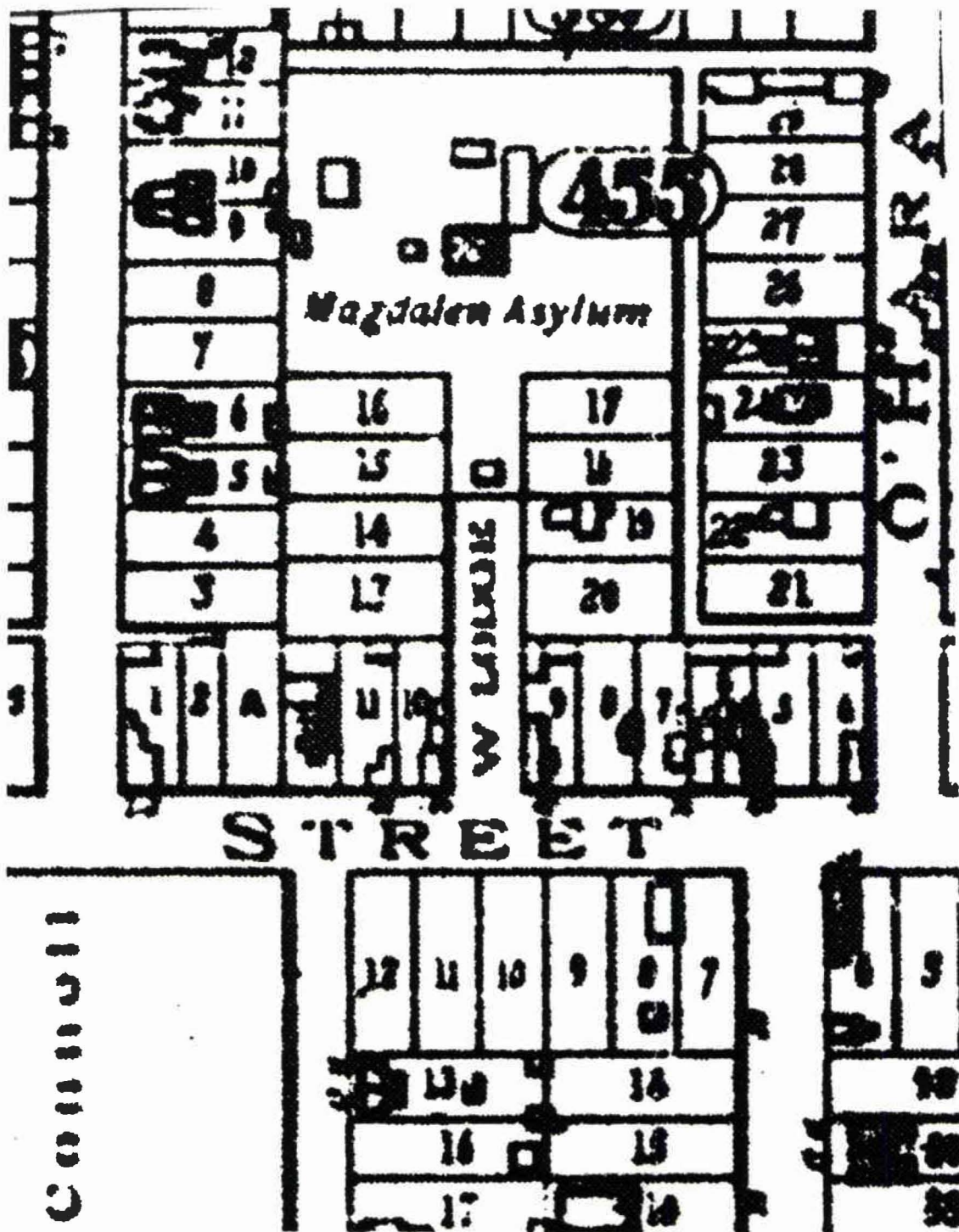


Figure 6. Queen Street West, 1884. Four permanent structures and two sheds have been built on the north side of Queen Street, between O'Hara and West Lodge Avenues.

Source: Goad's Atlas 1884, Plate 34.

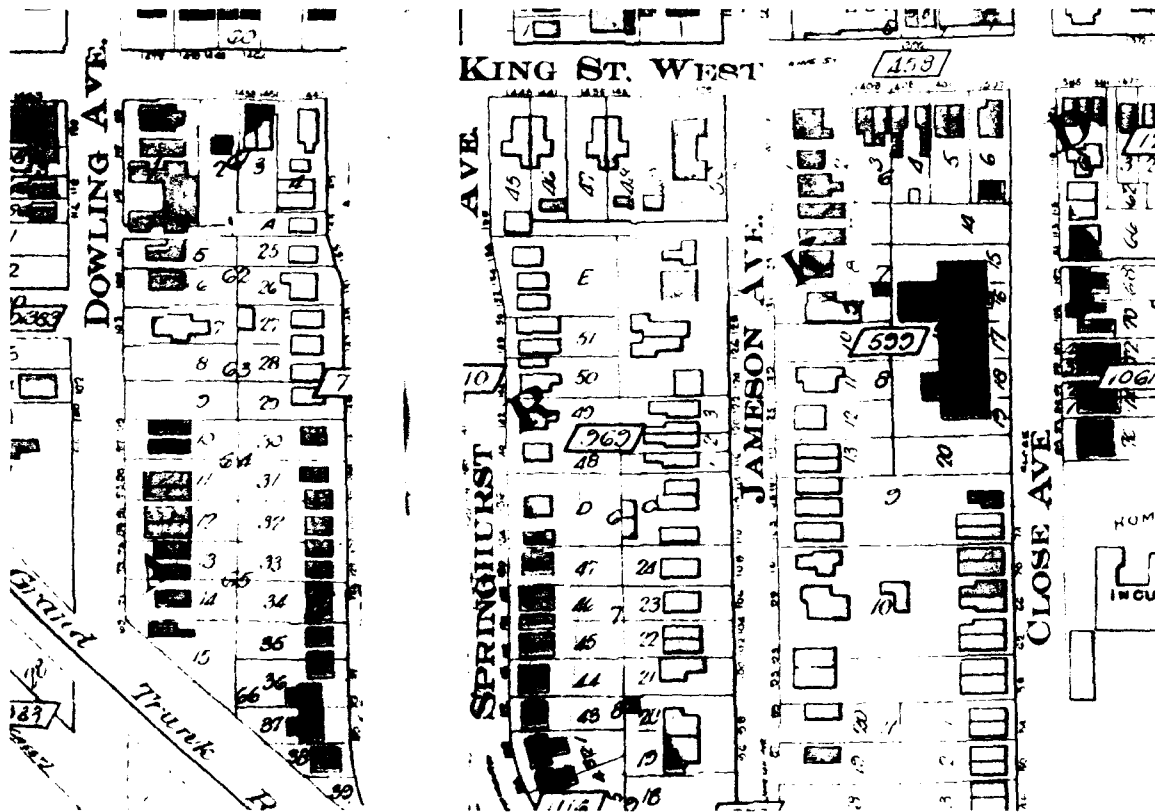


Figure 7. Dowling Avenue, 1923. Note the outline of one purpose-built apartment building on the east side of the street (the apartment building on the west side of the street is shown in Figure 20). By 1923, most of the lots in south-west Parkdale have been built upon. Several of the detached villas and semi-detached houses on Dowling, Springhurst, and Jameson Avenues have been subdivided into apartments.

Source: Goad's Atlas, 1923, Plate 42.



5. Empress Crescent, south side, between Dunn and Jameson Avenues: An example of the eight streets, with 170 houses, destroyed during the construction of the Gardiner Expressway in the late 1950s. Like most of these streets, housing was developed relatively late, between 1900 and 1913, and many of the villas and semi-detached houses were soon converted to multiple occupancy. After 1913, the houses were slowly expropriated and torn down by the City of Toronto for road allowance or parkland. Figure 8 shows Empress Crescent in 1923, when there were 10 semi-detached residences on the street.
6. Galley Avenue, north side, between Macdonell and Sorauren Avenues: Subdivided in the 1880s, but not built up until the tail end of the 1906-1913 Toronto housing boom. A block of substantial two and three-storey semi-detached and row houses, they were initially sold to British immigrant working class and lower middle-class families. There were very few sales until 1949, when many houses began to be sold to Eastern European working class families. Another changeover began in the 1980s, as middle-class homeowners began to predominate. Figure 9 shows Galley Avenue in 1923.

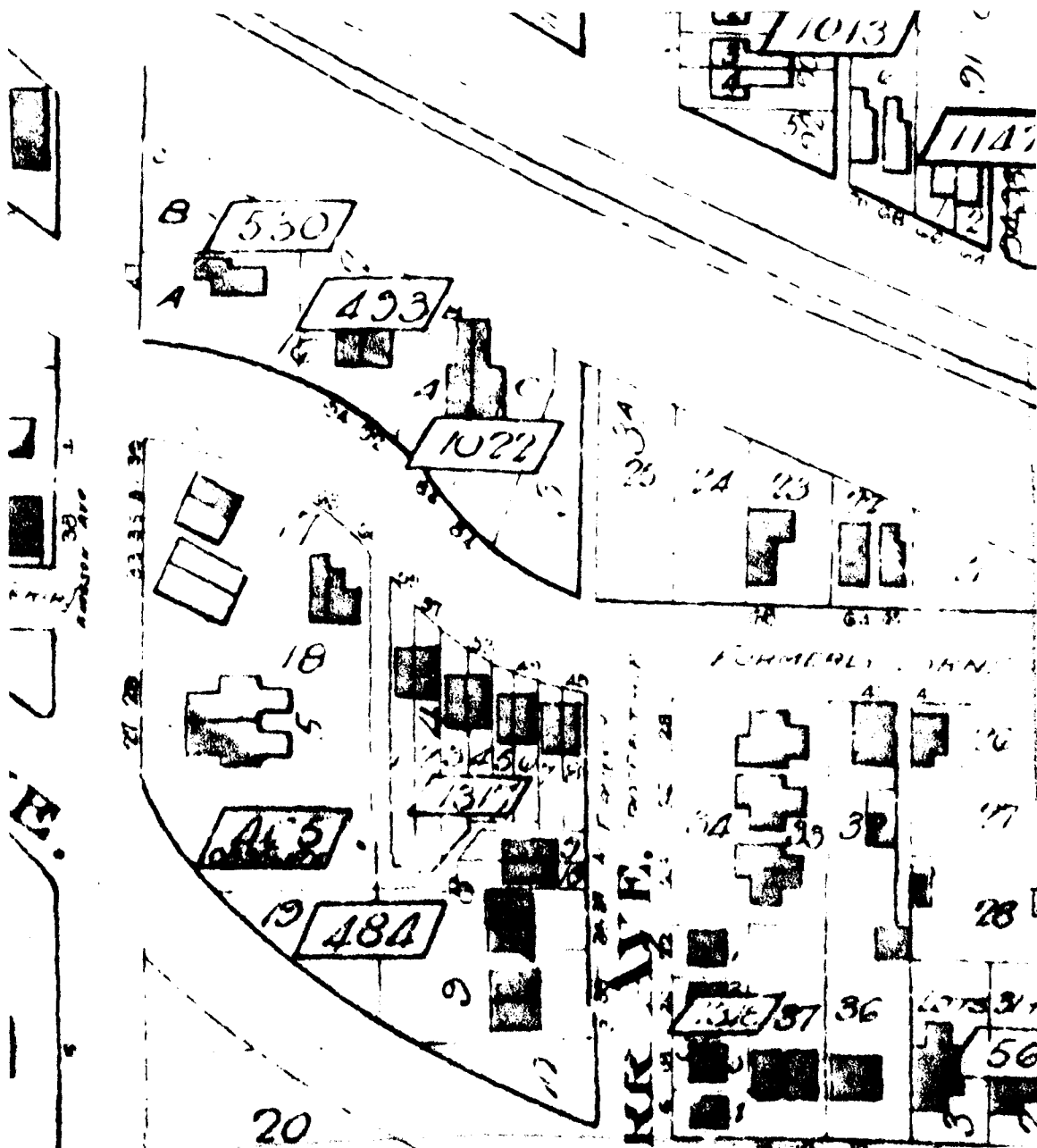


Figure 8. Empress Avenue, 1923. On the south side of the curving east-west street, there are ten semi-detached houses. All of the houses south of the rail tracks are under expropriation orders by 1923, and have been torn down by 1955.

Source: Goad's Atlas 1923, Plate 42.



Unfortunately, it is difficult to find Toronto-wide information on house prices, mortgage financing and ethnic/class change before 1951. There is some limited data on mortgage financing in particular neighbourhoods or parts of the city in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>23</sup> and some comparative data on central neighbourhoods between 1981 and 1996.<sup>24</sup> I compare Parkdale trends with the limited data on land prices in other North American cities.<sup>25</sup>

### Notes to Chapter Three

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- <sup>1</sup> Hoyt 1939: 3.  
<sup>2</sup> Harris 1996: 4.  
<sup>3</sup> Fishman 1987.  
<sup>4</sup> Harris 1996.  
<sup>5</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991: chapter 2.  
<sup>6</sup> Dennis 1989; 1998.  
<sup>7</sup> Sendbluehler and Gilliland 1998.  
<sup>8</sup> Fishman 1987.  
<sup>9</sup> Rodger 2001.  
<sup>10</sup> Reeves 1993.  
<sup>11</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991.  
<sup>12</sup> Bacher, 1993, Metzger 2000, Beauregard 2003.  
<sup>13</sup> Lemon 1986.  
<sup>14</sup> Harney 1985:8-9.  
<sup>15</sup> Sies 2001.  
<sup>16</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991.  
<sup>17</sup> Goheen 1970, Moore 1979, Ganton 1982, Kaplan 1982, Careless 1984, Lemon 1985 and 1986, Murdie 1986, Reeves 1992a and b.  
<sup>18</sup> Dyos and Reeder 1973: 369; Jackson 1985: 5-10; Fishman 1987: 5-6.  
<sup>19</sup> Dyos and Reeder 1973: 364; White 1986: 2; Mayne 1993: 2-12.  
<sup>20</sup> Dyos and Reeder 1973: 363; see also Howe 1994 and Rodger 2001.  
<sup>21</sup> Goheen 1970, Harris 1996.  
<sup>22</sup> Harris 1996, appendix 2.  
<sup>23</sup> Murdie 1986 and 1991, Paterson 1991.  
<sup>24</sup> Ley 1996.  
<sup>25</sup> Hoyt 1933 (Chicago); Edel, Sklar, and Luria 1984 (Boston).

## Chapter Four

### “The Flowery Suburb”: Parkdale’s Development 1875-1912

“Halfway up the stairs

Isn’t up.

And isn’t down.

It isn’t in the nursery

It isn’t in the town.

And all sorts of funny thoughts

Run round my head:

‘It isn’t really anywhere!

It’s somewhere else

Instead!” – *AA Milne, When We Were Very Young*

#### Inventing the ‘Flowery Suburb’

Saturday, May 17, 1879, “was a red letter day in the western, or, as it has now been christened, the ‘Floral’ suburb of Parkdale”.<sup>1</sup> The Village Improvement Association, made up of prominent families in the newly incorporated municipality, organized a tree planting ceremony. This was no formal political gesture with a spade. Fifty saplings, donated by the Village’s Reeve, nursery owner John Gray, were muscled into the hard spring ground along eight streets by an estimated 600 men, women, and children. If the figure is unexaggerated, virtually everyone then living in Parkdale participated in this exercise. Afterwards, the crowd repaired to the ‘grove’ owned by a

lawyer named Maynard, to indulge in well-earned lemonade and cake while listening to local musicians. A speech made by Reeve Gray at this occasion referred to Parkdale as the Floral Suburb. The name stuck. Parkdale continued to be called ‘the Flowery Suburb’ well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the term was re-cycled in the 1970s to refer to the neighbourhood’s past glory.

The tree planting ceremony was a great success in its underlying motivation: to present an image of progressivity, natural health, and moral virtue to potential purchasers of property. *The Mail*’s correspondent, well lubricated with sarcasm if not liquor at the teetotal event, provided an extended summary of “Parkdale’s Progress” in his coverage of the tree planting day. He began by giving the vital statistics of this “village of very aristocratic pretensions, suburban to Toronto”: a population in four figures, with four trains a day stopping on their way downtown as well as steamship connections, and land increasing in value “within the past few years from \$75 to \$800 and \$1000 an acre”. Then he turned to a curious metaphor to describe battles between those who wished the suburb annexed to Toronto, and those who had successfully incorporated Parkdale as a separate municipality:

“Toronto sought on divers occasions to become possessed of her, but she turned coldly from the blandishments of her too experienced lover, whose perfidy is proverbial, and gathering her spotless skirts closer about her, drew further away from the proposed new housekeeping arrangements.”

Clearly enjoying the metaphor, the correspondent continued with his description of Parkdale:

“Adopting the maxim that ‘A virtuous mind in a fair body is like a fine picture in a good light’, she became austere, proud and chaste. Ostracized the saloon-keepers, frowned on negro mistrels,<sup>2</sup> erected several churches, established a pound, built a school house, decorated her walls with placards of church meetings, tea parties, temperance socials, sacred concerts, and theological lectures, and became pious in good style.”<sup>3</sup>

The newspaper reporter was somewhat backhandedly praising the new community not simply for its setting, although he also mentioned “the high ground off the lakeshore” and the “fine views”. Nor was proximity to Toronto or rising land prices the primary claim to potential buyers. Rather, an image of sylvan purity was being projected to newspaper readers. The Village of Parkdale was to be a place of innocent amusements and moral advancement, physically adjacent to the rapidly expanding industrial city, but as separate as possible when it came to governance and social norms. The conflict between Parkdale as a morally separate place, and Parkdale as a place to profitably purchase land, would remain throughout the period of the suburb’s development.

The use of a chaste female to symbolize the nascent village was no coincidence. Christopher Armstrong and Viv Nelles argue that Toronto in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a “slightly British version of a North American city”, looking and acting like “one hundred other aspiring commercial cities on the continent.”<sup>4</sup> As in U.S. and Australian cities, middle class suburban space was being promoted based on two related domestic ideals. One, argued predominantly by men, sought to confine wives and daughters in residential communities, in order to protect them from the moral and physical dangers of the central

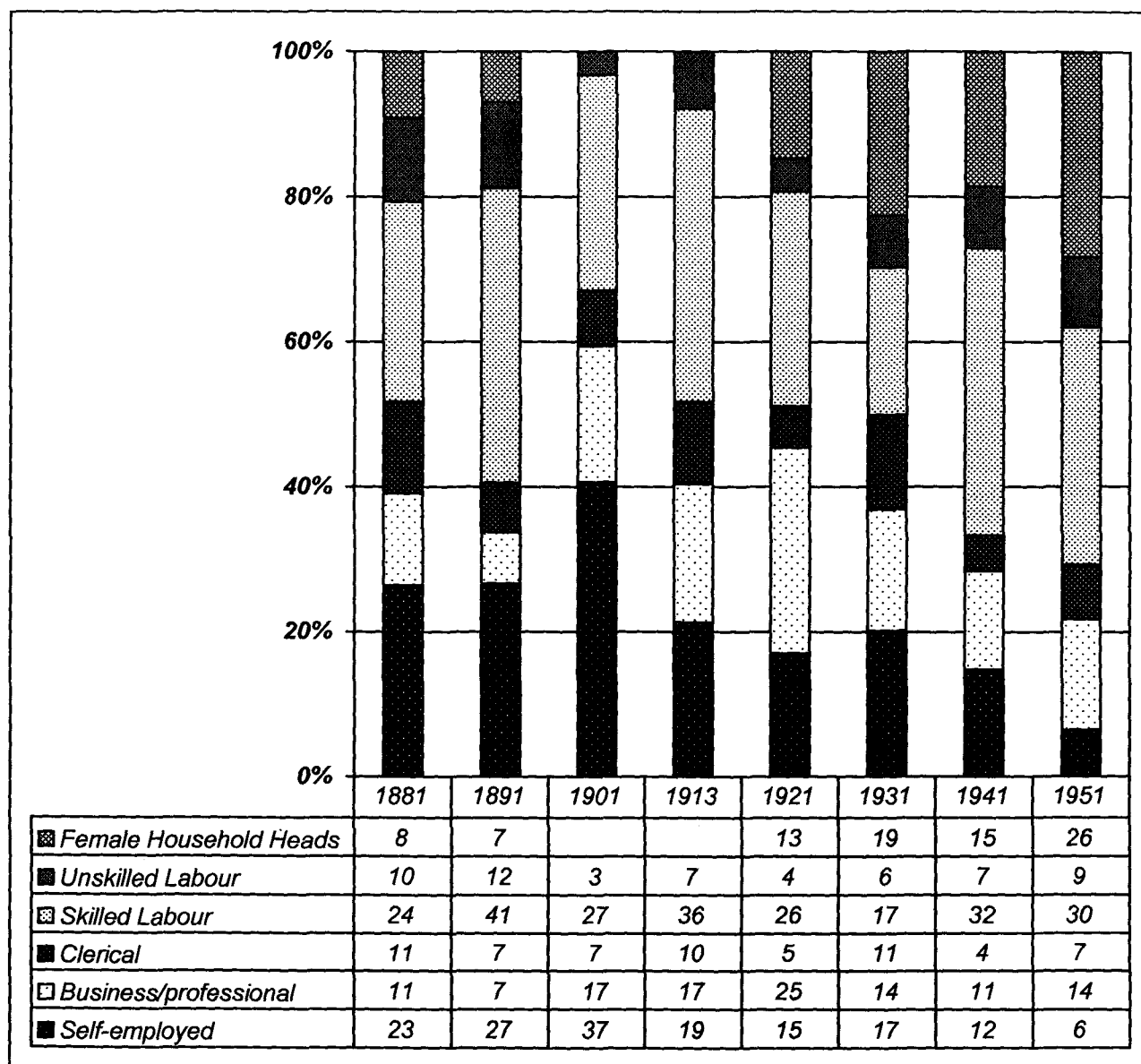
city. The other ideal, argued by women as well as men, affirmed the importance of home in providing a “platform for shared values”, a basis for “domestic education” of the next generation, and a possible suburban basis for a more humane city.<sup>5</sup> The difference was one of emphasis: protection on the one hand, hidden power on the other. Both aspects of this domestic ideal sought a counterbalance to what was seen as a corrupt and unhealthy central city. Those in Parkdale who had opposed annexation by Toronto the previous year had used the threat of unchecked liquor licensing as a basis of their drive to incorporate a separate municipality,<sup>6</sup> and as will be seen, Parkdale Council took several steps in its first years to promote health and morality. Parkdale was not merely being promoted as an extension of urban space into the periphery. It was intended to exemplify what was, for Toronto, a new kind of space: a suburb where the values of middle class women and children would predominate, an extension of the safe domestic sphere.

Throughout the summer of 1879, news items reinforced this message almost every day. On August 18, *The Globe* reported that “certain parties in the ‘model village’ play croquet on Sundays, and their pious fellow-villagers are indignant thereat”. Two days later, there was coverage of a civic holiday picnic held at ‘Beaty’s Grove’, to honour that prominent Parkdale land owner for donating part of his property so that King Street West could be extended to Roncesvalles. After the picnic, the newspapers reported that there were wholesome entertainments such as races, dancing, and finally hymns sung around a bonfire. Even when a violent incident occurred in what was “usually a quiet suburb of Toronto”, as reported on September 27, *The Globe* made sure that readers knew that “the gang of roughs” who assaulted Parkdale hotel keeper Robert Moore in a



drunken brawl were “residents of Brockton”, the Irish working class community to the north of the Flowery Suburb.

Yet the 1878 *Might's Directory*, the earliest source we have for Parkdale's class composition, indicates that half of Parkdale's pioneering households were working class,<sup>7</sup> and there were occasional hints in the newspapers that Parkdale was being settled by people who were interested in issues other than Sunday croquet. On September 25, 1879, *The Mail* reported that “employees of the Massey Manufacturing Company have been making unsuccessful house-hunting expeditions through the village”. Two months later, *The Globe* carried the salutary tale of a railwayman who had bought a lot in Parkdale and was subsequently killed in a workplace accident. His wife and family were now “well provided for” thanks to his investment.<sup>8</sup> By the 1881 assessment, the most common occupation of 216 household heads living in Parkdale was “railwayman”. With related titles such as “conductor”, “switchman”, “porter”, “railway foreman”, “yardman”, and “station master”, there were an even dozen. Several of the six engineers listed may have been railway locomotive drivers. Two trunkmakers, two moulders, and various other “labourers” were presumably employed by the budding industrial conglomeration just east of the suburb's boundaries [see Figure 2], and there were at least two guards employed by the women's and men's prisons also in that precinct. In all, a little over one third of household heads could be classified as working class. Another third were self-employed small businessmen: tailors, traveling ‘agents’ for manufacturers, owners of ‘dry goods’ stores, saloon or boarding house keepers. The remainder included an equal number of clerical and business/ professional workers (11% each), along with those classified as ‘unwaged’ (mainly widow and other female household heads) [Figure 10].



**Figure 10. Employment of Household Head, Parkdale 1881-1951**

Note: there are no figures for female household heads in the 1901 or 1913 assessment samples.

Source: Assessment Samples 1881-1951.

In contrast to the domestic ideal of the suburb as home of virtuous women and children unsullied by commercial connections, there were approximately 70 “abandoned” women and girls, “the most unhealthy of their sex”,<sup>9</sup> incarcerated in Parkdale’s Magdalen Asylum for Fallen Women by 1879. There were a further 150 women and girls in the Mercer Reformatory for Women just east of the suburb, and significant numbers of poor and ‘immoral’ women in two other Parkdale-area institutions: the Home for Incurables and the Provincial Lunatic Asylum.<sup>10</sup> A little less than 10% of Parkdale households were headed by women (mostly widows) in 1881 and 1891, and many married women as well as widows were actively involved in the development of Parkdale as landowners and lenders.

Moreover, after initial opposition, Parkdale’s Village Council allowed and even subsidized the growth of industry within its boundaries.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the continuing rhetoric of “aristocratic pretensions” in the “model village”, Parkdale was developing into a mixed land use and mixed income community, with a variety of household structures, at the periphery of the city. Why then was there a large and growing gap between the way that Parkdale was being described, and its socio-economic and housing conditions? Could the middle class domestic ideal of ‘the Flowery Suburb’ be compatible with a growing industrial working class reality? Was Parkdale really so different from the rest of Toronto, and if so, how? The answers to these questions, for a geographer at least, begin in a discussion of Parkdale’s location within the context of Toronto.

## The Context for Parkdale's Development

The British colonial settlement of Toronto was in its eighth decade when Parkdale was first subdivided into lots and promoted. Although the Humber River, whose mouth is just west of Parkdale, was used as a portage shortcut by the Huron, Seneca, and Mississagua tribes, the area that is now Toronto had no long-term aboriginal or European permanent settlement for the 200 years of colonialism before the American Revolutionary War of 1776-1783. There were two French forts built during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the second (Fort Rouille) just east of Parkdale in what are now the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition. The war brought tens of thousands of British Loyalist or 'Tory' refugees north of the border, settlers who the powers in London were anxious to retain. By 1791, there was a new Province of Upper Canada, separate in culture and governance from the predominantly francophone and Catholic Lower Canada. After a prolonged argument about the capital for the new province, colonial administrators were reluctantly dragged away in 1793 from charming but indefensible Niagara, on the U.S. border, to a more secure but marshy settlement immediately dubbed 'Muddy York'.<sup>12</sup>

The first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, was responsible for laying out the grid that still dominates Toronto's street pattern. Beyond the eight block square town plan, thirty two 100-acre 'park lots' were granted to recalcitrant officials as a reward for moving to Toronto. The lots stretched north of what is now Queen Street to Bloor Street, one concession line to the north, and from the Don River three concession lines west to what is now Landsdowne Avenue in Parkdale. West of Landsdowne, the lots doubled in size to become 'farm lots'. The choice waterfront land south of Queen, stretching from the tiny town to what is now Dufferin Street, was

set aside for a 1000 acre 'Military Reserve', including a new Fort. West of the reserve and south of Queen Street, the remaining land was divided into 'broken lots'. None of the original owners of the lots in what is now Parkdale lived on their land.<sup>13</sup>

Created as an administrative capital and military outpost, the Town of York was, by the early 1800s, beginning its growth as a commercial centre. Like Chicago, its site was uninspiring, but its location within the North American continent was excellent [Figure 11]. The 'Toronto passage' portage up to Georgian Bay provided a short cut between the upper and lower Great Lakes, and construction began almost immediately on Yonge Street, which would connect the town to the first navigable river at Holland Landing.<sup>14</sup> Toronto's harbour could also act as a transshipment point between Britain and fertile farms to the west and southwest. By 1800, an old Native trail, renamed Dundas Street, had been surveyed and cleared. Six years later, a second westward road, what is now Queen Street and Lakeshore Road, was opened, but it tended towards flooding and was thus less popular than the more northerly route of Dundas Street.<sup>15</sup> The Don River's deep ravine impeded development to the east until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1834, when the Town of York became the City of Toronto, some of the owners of lots west of the city's boundaries began to consider future development. Of these landowners, none is more remarkable than John George Howard. Today, Howard is remembered locally as the benevolent old man in a Santa Claus beard who donated his property High Park, which would become central Toronto's largest green space. His home in High Park, Colborne Lodge, is open to the public, and there a highly

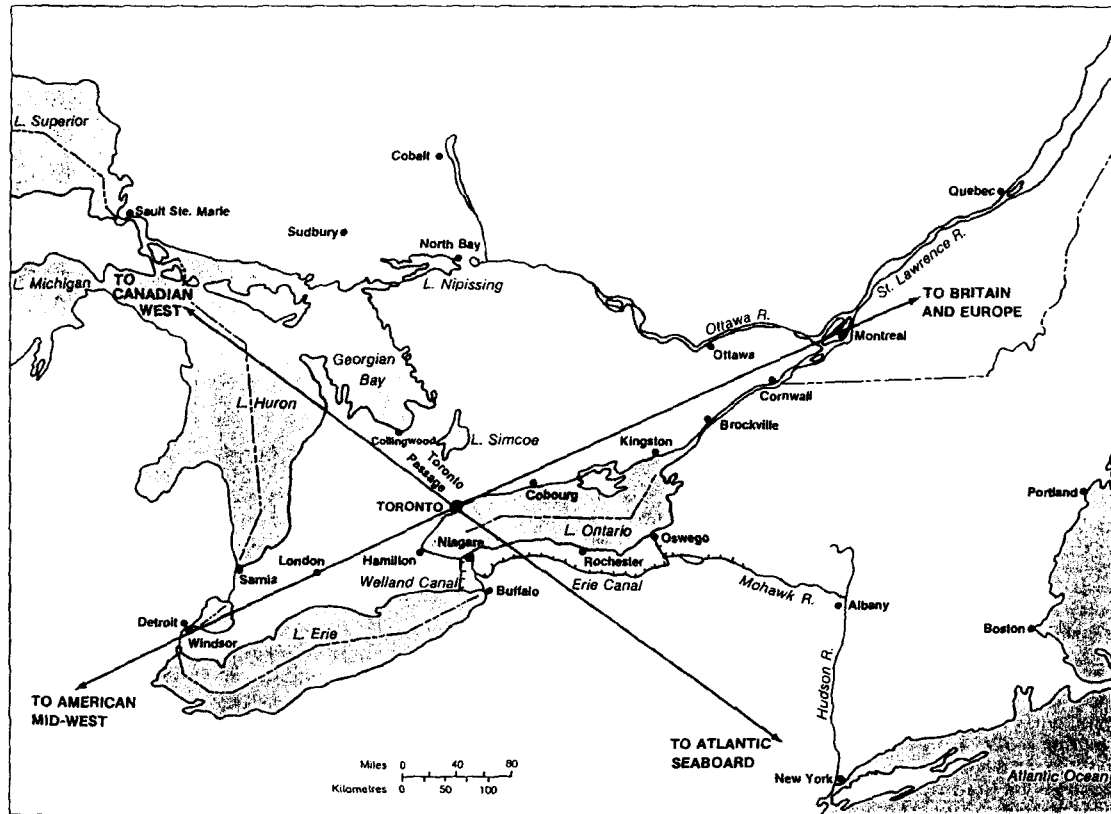


Figure 11. The location of Toronto

Source: Careless 1984: Map 2.

sentimentalized version of his life is provided. We hear about his happy domestic life with his wife Jemima, unfortunately unblessed with children, and his peaceful retirement days spent sketching and acting as 'park ranger'. This version of Howard's life underestimates his talent, and overestimates his benevolence. Howard was a deeply disturbed man who suffered all his life from what would probably be diagnosed as manic depression today. He had three children with a mistress, while imprisoning his wife in Colborne Lodge and attempting to admit her to the Lunatic Asylum he had designed. He was also Toronto's chief architect and surveyor for over 20 years, whose ideas on urban landscaping and suburban design parallel those of Frederick Law Olmsted. As the man responsible for High Park and the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, two places intimately connected with the wax and wane of Parkdale's image, his life deserves closer examination.<sup>16</sup>

Howard was born, illegitimate, in a small village north of London in 1803. In his autobiography, he concocts a genealogy claiming descent from a noble Scottish family, the Howards, but he was originally named Corby after his home village. At 15, he joined the navy and learned surveying at sea. He later apprenticed with a series of land surveyors, and married Jemima Meikle, the daughter of one of this masters, when he was 24. Soon after, he followed his wife's family to Upper Canada. After a difficult first winter, Howard found work as drawing master at Upper Canada College, which led to architectural contracts with students' families. In 1834, he was hired by Toronto's first mayor as City Engineer and Surveyor.<sup>17</sup>

Although Toronto was then but a small provincial capital, Howard was a visionary thinker who subscribed to London journals and was up-to-date with the latest

trends in city-building. He bought a picturesque farm lot overlooking Humber Bay almost immediately, and began enjoining friends to buy adjacent lots. His dream was a suburb of villas in a park setting, a more rustic North American version of Regent's Park in London. Twice in the 1840s and 1850s, he advertised five acre lots within his property as Ontario Park, a "suburban retreat for professional and business men in the City... with a fine view of the lake", and even built a villa, Sunnyside, on speculation.<sup>18</sup> But, in this as in many other matters, Howard was too far ahead of his time and his city. The lots did not sell, and the first buyer of Sunnyside defaulted on his mortgage. Howard also laid out Jarvis Street, Toronto's first 'exclusive' address, for Samuel Jarvis, and probably worked on the first plan of subdivision for what would later become the wealthy suburb of Rosedale, for Samuel's cousin William Jarvis. Both the Ontario Park and Rosedale subdivisions featured winding irregular streets, in stark contrast to the grid plans of most of Howard's contemporaries. Howard's most successful curvilinear 'subdivision' in Toronto was St. James Cemetery, designed in 1845. These lots found immediate customers.

In 1840, Howard began work on what would become a 30 year enterprise to build North America's largest Lunatic Asylum, managing every detail, from a separate water intake pipe from Lake Ontario, to a complicated set of stairwells linking the wards by gender and severity of illness. The asylum's construction was caught in endless delays, and Howard's grand plan was never fully realized. Another frustrating experience was his design for a waterfront esplanade in 1852, which was neglected in favour of a Grand Trunk Railway-sponsored plan that made public access to the waterfront unsafe and unpleasant. By 1856, the strain of unpaid bills from the Jarvis family, too many



unfulfilled contracts, and maintaining two households caught up with Howard. He had a nervous breakdown (or as a contemporary historian put it, “his weary brain called out for rest”), leading to his early retirement at the age of 52.<sup>19</sup>

In the late 1840s, Toronto received its first substantial wave of economic refugees, Irish fleeing the 1847-48 Famine. Many of these immigrants found work clearing lumber off the O’Hara estate, which by 1850 comprised a park lot and two farm lots totaling 500 acres to the west of Toronto’s city limits. Walter O’Hara had served in the Peninsular War before becoming a Colonel in the Upper Canada Militia, and his battle experiences in Spain are commemorated in the exotic Parkdale street names of Roncesvalles and Sorauren. More concretely, he encouraged the creation of Toronto’s first industrial suburb, Brockton, centred on the first westbound toll gate beyond Toronto along Dundas Road. By the early 1870s, Brockton had two rope walks, several abattoirs and lumber yards, a basket maker, and three taverns close to the toll gate. It also had a strong Catholic character, one of the few parts of Toronto that had a minority culture identity in the overwhelmingly Protestant ‘Belfast of the North’.<sup>20</sup> Figure 12, a map of Toronto and its suburbs in 1860, shows the western suburb of Brockton and the curvilinear subdivision of ‘Rose Park’ (Rosedale), adjacent to the northern suburb of Yorkville. Lots in the future Parkdale are as yet unsubdivided, and bear the names of the landowners Gwynne, Dunn, and McDonell.

While Brockton developed west of the City’s boundary, the military ‘Garrison Reserve’ east of what would become Parkdale was filling up as well. After the U.S. invasion and burning of York during the War of 1812,<sup>21</sup> the military function of the reserve lands gradually waned, and the government began selling off plots for other uses.

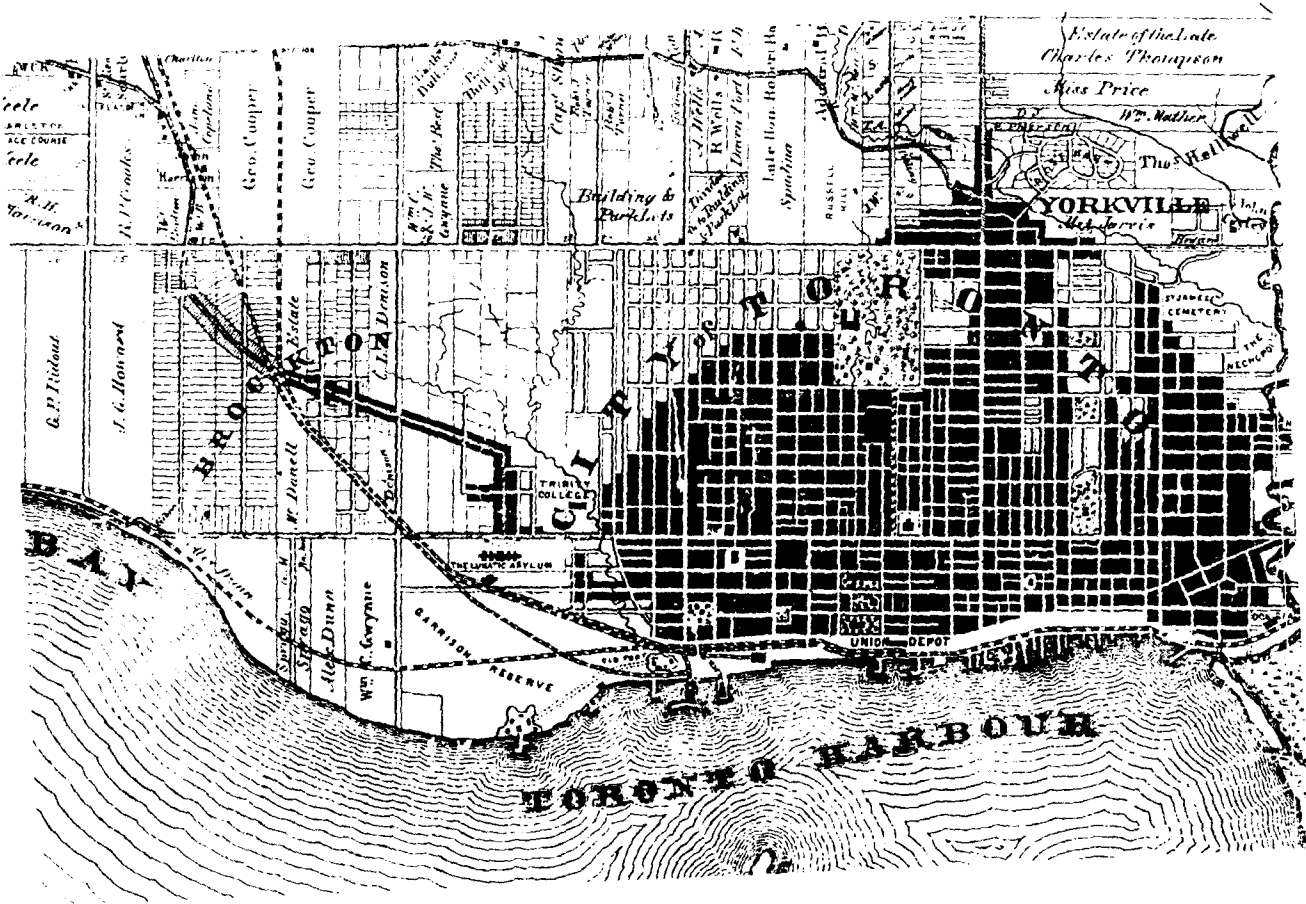


Figure 12. Toronto and Suburbs 1860. Brockton refers to the entire area west of the city, including the Dunn, Gwynne, and McDonnell estates that will be subdivided to create Parkdale. Note the suburb of Yorkville directly north of the built-up city, with the curvilinear subdivision of 'Rose Park' (Rosedale) to the east.

Source: Tremaine's Map of the County of York, Canada West (City of Toronto Archives MO 0004-1)

First and foremost came the railways: the Northern Railway (originally called the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron) to Georgian Bay in 1853, the Great Western Railway to Hamilton, Detroit, and points west two years later, the Grand Trunk Railway to Guelph and Western Ontario in 1858, and the Credit Valley and Toronto Grey and Bruce Railways, also serving Western Ontario, by 1879. Four of these railways skirted Brockton and what would become Parkdale as they turned northward; the Western Railway continued west along the waterfront. At least two of the railways had shunting and works yards close to the Queen-Dufferin intersection, and all had stations within Parkdale. By 1879, there was also a 'Queen and Parkdale' horse tram running to the intersection, which by 1887 was extended to High Park. A King Street tram reached Parkdale by 1883.<sup>22</sup>

Two hundred acres set aside for farming in the Lunatic Asylum (the inmates were expected to earn their keep) were sectioned off for other institutional uses, the Central Prison which began construction in 1871, and the Mercer Reformatory for Women and Girls in 1878.<sup>23</sup> The Government of Ontario had rotated its annual agricultural fair between several cities from the 1840s onwards, but the City of Toronto began to bid for a permanent site in 1858, when it constructed a replica 'Crystal Palace' in the Garrison Reserve. By 1879, an annual Toronto Industrial Exhibition, open the three weeks before Labour Day, was established in a permanent site just east of Parkdale. One hundred and two thousand people came the first year, and by the turn of the century, the annual attendance was close to half a million. The Toronto Industrial Exhibition, which changed its name to the Canadian National Exhibition in 1903, would come to be seen as a mixed blessing to Parkdale. While providing a year round landscaped green space adjacent to

the community, and a tremendous late August boost to shop and hotel keepers, the fair brought with it congestion from wagons and pedestrians that made the Queen-Dufferin intersection close to impassible for three weeks. Streetcars and trains were overcrowded, and there was considerable rowdiness, drunkenness, pickpocketing, prostitution, and theft, much of it centred at North Parkdale train station, where two special constables were kept busy during the fair. Several female residents of Parkdale were picked up by the police for 'vagrancy' (prostitution) during Exhibitions in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>24</sup>

Industries were attracted by railways and municipal tax subsidies to the Garrison Reserve. Hart Massey's agricultural machinery company relocated from Newcastle, Ontario, in 1879. By 1884, the four storey factory had 400 workers, and by 1891, a series of mergers had made it Toronto's largest employer, with over 700 workers. John Inglis' machinery factory employed a further 80 employees after 1882, and John Abell's implements factory employed close to 200 people after 1886.<sup>25</sup> While Toronto provided 11% of Ontario's industrial jobs in 1870, by 1910 it was the location of 27% of all industrial employment, much of it centred in the former Garrison Reserve and radiating northwest along the rail lines.<sup>26</sup> As Gunther Gad has pointed out, the movement of industries to what was then the western fringe of Toronto was in place well before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in seeming contradiction to many urban historians' emphasis on central city concentration, such as the work of Allen Scott.<sup>27</sup> Robert Lewis has also recently argued that industry began to decentralize in North American cities much earlier than previously assumed.<sup>28</sup>

So to the north and east, the vicinity of Parkdale was rapidly filling with institutions, industry, and growing rail and road traffic. However, there were

countervailing influences to the south and west. The land that would become Parkdale held the only undeveloped water lots within easy access of downtown Toronto. And Howard, after his early retirement, decided to become the beneficiary of Toronto's first municipal pension plan. He negotiated the sale of his 200 acre lot to the City of Toronto as a municipal park, for a \$1,200 annuity and the right to live in his Colborne Lodge estate and act as a 'park ranger' until his death. He also attached restrictions to the use of the land, ensuring that no "drinking booth, alehouse, saloon or tavern" be located on the property, and that it be "kept select for the wives and children of mechanics, and the working classes generally, also the Sunday School children and the different charities' picnics". This must have seemed like an excellent deal to the City, when the agreement was voted on in 1873. Howard was 70 years old at the time, and seemed to be in frail physical and emotional health. But Howard lived on for another 17 years, by which time the City had paid him over \$20,000. The City paid less than \$15,000 to add the 200 acre Ridout estate to High Park in 1876, with no conditions attached. Still, High Park became an immediate boon to the growing city without large open spaces, especially after 1878, when the Great Western Railway began to run inexpensive excursion trains on Saturday afternoons and holidays.<sup>29</sup>

An 1878 map of the southwestern portion of York County shows these potentially conflicting sources for growth in the vicinity of Parkdale [Figure 13]. On the one hand, the new Exhibition Grounds to the east, High Park to the west, and the waterfront to the south offered green space and the potential for pleasant walks and prospects. The railways and horse cars provided easy commuting opportunities to downtown jobs for the

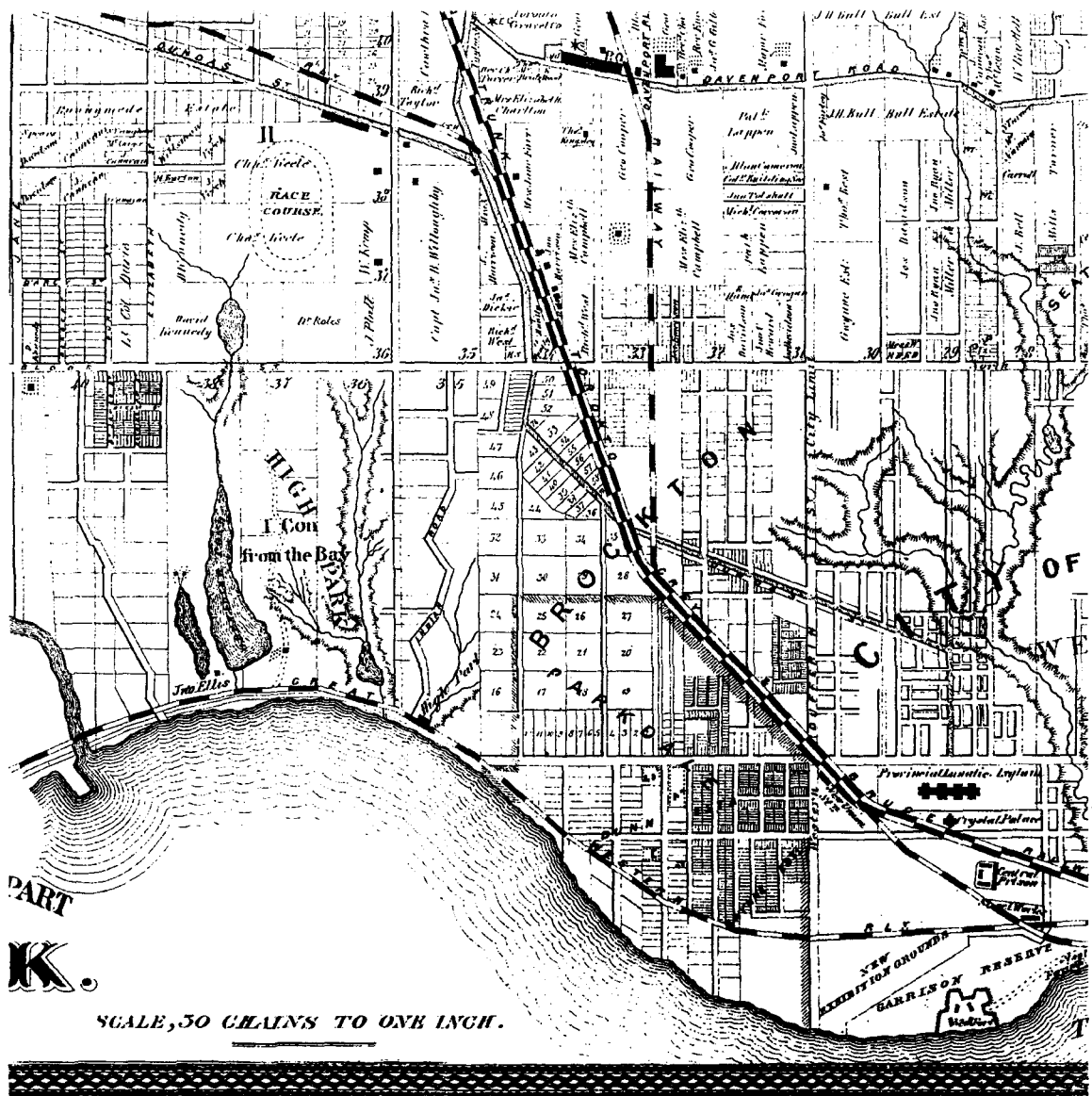


Figure 13. Toronto and western suburbs, 1878. By 1878, the eastern portion of Parkdale has been subdivided into urban lots. Note the Lunatic Asylum, Central Prison, Steel Works and New Exhibition Grounds to the east of the new suburb.

Source: Canniff 1968.

middle class. On the other hand, the railway yards, industries, lunatic asylum, and prisons, while providing working class employment opportunities, would be considered unpleasant neighbours to a middle class clientele. Parkdale could be 'sold' to middle class commuters and industrial walk-to-workers, and to a certain extent, it was marketed to both.

### Marketing Parkdale

As Toronto entered the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its social geography resembled that of many North American cities of the time: a finely-scaled jumble of commercial and industrial uses, and residences for all classes spread across the developed area. There were some elegant blocks, like Bay Street and Wellington Square, but they were adjacent to labourers' cottages, industries and rail tracks. Ethnic segregation was limited to poor Catholics (mostly of Irish origin) living in the central area that would become called 'The Ward', north of Queen Street between University Avenue and Yonge Street, with other settlements in the marshy eastern periphery (later called Cabbagetown) and Brockton. The small Black community, mostly refugees from slavery in the U.S., were concentrated on one downtown block, York Street, just west of then-elegant Bay Street. Unlike most North American cities, Toronto remained over 75% Protestant, and over 90% British in origin, until well after the turn of the twentieth century, which meant that Toronto had a somewhat different context for ethnic and racial segregation than cities like New York, Montreal, Winnipeg, Boston, and Chicago.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1860s, the northern portions of several streets were being subdivided by their park lot owners into large lots for sale to the growing commercial elite, including Jarvis Street, St. George Avenue and Queen's Park Crescent. Yorkville, just north of the city limits along Yonge Street, became Toronto's first incorporated suburb in 1853. Unlike Brockton, which did not attain its own government until 1883, Yorkville had a mixture of self-employed craftspeople, shopkeepers, labourers and clerks working locally, and a few merchants and professionals commuting by the omnibus service provided along Yonge Street after 1849. Again unlike Brockton, the developers of Yorkville engaged in promotion of their suburban lots to the middle class, advertising the "pure and healthy air" that would presumably be found one and a half miles north of downtown.<sup>31</sup> Suburban boosterism worked: the population of Yorkville grew from 800 in 1853 to over 5,000 in 1881, with an increasing proportion of middle-class commuters.<sup>32</sup> Yorkville, however, was never a 'high class' suburb, as contended by Goheen.<sup>33</sup> It continued to mix industry, commerce, and various sizes of houses in the fine-grained pattern of the central city.

Places further afield took note. By the mid-1850s, the Village of Maple, 20 miles north of Toronto, was promoting itself as a half hour railway commute to Toronto, with lower taxes and cheap firewood.<sup>34</sup> Residential development began to enjoy regular boom and bust cycles: a boom in housing construction during the 1850s was followed by a bust due to over supply in the 1860s. Another boom starting in the late 1860s was followed by a world-wide recession in the mid 1870s. By the late 1870s, there was a third boom that lasted throughout the 1880s in Toronto, only to screech to a halt in the early 1890s during the worst global economic recession before the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> The Anglo-American



tendency already noted in the previous chapter was true for Toronto as well. Lots unsuccessfully offered to “genteel residents” would eventually be advertised as suitable for “mechanics and others”, with auctions moved to the evening to accommodate wage workers’ hours.<sup>36</sup>

By 1851, three-quarters of what would become Parkdale was under cultivation, and during the next two decades, subdivision plans for the entire area had been registered.<sup>37</sup> Ganton, who has analysed the process of subdivision in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Toronto, calls these lots “transitional”: two to 15 acre lots that were intended to be sold to land speculators or market gardeners, rather than built up immediately.<sup>38</sup> The death of three of the area’s principal property owners between 1868 and 1875 provided an immediate impetus for subdivision into small ‘urban’ lots and marketing as a suburb.<sup>39</sup>

A subject which has received little attention in the literature on suburban development is the importance of widows and other female inheritors to the subdivision and home financing process in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> Women who inherited property and money tended to search for investments that would minimize the gap between the annual income of a wage-earning male, and the much smaller interest they would receive on capital after the wage-earner’s death. While subdivision and mortgage loans were somewhat risky endeavours, they were both less risky and more ‘respectable’ than other options, such as loans to new businesses. A network of property-handling agencies had sprung up in North America by the 1870s, who acted as intermediaries between women and orphan’s capital, and land developers, home-builders and individual buyers.<sup>41</sup>

The biggest land owner in Parkdale from 1875 until her death in 1910 was Eliza (Nell) Gwynne, sole surviving child of one of Parkdale's original settlers. In 1875, immediately after the death of her father, Nell Gwynne and the O'Hara family (Walter O'Hara had died in 1874) were approached by a land developer named William Innes Mackenzie, who would become known as the 'Father of Parkdale'.<sup>42</sup> Mackenzie had enjoyed a very chequered career up to that point, not atypical of the lives of 19<sup>th</sup> century Toronto businessmen. Born in Scotland in 1824, he had emigrated to Hamilton in 1848. As an 1886 *Cyclopedia of Canadian Biography* discreetly put it, he held "several other positions" in New York, Mobile, and other North American cities, before returning to Britain as financial manager of an ill-fated railway speculation company. After that bankruptcy, he ended up in Yorkville in 1874, where he found several wealthy backers to support a new company with the grand name Toronto House Building Association.<sup>43</sup> The Toronto House Building Association (THBA) purchased the southern 20 acres of the O'Hara estate in 1875, and the northern 30 acres of the Gwynne estate the following year, and immediately registered subdivision plans for an eight block area immediately north and south of Queen Street and west of the city limits.

It seems likely that the Association gave the area the name of 'Parkdale' sometime in 1875 or 1876.<sup>44</sup> Unlike many subdivision names in Toronto (Rosedale, Seaton Village, Brockton), Parkdale was not named after a landowner or an estate. Nor was it a colloquial name, like Cabbagetown. Rather, the name Parkdale seems purpose-built for marketing. Rosedale was already associated with Toronto's elite. High Park was becoming a popular spot for picnics and other natural pursuits. By 1883, the area just east of the Don River had changed its name from Riverside to Riverdale. Of sixteen

Chicago-area subdivisions advertised by Samuel Gross in 1885, mostly for lower middle and working classes, six have 'park' in their names and two 'dale'.<sup>45</sup> The name 'Parkdale' was thus a combination of two important signifiers in late 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban culture, both suggesting natural beauty and remoteness from the sights and smells of the city.

A sample of the promotional material produced to advertise Parkdale lots can be found in 1881's *Parkdale Register*, which summarizes the history of the area to that date and provides sketches of its most notable citizens. Located only three miles west of Toronto's city hall,

"The site is higher than that of the major portion of Toronto, and is exceedingly picturesque, being surrounded by a landscape that possesses all the varying attractions afforded by the beautiful Lake Ontario, and the diversified scenery of an undulating expanse of fertile country, wooded, watered, cultivated, and adorned with attractive homes."

The streets were described as "regular, kept in good repair, and ornamented with young trees". The climate was modified by lake breezes, which meant that the area was "not subject to malarial influences and is uncommonly healthy". The real estate market was "exceedingly active", due to the "steadily increasing desire of those whose avocations require them to spend much of their time amid the bustle of Toronto, of providing themselves with a quiet home in an agreeable locality". The "unpretentious homes" of the "working and middle classes" were "neat and comfortable", showing evidence of the wise residents' "thrift and prosperity".<sup>46</sup> The Register suggests that the primary audience

for advertising was commuting businessmen, although there was some recognition that others might be attracted to Parkdale.

Apart from a name that clearly differentiated the development from Brockton, Parkdale needed other preconditions for settlement. In November 1875, the THBA organized local land owners to “be assessed for the purpose of constructing a sidewalk on the north side of Queen Street from the city limits to Sunnyside”, and York Township subsequently granted \$200 and levied \$800 for a half mile of wooden sidewalk. The late 1870s also saw petitions to York Township to grade roads along Roncesvalles, Jameson, Elm Grove, Gwynne, O’Hara, and King, to erect a cattleguard across the Great Western Railway junction with Jameson, and to provide a school house on Landsdowne. The City of Toronto constructed a sidewalk on Dufferin from Queen Street to the Exhibition grounds, and sidewalks were provided by York Township along a further five Parkdale streets in 1878.<sup>47</sup> Construction on an Anglican church began in 1877, and a Methodist church followed in 1878, with the Presbyterians close behind in 1879.<sup>48</sup>

Across North America, the late 1870s witnessed a frenzy of speculative flipping in suburbs, although actual building activity was slow.<sup>49</sup> Land registry records for Parkdale indicate that this trend was true for Toronto as well. Plan 387, for a portion of the north side of Queen Street, was registered by the THBA in 1875. Lots 4 to 6, between O’Hara and West Lodge, were immediately sold to a man named Duckworth for \$1,667, with a mortgage provided by the vendors (who advertised themselves as a ‘Building, Loan, and Savings Society’) for all but \$400. Four years later, the mortgage was discharged when Duckworth sold the three lots to a real estate dealer named John Laxton for \$1,900 cash. Laxton almost immediately resubdivided, and sold less than half

of the property to a man named Woods for \$1,325. Woods, however, did not build on his land until 1886. Sophie Dunn, widow of a large landowner in the southwestern portion of Parkdale who had died in 1868, sold lot 61, Plan 333 (the east side of Dowling Avenue) to Robert Gooch, a real estate agent, for \$1,903 in 1873, with a vendor mortgage of \$950. Gooch immediately resold this lot and one other to Goldwyn Smith for \$3,318, although he did not discharge his mortgage to Sophie Dunn until 1883. Three years and two sales later, lot 61 was re-purchased by Robert Gooch for \$6,000, triple what he had originally paid, although there was still no house on the property. There were some rowhouses being erected, for quick resale, on Gwynne, Elm Grove, Dufferin and Cowan Avenues just south of Queen. These were purchased by some wealthy people as an investment and temporary home while more elaborate villas were being built. For instance, legal publisher Charles Frankish was constructing a mansion on Dowling Avenue by the lakeshore (later occupied by his business partner Robert Carswell), but he lived on Elm Grove Avenue in 1881, alongside two carpenters, a bookbinder, and two prison guards sharing a house.<sup>50</sup>

Land speculation was breathlessly reported by newspapers, which benefited from real estate advertisement revenue, and also considered high land prices a sign of municipal progress. The *Mail* reported on July 9, 1879 that “The mania for Parkdale lots has subsided”. Two months later it announced a bounce back: “More lots in Parkdale have been sold in the last fortnight than during the whole of the preceding months”; and three days later added, “Lots are selling rapidly in Parkdale, and there are scarcely any vacant houses”<sup>51</sup>. In 1882 the newspaper positively crowed: “The property which was bought from Mr. Farrell last week for \$10,000 has been sold again for \$14,000. Can this

be beaten in Winnipeg?”.<sup>52</sup> Suburban news items included sales of lots and announcements of auctions, and then as today, news of the business of home selling seemed to transform itself effortlessly into shilling the product.

Despite the fact that there were fewer than 1,000 residents in Parkdale by 1878, a hot political debate was being waged over the future of this suddenly valuable property. In June 1878, two separate delegates from Parkdale presented petitions to York County Council, one requesting Parkdale’s incorporation as a village, the other asking that it not be incorporated but continue to be governed by the county. At the same time, Toronto alderman Richard Denison, who owned land and held office in both Toronto and in York County, presented a motion asking for the City’s boundaries to be extended from Dufferin westward to the Humber River.<sup>53</sup> *The Globe*, which favoured annexation, pointed out the absurdity of having an independent village between the city and its new municipal park, and thundered in an editorial: “We cannot allow ourselves to be girdled around with incorporated villages, whose presence may by and bye cause annoyance by absurd restrictions, and disease by neglect of ordinary sanitary precautions”.<sup>54</sup> Parkdadians who favoured incorporation turned these moral and physical health arguments around, saying that Toronto’s tap water tasted like “purgatory and death united... a miasmic liquid”, and that Toronto’s city government was notorious for its corruption, especially in the granting of liquor licenses.<sup>55</sup> Denison argued that the balkanization of Toronto into many separate municipalities would threaten Toronto’s rivalry with Montreal for commercial supremacy; while a letter to the *Globe* pointed out that the lack of metropolitan government had done London no harm.<sup>56</sup> The *Evening Telegram*, which maintained neutrality on the question of annexation versus

incorporation, focussed on the underlying issue of taxation for municipal services. On “one side of the issue”, “Parkdale is to all intents and purposes, except those of taxation, a part of the city now”, and it was unfair for businessmen to “enjoy all the advantages” of living in a city without “contributing to its cost”. On the “other side”, surely it was a property owner’s right to “protect against municipal extravagance and jobbery” so prevalent in Toronto.<sup>57</sup>

Parkdale’s fate was actually decided not by businessmen and property owners, but by some of its most marginalized residents. After a preliminary census found fewer than the 750 residents required for incorporation, it is said that a tribe of gypsies was bribed to become temporary ‘citizens’.<sup>58</sup> Alderman Denison also charged that signatures were collected of those “who were not really inhabitants”, such as “mechanics from Toronto who were working there temporarily” and residents of “the Roman Catholic institution” i.e., the Magdalen Asylum for Fallen Women, which had been established in O’Hara’s old estate of West Lodge in 1876.<sup>59</sup> While marketing and reporting focussed on wealthy potential land and home owners, the new residents of Parkdale were creating a different reality for themselves.

#### Disputes over Character: Parkdale as an Independent Municipality 1879-1889

Throughout the ten year life of Parkdale as an independent municipality, tensions between what I will term ‘pro-development’ and ‘slow-growth’ forces helped shape the neighbourhood’s physical form and social composition. Each side of the debate worked within a mental image of Parkdale’s character. The ‘pro-development’ forces viewed

Parkdale as the expanding edge of a growing city, with inexpensive housing opportunities for all. The 'slow growth' forces wished to maintain physical and moral 'difference' to the suburb, to make decisions that would maintain a distinct identity within the community. By 1883, it seemed that the 'pro-development' forces were in ascendance. After initial opposition, Parkdale Council turned to industrial expansion and working class dwellings in order to finance infrastructure also favoured by some of the wealthier land holders. Decisions made in the early 1880s resulted in benefits to all residents, although they also resulted in a huge public debt and strong pressure to join the City.

In the public arguments leading to incorporation, a letter from "a resident of Parkdale" accused the pro-annexation movement of being led by a few absentee "speculators, each owning from 5-10 acres of land in that section, and who have not the slightest interest in the place further than to increase the value of their property"; they would "leave the purchasers of the building lots to pay the taxes". In contrast, this resident had gone to the expense of sinking a well and outhouse, and did not "want or need city water or drains".<sup>60</sup> Another letter to the *Evening Telegram* complained about the City spending hundreds of thousands building the Exhibition Grounds, while Queen Street West was in a pitiful condition; Parkdadians would not be caught in this spendthrift trap.<sup>61</sup> Pro-incorporation forces were thus arguing that Parkdale could be managed by a sensible business elite, who would live in a semi-rural environment without need of municipal services. Some city-dwellers, including the editor of the *Globe*, assumed that low services and low taxes would bring on an entirely different class and number of residents. As another letter by "a Toronto Ratepayer" argued, Parkdadians should be left to their own devices: "There they will have railway facilities, easy access to the city,



cheap land, and not be disfiguring our streets with their modest dwellings... If mechanics or men of modest means wish to purchase property within the limits of their purse, let them go...”<sup>62</sup>

By the time of the village’s first election, “two parties” were identified in coverage of political meetings. One ticket, led by Charles Frankish the legal publisher, Thomas Abbs, a former tenant farmer who had just opened up a grocery store on Queen Street, and several others, was opposed to “speculation and extravagance”: they were the low-tax, low-service, sell-lots-quickly party. The other, led by Colonel Gray the nurseryman and Joseph Norwich, a Queen Street butcher and large land owner in northwest Parkdale, were slow-growth advocates, wishing to hold onto their land and make improvements until wealthy people were willing to buy large lots for estates. There were both political and religious differences between the parties. Gray was a Tory Anglican, representative of the old Toronto elite. Frankish and more particularly future town clerk John MacLachlan were non-conformist pro-temperance Grits who were typical of the new commercial elite in Toronto. The THBA’s Mackenzie, who was of course the epitome of the ‘pro-development’ forces, accused Gray’s party at a public meeting of not being suitable to govern, because “they kept large tracts from people and paid low [non-residential] taxes”: he was greeted with loud “hear, hear”s.<sup>63</sup> The slow-growth Tories won the first village election, but by 1883, the pro-development forces were in ascendency in Parkdale, as measured by votes on key issues.<sup>64</sup>

There were several progressive government proposals on which there was a consensus. The first was a ‘frontage tax system’, by which a majority of residents on a street would petition for sidewalk or street improvements, to be paid by themselves using

a special levy. This special assessment system, which Lisa Einhorn claims had been pioneered in Chicago during the 1870s,<sup>65</sup> met with approval by the *Globe*, which otherwise had little good to say about the suburban municipality's governance.<sup>66</sup> At the first meeting of the village council, in January 1879, a medical officer of health was appointed. This was exceptionally forward-thinking, since the City of Toronto only got around to appointing a health officer four years later, at which point it was the first city in Ontario to do so.<sup>67</sup> Parkdale's school board also proved to be ahead of its time on education issues. By 1878, Parkdale residents on the County School Board had taken the Township to court in order to obtain funds for adequate facilities at the public school, and twice more during the next six years, Parkdale School was expanded at local taxpayer expense. In 1883, the York Township Model School was located there, with 28 teachers in training, and by 1886, it housed one of the first kindergarten classes in Canada, along with a full gymnasium, steam heat, and the latest in school equipment. An additional elementary school, Queen Victoria, and Toronto's second high school had opened by the time Parkdale was annexed in 1889.<sup>68</sup> A Mechanic's Institute, or public library, had been formed by 1881, with a board that included ministers from the three largest denominations (Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican). One hundred people paid the dollar annual fee to gain access to almost 2,000 volumes and 20 periodicals. Parkdale Council subsidized the Institute, as it did an Art School, with a predominantly adult membership of 87, founded in 1888.<sup>69</sup>

The Council, meeting biweekly, pursued other measures which it believed would contribute to good living conditions for all classes. One of the first by-laws prohibited domestic animals running at large, a measure aimed not only at residents keeping hogs,

dogs, and poultry, but also cattle drovers from west of the city who brought their cattle along Queen Street to be slaughtered in the City. Amusingly, the medical officer of health's cow was almost immediately impounded, and released from the village pound only after a stiff fine was levied.<sup>70</sup> By-laws to provide night soil removal and regular crackdowns on butcher shops, slaughter houses, stagnant gutters, and dysfunctional 'earth closets' also assisted public health. Water and sewer work contracts were awarded. Many more trees were planted by the municipality, mostly supplied by Reeve Gray, who also sold trees and plants to the City for use at the Exhibition Grounds, Riverdale Park, and University Street.<sup>71</sup> Developers of working class streets seized on 'flowery suburb' imagery, with petitions to change the name of Greig to Elm Grove and Marion to Maple Grove.

More controversial was the growing number of morals-related bylaws being passed by the Village Council. Bylaw 18, adopted in May 1879, made it illegal to give intoxicating drink to a child, an apprentice, an insane person, or a servant if forbidden by his or her employer; to circulate indecent prints or placards; to use profane language; to appear on the street intoxicated or to behave in a disorderly manner; to keep a house of ill-fame or to harbour 'bad characters'; to gamble; or to expose oneself near a public highway or other public place. Parkdale Council sent a deputation to Toronto City Council to argue against the construction of the Gladstone Hotel, across the Dufferin tracks, and prohibited the sale of "intoxicating liquors" in the municipality. Several months later, this bylaw was flouted when the Union Hotel obtained a liquor license to serve and two grocers licenses to sell,<sup>72</sup> although the municipality prided itself on its strictness when it came to liquor licenses. There were regular crackdowns on public

swimming in Lake Ontario, especially on Sabbath.<sup>73</sup> The municipality also tried to limit pedlars by making them purchase a \$15 license, but was immediately faced with a mutiny by female residents, who threatened to buy their coal-oil and other goods in Toronto if they were not delivered to their doors.<sup>74</sup>

Industries seeking sites in Parkdale faced a seemingly contradictory attitude from the Council. By December 1879, Harris and Crowhurst's sheet metal company on the west side of Dufferin Street was producing portable houses for export to Australia.<sup>75</sup> A month later, the *Mail* reported that a cotton manufacturing company had asked the Village Council for a bonus, but Parkdale was the "last place to procure a bonus. Its residents desire nothing but 'flowers and a rural home' - as one of the councillors poetically puts it."<sup>76</sup> A glucose factory was refused twice in 1882, then given a permit to operate.<sup>77</sup> In January of 1883, the annual election finally produced a majority for the pro-development party. By April of that year, Parkdale had repealed all of its previous "dangerous trade and nuisance bylaws", and began to openly compete for industries with Toronto. The Gutta Percha Rubber Company, a Canadian branch plant of an American firm, was granted a ten year tax exemption, a special water rate, and free gas. In return, over 100 jobs, mostly held by local residents, were provided. The Toronto Stove Manufacturing Company, also employing about 100 men, erected a factory on a five acre Dufferin Street lot in return for a similar arrangement. Several lumber companies were permitted to use steam power for their mills. Ironically, Major Gray, the leader of the slow growth forces, was a major beneficiary of this change in policy. He sold his nine acre nursery adjacent to the tracks for industrial use, making a considerable profit.<sup>78</sup> Parkdale residents were also employed in large numbers at the Ontario Bolt Company

west of High Park, which had opened in 1883 and would employ 500 people by the end of the decade.<sup>79</sup> On January 3, 1884, when a special train carrying 60 workers from central Toronto crashed, killing 24 passengers, the *Globe* reported that Parkdale Council held an emergency meeting and raised \$158 for a widows' and orphans' fund, although there were no Parkdale fatalities.<sup>80</sup>

The slow-growth party was also ineffective in its occasional attempts to control working-class housing. Although there was "much excitement" about an early bylaw barring roughcast houses within the developed portion of Parkdale, no houses were found to have contravened the code.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, it was reported that "Parkdalers are alarmed at the suggestion made by [the *Globe*] that small tenement houses be built in the suburb. It is contended that nothing would tend more to retard the prosperity of the village", yet rowhouse construction continued apace.<sup>82</sup> Complaints about "Mrs. Virtue's tenements [rowhouses]" at the January 5, 1881 council meeting did not stop their construction. John Coatsworth, one of the busiest builders of both high-end and low-end houses in the suburb, upset neighbours with three rowhouse developments in 1882: Trenton Terrace off Cowan and Melbourne Place near Queen and Dufferin were built [Figure 14], but the third, planned for the lakeshore on Dunn Avenue, would seem to have been stopped by an injunction taken out by neighbours. This may have been related to deed restrictions placed by Nell Gwynne, the original landowner, who continued to live in her villa and take an active role in Parkdale politics until her death in 1910.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the *Mail*'s breezy assurance that "this savvy municipality is evidently quite competent to take care of itself",<sup>84</sup> Parkdale Council found itself shouldering an



Figure 14. Working class 'tenements', Melbourne Place, built c. 1883, photographed 1955. Inscription on back reads: "The narrowest street in Toronto".

Source: City of Toronto archives, Fonds 1244, series 460.

untenable debt load as the years went on. In 1880, it attempted to resolve a long debate with York County Council over the removal of tolls along Queen Street by extending King Street westward to the intersection with Roncesvalles. York Council responded by moving its toll from Jameson to the new intersection.<sup>85</sup> In 1882, they took on debentures for \$130,000, or nearly \$100 per inhabitant, to expand their waterworks and provide “more complete drainage than any other village or city in the dominion”.<sup>86</sup> In 1885, Parkdale became a town, and the number of council members increased from five to 17. Street maintenance was a constant drain on revenues during winter and summer. The municipality’s newfangled horse-drawn snowplough collapsed during the first storm in the winter of 1879, and the *Mail* claimed in 1882 that “the ‘Flowery Suburb’ has streets choked with weeds”.<sup>87</sup>

The project that brought Parkdale to near-bankruptcy and annexation by Toronto was the matter of an underpass or subway under the rail tracks at Queen and Dufferin. A safe passage through the four railway lines was essential for the commercial and residential growth of the municipality. Reeve Gray’s own father had been killed by a train in January 1878, and hundreds of items in the newspapers testify to the dangers to both pedestrians and carts. To give some typical examples, a teamster named Strothers carrying a load of bricks narrowly escaped death when his cart got stuck at the crossing,<sup>88</sup> an unnamed ‘gentleman’ got his foot stuck in the tracks and came close to losing it,<sup>89</sup> and a Grey and Bruce train went out of control on the Queen crossing, fortunately causing no fatalities but backing up traffic for hours.<sup>90</sup> As the contemporary observer Mulvaney put it in 1884, “the want of such a provision for public safety [as a tunnel or bridge] has led to

many accidents, and has hitherto depreciated the value of Parkdale real estate, as parents are unwilling to expose their children to such a very serious risk”.<sup>91</sup>

From 1879 onwards, Parkdale Council sent regular deputations to Ottawa to try and get the railways to pay for adequate safety devices. The railways responded by occasionally assigning a man to direct traffic at the intersection. In 1883, the Province passed a bill empowering Parkdale and Toronto, along with the railway companies, to make an agreement for a subway. The legislation cautioned that Toronto and Parkdale had to mutually agree on how costs would be divided and paid, but when Toronto backed out of the agreement, Parkdale forged ahead, although two-thirds of the proposed subway were within city limits. When the subway finally opened in 1885, at a cost of about \$20,000 to Parkdale, residents found the passage unlit, muddy, and smelly. Many continued to risk the dangers of the overland route rather than risk the “dreadful hole”, also known as the “mudway”.<sup>92</sup>

Pressure for annexation increased in both Parkdale and Toronto when Brockton became part of the City, along with Yorkville and Riverdale, in 1883-4. In January 1885, ratepayers voted to join Toronto by a large margin, but negotiations foundered once the City was apprised of Parkdale’s debt load. The following year, the Clerk-Treasurer was fired for being “addicted to drink” (a conclusion that would be obvious to anyone trying to read Parkdale’s minutes from 1884 onwards). By 1888, Parkdale was entirely surrounded by the City, and another vote was ordered by the province on annexation.<sup>93</sup>

Once again, annexation was “the only topic in the Flowery Suburb”.<sup>94</sup>

Arguments for and against annexation echoed those made ten years previously. Those in favour of keeping Parkdale a separate municipality argued that Parkdale Council had



kept taxes low, provided clean water and a pleasant living environment, and guarded against the city's bad influences. These anti-annexation forces called themselves the Citizens' Protective Association, and their mottos included: "Save our Streets and Waterfront" and "Vote for Home Rule and the Town Pump".<sup>95</sup> One letter writer from Parkdale claimed he paid \$65 per annum for a 60 foot lot on a street "sidewalked, sewerred, and block-paved", while a friend just across the subway paid more for a 24 foot frontage with inferior services, and was closer to "a great big institution where Ontario provides light and heat, amongst other things, for at least one thousand poor demented unfortunates [the Lunatic Asylum]".<sup>96</sup> Parkdale had created schools, sewers, a separate water supply, and was ready for a population five or six times its present size, at which point per capita debt would go down.<sup>97</sup> The municipality was entirely free from "low groggeries and houses of ill-repute". In contrast, Toronto had turned their beautiful waterfront into "a sewage pond". The only people in favour of annexation were large owners of vacant lots: "men who have never lived, nor intend to live, within two or three miles of our midst", who wanted to dispose of the lots during a boom that they hoped would follow annexation.<sup>98</sup>

Those in favour of annexation painted quite another picture of Parkdale's governance. According to them, Parkdale Council was a nest of "Boodlers, Town Pap-Suckers, Stick-in-the-Muds, Ward Heelers, [etc.]" whose doings set a new standard for corruption and incompetence.<sup>99</sup> Exhibit A was the subway. Parkdale citizens had paid five times more than they would have if they had been part of the City, and three years after construction, it already needed considerable repairs and widening.<sup>100</sup> The pro-annexation forces claimed that debt, mostly due to the subway, was \$123/head in

Parkdale, twice the per capita debt load of Torontonians. Parkdale schools were overfull, and the social and physical infrastructure in general was in need of immediate improvement. Annexation would also allow better competition with other suburbs.<sup>101</sup> For instance, “land is still cheap in [recently annexed] Rosedale”, while taxes had trebled in Parkdale since incorporation.<sup>102</sup> The *World*, an inexpensive tabloid popular with workers, nailed its pro-annexation colours to the mast early on in the debate. It did not scruple to make up letters to the editor supporting its stand, such as an obviously fictitious missive from ‘the Honourable John de Barnacle’ [John Gray?] bewailing the possible loss of patronage if Parkdale was annexed: “How could I get a hundred dollars or two for myself and a contract now and then for my friends?”.<sup>103</sup> Allegations of corruption seemed to be confirmed in the waning days of the independent municipality when Parkdale School Board purchased a site for a third public school, on Fern Avenue, from the Chairman’s father at twice the market value.<sup>104</sup>

The leaders of both sides in the debate were local real estate agents. When Isaac Lennox, of the Citizen’s Protective Association, claimed at a public meeting that the annexation movement was led by “land sharks”; W.H.P. Clement retorted that “Housebuilding companies had done a great deal for the town in its infancy”.<sup>105</sup> Despite middle class leadership and unlike the 1878 incorporation debate, both pro- and anti-annexation forces made explicit appeals to working class freeholders. The *World* produced two suspiciously similar letters from “A Workman” and “A Carpenter” during the pre-vote debate. The first letter said the writer was initially against annexation, but was increasingly worried about future taxes increases should the municipality remain separate. Annexation would be an inducement to builders, which would result in “more

work to be done by men like me, and instead of having to pay streetcar fare to our work, as we have to now, we will have plenty of work at home”.<sup>106</sup> The second letter repeated many of the phrases of the first, telling of a changed mind on the vote, since Parkdale Council was made up of those with “swell houses”.<sup>107</sup>

The anti-annexation *Mail*, in contrast, reported that: “Small householders, who have not any real estate to dispose of, seem to be against a matrimonial arrangement on any terms”.<sup>108</sup> J.J. Ward, a Parkdale councillor and merchant tailor who was a leader in the labour movement, claimed at several public meetings that Parkdale provided good cheap houses, whereas in Toronto, “you can’t show me a house... with a \$6 [monthly] rent”.<sup>109</sup> The pro-annexation forces played into the hands of the Citizens Protective Association when A.F.G. Gianelli, the Italian vice-consul who lived in a large villa on Jameson Avenue, said at a public meeting, “Parkdale’s isolation prevents many well-to-do people, who would otherwise go to live there, from going to a place that they think is a place for mechanics only”.<sup>110</sup> H.H. Cook, Parkdale’s MP and an opponent of annexation, immediately responded that “he wanted Mr. Gianelli to understand, in connection with his sneers about the town’s inhabitants being principally mechanics, that he was not going to introduce any of his ancient aristocratic views in this democratic country. A mechanic was as good as any man, and they were thoroughly substantial citizens”.<sup>111</sup> Gianelli was forced to back down with the time-honoured excuse that his remarks were misrepresented, and that “mechanics are a vital element in every country”.<sup>112</sup>

On Saturday, October 27, 1888, the day of the vote, the *World* abandoned its veneer of interest in its working class Parkdale residents when it advertised for all

absentee landlords to show up in Parkdale: “A cab at 91/2 Adelaide Street, the Annexation Committee room, will take you out to Parkdale to record your vote for Union and Progress... You have a vote in every ward in which you are upon the voter’s list”. The ward breakdown of the final result shows small householders near the rail tracks voting against annexation, while land owners in the larger, less developed areas voted for the motion. Without 464 absentee landholders (of a total of 1128 votes), the anti-annexation forces would have won, admitted the *World* immediately after the vote.<sup>113</sup>

The ten year life of the Parkdale as an independent municipality provides a counter-example to the usual stereotypes of politically independent suburbs existing to protect middle-class people’s property values by excluding non-residential uses and poor people. As both Jackson and Keating point out in the U.S. context, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a transitional point between ‘big tent’ and ‘exclusive’ suburbs, suburbs that sought growth at any cost and suburbs that marketed themselves as ensuring race, ethnic, and class distinctions that would ensure stable high property values.<sup>114</sup> Although political power was held by small businessmen, both commuters and people whose primary business interests were in Parkdale, the net impact of early political decisions resulted in the suburb being a low-cost haven for working class homeowners. Land was cheap, services were good, and access to jobs across the rail tracks and within the municipality became a priority. Although Parkdale was the fastest growing suburb in the greater Toronto area during the early 1880s,<sup>115</sup> large tracts of land in the west and north remained undeveloped by the time it was annexed by Toronto. In what again seems to be a counter-intuitive manner, Parkdale became a suburb where the wealthy predominated only after annexation by the City, during the worldwide recession of the 1890s.

### Boom, Bust, and Echo: Social and Housing Conditions in Parkdale from the 1880s to 1913

The 1880s had seen a real estate boom across Toronto, fuelled by population and job growth. Industrial employees and payroll had doubled in the 1880s, thanks in part to protective tariffs enacted by the federal government, and the city's population more than doubled, to almost 200,000 people, between the 1881 and 1891 census.<sup>116</sup> Toronto was at the forefront of innovations: Eaton's mail order catalogue was launched at the Industrial Exhibition in 1884, and the following year, an invention with even more influence, the electric streetcar, was first displayed there.<sup>117</sup> Good times and a high demand for skilled workers led to labour activism. A January 1886 strike at the Massey factory fizzled out after labour spokesmen were fired and the police called in, but a strike by horse tram drivers two months later met with considerably more public sympathy and eventual management concessions, even though commuters from Parkdale were temporarily inconvenienced.<sup>118</sup>

Parkdale's housing construction in the late 1880s had favoured working class homeownership. The proportion of skilled labourers in the suburb had increased from 24% in 1881 to 41% in 1891, and over half of these skilled labourers owned their homes, double the rate for Toronto as a whole.<sup>119</sup> R.C. Libby was born in 1881 and lived on Callendar Avenue for close to 90 years. He tells of how his father, also named Robert and a blacksmith working for the Canadian Pacific Railway, bought one of two semi-detached houses built by Walter Wilcox, the yard master, in 1883. While his oral

memoir is not entirely clear on the point, it would seem that the CPR assisted Libby senior with home financing, by part payment with a land grant outside Toronto. When Libby sold the land, he had enough cash for a house down payment. While Wilcox moved to West Toronto in 1890, following the CPR shop (see below), the Libby family decided to stay in their Parkdale home. Eventually young Robert followed in his father's footsteps, and worked for the CPR for several years<sup>120</sup>.

Although large landowners like Nell Gwynne and Joseph Norwich, and real estate companies like the Hamilton firm of Fuller and Plumb, still held the majority of undeveloped Parkdale land in the early 1880s, many people followed the entrepreneurial path of Wilcox, and built one house to live in along with an adjacent house for rent or sale. According to the 1881 assessment, a 25 year old bricklayer named William Westcott lived in one row house and owned another on Landsdowne Avenue, each assessed at \$900, along with two 50 foot lots assessed at \$400 each. Udney Walker, a bookkeeper and member of Parkdale Council, owned three houses on the same street, assessed between \$650 and \$750. Even in the first years of Parkdale, lower income homeowners rented part of their house as an affordability mechanism. Thus in 1881, Gilbert Harkly, a guard at the Central Prison, had as a lodger Michael Wood, a fellow prison guard, on Elm Grove Avenue, and Mrs. Rawcliffe, a grocer on Queen Street, had an engineer named James Tout living upstairs.<sup>121</sup>

There were immediate negative impacts to residents when Parkdale was annexed by the City of Toronto in 1889. The Mechanic's Institute, whose operation had been subsidized by Parkdale Council, agreed to transfer all of its books and furniture to the Toronto Public Library, on condition that a branch be opened in the former Town of

Parkdale. The promised library branch did not appear until 1964. For the intervening 75 years, South Parkdalian had to make do with a branch one half mile to the east of Dufferin, although North Parkdale had a handsome 'High Park' branch on Roncesvalles after 1910.<sup>122</sup> It could also be argued that annexing Parkdale was a bad deal for the City of Toronto. The annexation of Parkdale was cited as one of the reasons that the City was in a debt crisis by the early 1890s, and Parkdale was the last major suburban annexation for over 15 years.<sup>123</sup> The much vaunted Parkdale waterworks were judged inadequate by the City, and the land was sold for industrial use in 1893, much to the displeasure of residents banding together under the name Parkdale Advancement Association, who wanted the lakeshore property developed as swimming baths.<sup>124</sup>

In 1891, the City of Toronto went back on another one of its annexation promises, to keep political representation for the suburb on city council. The doubling of the City's size during the 1883-1889 wave of annexations had led to an unwieldy system of thirteen wards, each with three aldermen. Now, the fever for administrative reform already apparent in big cities like Chicago, New York, and London,<sup>125</sup> hit Toronto. Six new wards were created, long narrow north-south strips that sliced across class, ethnic and religious lines. Although the new ward system was intended to break up political machines, they eventually ensured political domination of older working class areas south of Bloor by newer suburbs north of Bloor.<sup>126</sup> 'Parkdale' was swallowed up within Ward Six, which stretched from Dovercourt east of Dufferin, to west of High Park. With minor modifications, the new ward system stayed in place until the 1970s.

The suburb could no longer offer inducements to local employers. By 1889, the four railways that made up Parkdale's northeastern boundary had been amalgamated into

two: Canadian Pacific and Grand Trunk. In October of that year, the CPR rail maintenance yard at Queen and Dufferin was lured away by the new Town of West Toronto Junction, in return for a ten year tax abatement.<sup>127</sup> Many workers followed the jobs.

And then Parkdale, like the rest of Toronto, was hit by the worldwide recession. There was concern about a coming crash in Parkdale land values by early 1889, when the *Mail* warned that “If annexation does not occur before 1890, many speculators will be caught”.<sup>128</sup> By the winter of 1891, land registry records show that some speculators had indeed gotten spectacularly caught out. A set of four modest row houses on Gwynne Avenue, numbers 61-67, sold for \$4,450 in 1889 and \$3,450 a little over a year later. On Queen Street, a newly constructed commercial building, 1418-20, was purchased in early 1890 by a butcher named Richard Hayes, who sold his house on Dowling Avenue in order to finance the deal. The purchase price was \$8,700, with a \$4,000 mortgage provided by an individual surnamed Thomas. Within a year, Hayes had borrowed a total of \$9,220 from the Synod of the Diocese of Saskatchewan, with his property as collateral. The Synod took over the property in 1894, and managed it until a 1913 sale to the long-time lessee Munro and Son, druggists, for \$2,850. One newly constructed detached villa, 109 Dowling, sold for \$10,000 in October 1891, and \$7,000 in December 1892. An even grander villa on the corner of Dowling and King was mortgaged for \$13,000 when it was sold in September 1890 for \$10,000 to Anderson Ruffin Abbott, who was not only Canada’s first Black doctor, but the son of one of Toronto’s foremost real estate speculators. Abbott, in turn sold the house to Henry Anthes in 1903 for \$5,500, writing to his lawyer: “I think the sooner we get rid of the Dowling Avenue



property altogether the better”.<sup>129</sup> The contemporary observer C.S. Clark named as principal victims of the depression “widows and orphans, whose money was advanced through the agency of some rascally lawyer upon worthless second mortgages”, as well as borrowers who sank all their savings into land speculation.<sup>130</sup>

Estates for the wealthy provided virtually the only building activity in the early 1890s, when Parkdale was described as “the only place where there are any real estate” transactions.<sup>131</sup> It was during the 1890-1913 era that Parkdale had its heyday as a home for the rich. The proportion of business owners and managers in Parkdale rose from 3% in 1881 and 1% in 1891, to 17% in 1901 and 1913. The raw numbers are even more startling: there were 6 household heads out of a total population of 1,000 who could be classified as wealthy businessmen in 1881, 10 in 1891 (when Parkdale’s population was 6,000), over 300 in 1901 (by which time Parkdale’s population was 11,000), and over 500 wealthy businessmen in a total population of 15,000 by 1913.<sup>132</sup> Benjamin Westwood, a fishing tackle manufacturer, moved from the Annex to a new mansion at the foot of Jameson Avenue in 1890. Its assessed value was \$18,608 [Figure 15]. He was joined by George Magann, a railway contractor, who built an adjacent mansion with an assessed value of \$17,050, in the same year. The 1881 *Parkdale Register* listed a few doctors and lawyers and many self-employed businessmen among its worthies. By the time G. Mercer Adam’s *Toronto: Old and New* was published in late 1891, there were a considerable number of business magnates whose new mansions adorned the pages of the book: people like Sturgeon Stewart, Managing Director of the Eno Steam Generator, who owned Glen Zephyr on Dowling; and Richard Thorne, a folding bed manufacturer. In 1911, a book on *Greater Toronto and the Men Who Made It* included dozens of others,

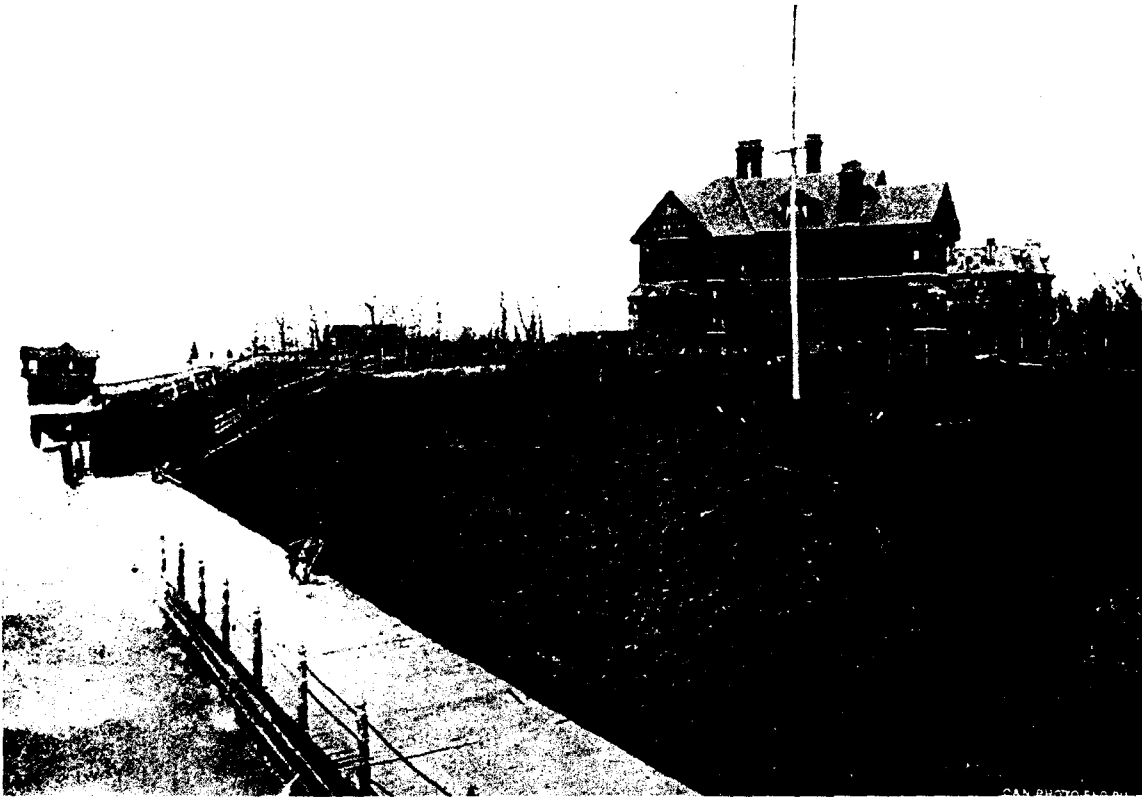


Figure 15. The lakeside mansion of the Westwoods, 1890, with the privately-owned boardwalk in the foreground, and the Clark's estate visible behind the Westwood mansion.

Source: Adam 1891.

including the Presidents of the Steel and Radiation Company, Dominion Radiator, Canadian Pipe and Steel, Gold Medal Furniture, and two piano manufacturing companies, along with a couple of bank presidents. Interlocking memberships in Parkdale Methodist or Presbyterian churches, the Masons, and several charitable enterprises cemented the wealthy members of the community.

For the wealthy, Parkdale could indeed provide an ideal place to live, combining easy access to the city via railway or streetcar with a pastoral life style. The future novelist Mazo de la Roche, who lived with her grandparents on Dunn Avenue at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, recalled “her first real home”, “one of five that stood on a tree-shaded street that ended in a kind of wooden terrace with seats, overlooking the lake”. Along with a boardwalk, provided by owners of lakeside lots, she could see boathouses from whence rowers and sailors would emerge on warm summer evenings, protected by a breakwater crib built by Parkdale Council. Behind her, there were “fields of tall feathery grass and daisies”.<sup>133</sup>

But even during its heyday for the wealthy, Parkdale was a mixed suburb. It liked to compare itself with Rosedale, but whereas by 1913, half of household heads in Rosedale were businessmen or professionals with only 13% listing themselves as clerks, skilled working class or labourers, Parkdale had an equal number of skilled wage earners and self-employed businessmen and professionals (36% each), and a higher than average number of clerical and blue collar workers. A far more accurate comparison could be made with the Annex, the area bounded by Bloor, Dupont and the northern CPR rail tracks, Bathurst and Avenue Road [see Figure 2]. Developed, like Parkdale, between the late 1870s and the First World War, the first housing had been modest working class

housing on the eastern and western peripheries of the suburb. During the 1890s depression, mansions and villas for the wealthy sprung up along Walmer and Admiral Roads, and St. George Street north of Bloor. There was residential segregation, but it was on a block-by-block scale. Scions of Toronto society, like the Gooderhams and the Eatons, lived a few blocks away from industries and industrial workers.<sup>134</sup>

Sometimes the social distance in Parkdale was even more finely-grained. Toronto was transfixed in late 1894 by the murder of Frank Westwood, 18 year old son of the fishing tackle magnate mentioned above. Clara Ford, a 33 year old “mulatto tailoress” who sometimes dressed in men’s clothes, was arrested six weeks later for the crime. It transpired that Ford, along her ‘foster’ mother and her teenaged daughter, had been next door neighbours with the Westwood family for three years, living in a shed behind the adjacent house. Their household shows up on no assessment or directory records. The considerable newspaper coverage of the crime quotes a number of lodgers, indicating that several houses in the area had been converted to multiple occupancy, which again is not reflected in available records. Ford’s initial defence was that Westwood had tried to rape her in a lakeside boathouse, the culmination of years of harassment. This defence was dropped before the trial in favour of a safer strategy that portrayed Ford as an ignorant ‘girl’ coerced into a false confession, but it leaves behind the strong impression that social harmony in Parkdale may have had its large fissures.<sup>135</sup>

The Westwood murder highlights the difficulty in reconstructing class and ethnic difference, and possible conflict, in Parkdale. *Parkdale: a Centennial History* categorically stated in 1979 that there were no ethnic minority communities in Parkdale before the Second World War.<sup>136</sup> There certainly were minority culture individuals. By

1891, there were at least three 'Black' households in Parkdale, ranging from the wealthy Abbots in their new villa, to the impoverished women in Ford/Mackay shack three blocks away. The existence of a possible third Black household comes from a suburban crime report, where Alfred Lewis, a "negro" who kept a small lunch counter near the subway stair, was fined \$50 and court costs or three months in jail for selling liquor without a license.<sup>137</sup> In 1901, Jewish households that have turned up in various contexts include a well-to-do piano salesman, Maurice Cohen, whose family lived in a Dowling Avenue villa until the 1950s, the blacksmith Kinkenbloomer on Queen Street, and Harry Rosenthal, a boatman at the Dufferin Street dock. A number of Irish names are scattered throughout the suburb. To judge from church construction and religions of prominent men, Presbyterians and Methodists were more numerous and richer than Anglicans and Catholics (the latter did not have a church or school in Parkdale until 1902, over two decades later than the Protestant congregations). Both R.C. Libby and Ethel Abel mention in their oral histories that gypsies or tinkers occasionally camped in Parkdale in the waning years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it is unclear whether they mean Romany or nomadic Irish immigrants. The number of roomers and boarders is probably underestimated in directories and assessments, since sometimes a lodger shows up in one but not the other for the same year. To state the obvious, it is a lot easier to know about wealthy majority culture men in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century than those marginalized by gender, 'race' or income. Parkdale would seem to have its share of people who could be considered 'different', but it may be correct to say that these 'different' people did not form recognizable communities. It is impossible to know the extent to which minority

culture individuals felt at home in Parkdale, let alone to compare it with experiences across Toronto.

As was typical for fringe areas, the business of development employed many Parkdalian through the 1880-1913 period. The 1881 assessment shows 26 household heads, or 12% of the total, working in the construction trades, including ten carpenters, seven builders, two bricklayers, and a plasterer. The proportion had risen to 14% by 1891, and even in 1913, 9% of household heads worked in the construction trades. As early as 1878, a local benefit raised \$50 for the family of resident Alex Lawson, injured in the construction of the Industrial Exhibition.<sup>138</sup> Three years later, the *Mail* reported 175 men working on construction of Parkdale's sewer system.<sup>139</sup> The recession of the early 1890s hit these workers especially hard. B.A. Lillie, another long-time Parkdale resident, tells of how a bricklayer named Caulfield, laid off in the early 1890s, borrowed \$40 off local MP Cook to buy a cow, which pastured in the fields around his home at the undeveloped corner of Sorauren and Garden. His sons delivered the milk, priced at 3 cents a pint and 5 cents a quart. Eventually, his business became successful enough for him to buy land on Roncesvalles for what then seemed like the outrageous price of \$30 per frontage foot. His grandson became a director at Borden Milk, a large firm.<sup>140</sup> Others, of course, were not so enterprising or fortunate, and there are many stories of hardship during this era.

One of the most intriguing is the tale of Ethel Abel. As a neighbourhood 'character' who lived in the same house on Cowan for over 80 years, Abel's reminiscences were published in neighbourhood newspapers, *The Toronto Star*, and even planning reports in the 1970s and 1980s, as Parkdale's history became of interest to a

new generation of residents [see Chapter Six]. For instance, the 1983 *Neighbourhood Plan Proposals for South Parkdale* cite her as saying: “our neighbours were mainly professional people, lawyers, doctors, retired academics and so on” as a justification for their contention that Parkdale was an upper middle class residential suburb from development to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>141</sup> But when her three hours of taped memoirs are compared with directory and assessment records, a different version of her early life emerges, one that suggests considerable downward mobility. Abel’s father owned a Yonge Street tailor shop until 1893 or 1894, when the business went bankrupt. At that point, through the intervention of an MPP known to the family, he became the head tailor at Central Prison, and the family moved to a house in Parkdale. The 1898 *Might’s Directory* lists their immediate neighbours as four men working for the CPR, two travelling salesmen, a lineman for Bell Telephone, and a telephone operator at a hotel. By the turn of the century, they were renting out at least part of their 12 room house, which by the 1930s had become a full boarding house. Rather than Abel’s narrative becoming a story of residential stability and middle-class affluence, as it has been used, it can be seen as an example of the lengths some Parkdale families went to in preserving an image of stability and middle class affluence.

One of Ethel Abel’s immediate neighbours was the Parker family, representative of the 60 or so households supported by travelling salesmen by 1891. Parkdale was ideally suited for travellers, due to its location on the railways radiating out to Western Ontario. The Parker paterfamilias, an immigrant from England, was a commercial traveller for ladies’ wear, and would be gone for three months at a time, according to his daughter Dorothy Goddard. By 1912, the family had done well enough to move down

Cowan Avenue to the lakeside, where their house was surrounded by fruit trees. Here we do find an example of upward mobility in place.

The presence of institutions near and around Parkdale provided a distinctive ambiance, as well as job opportunities. In the early years, the Lunatic Asylum, whose dome was “visible for 30 miles distant” even in 1923, and the Central Prison-Mercer Reformatory conglomeration, “a gloomy pile of grey stone” with “high walled precincts and grated windows”, would have dominated views eastward to the City.<sup>142</sup> Ethel Abel recalled sending laundry out to the Magdalen Asylum on West Lodge, while Robert Libby would sometimes watch convicts being marched to the Central Prison along Queen Street. Escapees from the Lunatic Asylum and the Central Prison regularly used Parkdale as a shortcut to the western edge of the city and possible freedom. Parkdale residents even felt a certain sense of entitlement to jobs at the institutions. In 1882, the *Mail* reported that “Guard King, who last week so gallantly recaptured the two negroes who tried to escape from the Central Prison, is a resident of this village, and therefore knew the locality well”,<sup>143</sup> and three years earlier, said that Parkdale “residents feel somewhat sore at the appointment of a stranger to the position of resident engineer to the Mercer Female Reformatory”.<sup>144</sup>

From 1906 to 1913, there was an ‘echo’ of Parkdale’s 1880s housing boom. This was the period where the neighbourhood’s remaining undeveloped land by the lakeside, towards the western edge of Parkdale, and along the east-west streets off Roncesvalles, were built out. Although land prices did not double or treble the way they had in the 1880s, speculation and house building did seem to bring steady profit. The primary market was lower middle class workers seeking inexpensive housing within an



acceptable distance to work. To give the example of one subdivision: Plan 287, part of which would eventually become Galley Avenue, was registered by Walter O'Hara in 1868 as two acre transitional lots. Lot 20 was sold to the McLean family for \$484.50, with a vendor mortgage of \$323. One of the McLean daughters, Fanny Wright, began borrowing heavily on the property during the 1890s recession, which led to foreclosure by the real estate firm of Mossom Boyd in 1896. The land speculator Ritchie (who also flipped properties on Queen Street) successfully bet that the land would increase in value, buying lot 20 for \$2,000 in 1902 and reselling it to a builder named Walker for \$7,000 in 1910. Walker built 11 houses on the north side of Galley in the spring of 1911, borrowing \$2,000 per house for construction costs. Most of the capital came from a male lender, although two women also provided loans.<sup>145</sup>

The design of the houses reflected a new era of relative affluence for industrial and clerical workers [Figure 16]. Unlike the two bedroom row houses on Gwynne Avenue, built for rental purposes in the early 1880s, the Galley houses were more generously sized four and five bedroom semi-detached houses. Both Galley and Gwynne properties had 18 foot frontages, but the Galley lots extended back 133 feet, as opposed to 87 feet on Gwynne. There were also indoor toilets and, by the mid-1920s, a rear lane to allow car parking on Galley, while the Gwynne row houses were constructed with outdoor privies and backed onto alleyway housing on Melbourne Place. By the fall of 1911, all of the Galley houses had been sold for between \$3,700 and \$4,000 each, while Gwynne houses that had passed into private ownership were being sold for half that price. Walker offered several of the home-owners seven year vendor mortgages ranging from \$900 to \$2,000, although two transactions were cash sales, and one purchaser



Figure 16. Middle class houses on Garden Avenue, photographed June 1972 (similar to houses on Galley Avenue). Inscription on back reads: "His Great Grandfather John F. Rogers lived here 1913."

Source: Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library, Toronto Streets series 979-42-3.

obtained a mortgage from another individual. Walker would seem to have made a modest deferred profit from building the Galley houses.

Although the supposed division between ‘working class’ North Parkdale and ‘middle class’ South Parkdale dates from the 1906-1913 period, purchasers of 44-54 Galley included quite a mix of occupations: a manager at a downtown factory, an optician, a self-employed salesman (real estate agent who used his home as an office), a post office clerk, a checker for the Grand Trunk Railway, a teamster, and two widows. Most were in their late 20s or early 30s. One of the widows and a ‘gentleman’ rented out their houses: to a superintendent in a nearby factory, and another GTR worker, respectively. The real estate agent had a clerk as a lodger.<sup>146</sup> With the exception of the real estate agent, who sold within the year for a profit (and who had received a slight discount on his house price from Walker, probably because he was responsible for handling the other sales), the houses remained in the same hands for an average of 25 years. It was only at the end of Parkdale’s initial development that we begin to see this kind of residential ‘stability’.

#### The Image of Parkdale to 1912: “Neatly Shaven Lawns and Faces”

During Parkdale’s life as an independent municipality, contemporary books and newspapers sometimes acknowledged Parkdale’s land use and social mix, but focussed on its affluence. The first book I have found to mention Parkdale is the 1878 *Illustrated Atlas of the County of York*, where it is described as a “pleasant new suburb”.<sup>147</sup> An 1884 book described it as “one of the pleasantest of our suburbs... rapidly being filled up

with handsome private residences and villas”.<sup>148</sup> A history of Toronto the following year called Parkdale “beautifully situated, overlooking the lake shore” and containing “a number of handsome villa residences”, although it also acknowledged that “of late, manufacturing enterprise has been developed, and the population is increasing rapidly”.<sup>149</sup> For the twenty years after annexation to Toronto, Parkdale continued to be described as a wealthy and somehow ‘special’ suburb. Photographs of handsome villas were reproduced in descriptions of Toronto, scenes of ‘Queen Street West, Parkdale’ and leafy avenues such as Cowan and Dunn were available as postcards [Figure 17], and praise of the area and its people abounded in publications intended for well-to-do residents and tourists.

In 1891, Adam said that the “recently annexed suburban villages of Parkdale and Brockton” were now “a vast network of streets and avenues, with handsome villas or rows of continuous houses”, although less than half of the lots were as yet developed. A tourist guide produced by the Toronto Street Railway Company said of its King Street Line, “This line passes through Parkdale, one of the most charming of Toronto’s residential sections... Business men find it delightfully convenient to drop work and worry for an hour or so in the day to enjoy the refreshing stimulant of a trolley trip to the suburbs”.<sup>150</sup> Yet from what we know about residents’ workplaces, over half of Parkdale household heads at that time walked to work in nearby industries and institutions. Fifteen years later, a similar guide produced by the Dominion Coach Line in 1910 invited tourists to “glide into the charms of Parkdale, the delightful retreat of Toronto’s wealthy and aristocratic people”.<sup>151</sup>



Figure 17. Commercial Parkdale: postcard of Queen Street West c. 1918

Source: Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library, Toronto Streets series, T 14029.

The apotheosis of Parkdale as middle class suburban dream came in February 1912, at the conclusion of an article describing “The Temperament of Toronto Streets”:

“Lastly, South Parkdale. Small, trim houses on small, trim lots, with neatly-shaven lawns and owners... The windows are abnormally clean here... Some Rosedarians think that Parkdale is the place where you get off the [street] car to enter the Exhibition. So it was once. Now it is a compact community which preserves many of the older and more pleasantly informal amenities of Canadian life. People drop in on each other there. The men call each other, many of them, by their first names. The ladies have travel clubs and socials, and enjoyable gatherings, where the mystic symbols –‘RSVP’- are not in evidence... The residents seem to live within their means, and at a guess I should say the savings accounts in Parkdale banks are something enormous... it seems that these good people have reasonable and moderate views... Can a street reflect anything better?”<sup>152</sup>

In this description, we return to the ideal of the ‘Flowery Suburb’ as described in 1878: clean, safe, somehow chaste in its values and aspirations. If we take the image for granted, then indeed we are left with a stable area, one that remained moderately wealthy and residential throughout its development at the periphery of Toronto. Parkdale’s image fit into the concentric zone model which was already part of the understanding of North American cities by the turn of the century. Its social geography was supposedly a contrast to the central city’s heterogenous jumble of land uses; its way of life different from and superior to what the old-fashioned city had to offer. It was simultaneously

modern in its architecture, design and services, and pleasantly old-fashioned in its customs and outlook.

When we look closely at the imperfect records of directories, assessment rolls, land registry books and oral memoirs, a more complex picture emerges. This ‘other’ Parkdale’s development is influenced by location at what was then the periphery of the central city. But there are two more factors at work. Industrial and residential expansion along railway lines and Queen Street, with later infill, suggest the kind of sectoral growth hypothesized by Hoyt,<sup>153</sup> with Parkdale acting as an extension to the industrial area that originated in the Garrison Reserve, and eventually encompassed West Toronto Junction, Mount Dennis and Weston along the northwestern rail lines, and Mimico and New Toronto to the west. Parkdale’s development was also influenced by its waterfront location. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the waterfront lots were considered choice locations for mansions and villas, although the presence of shacks and lodgers are also revealed by the Westwood murder. However, the traffic congestion problem at the Queen and Dufferin intersection foreshadow the central importance that an ‘efficient’ waterfront road would assume in the future.

The dominant image of Parkdale promoted during its development was of a stable, residential, middle-class “model suburb”. It was supposed to be a simpler place than the central city, a separate sphere of “flowers and a rural home”. The evidence on housing and social conditions suggest a far more complex and conflictual place, where visions of cheap housing for industrial workers clashed with concerns about “tenement housing” lived in by “mechanics”. Initially, Parkdale attracted more industrial workers than middle-class commuters. By the eve of the First World War, 50 years after John

Howard attempted to attract home buyers to the area with promises of a “suburban retreat for professional and business men in the City”, Parkdale finally attracted a disproportionate number of rich businessmen and professionals. However, by that time, Toronto was growing outwards, Parkdale was filling up, and developers were moving on to greener pastures. Parkdale was about to undergo a radical change in image, one that seemed equally disconnected from many residents’ lives.

#### Notes to Chapter Four

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<sup>1</sup> *Globe*, May 19, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1850s, members of Toronto’s small African-American refugee community had successfully fought to ban ‘black face’ minstrel shows on the grounds that they were demeaning (Hill 1985).

<sup>3</sup> *Mail*, May 19, 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong and Nelles 1977: 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Marsh 1990:7.

<sup>6</sup> *Globe*, July 5, 1878.

<sup>7</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Globe*, November 10, 1879.

<sup>9</sup> Mulvaney 1884: 67.

<sup>10</sup> Splane 1971: 181-182, 223.

<sup>11</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 13.

<sup>12</sup> Careless 1984: 9-10,14.

<sup>13</sup> Lundell 1997: 10-12; Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 7.

<sup>14</sup> Glazebrook 1971: 35.

<sup>15</sup> Careless 1984: 43; Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 7-8; Reeves 1992a: 45.

<sup>16</sup> Martyn 1980: 116-120; Hudson 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Howard 1883; Martyn 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Martyn 1980: 116; Reeves 1992a: 50.

<sup>19</sup> Quote from Robinson 1885: 78; Reeves 1992a: 50; Franklin 1998a, Morris 2000 for biography; Goheen 2001 writes about struggles over the waterfront.

<sup>20</sup> Patterson, McDougall, Levin 1986.

<sup>21</sup> The Americans landed at Humber Bay. Grenadier Pond in High Park commemorates the British troops who fell through the ice during an unsuccessful attempt to stop the invasion.

<sup>22</sup> Careless 1984: 74; Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 23-24.

<sup>23</sup> Splane 1971: 166-168.

<sup>24</sup> Walden 1997: 20, 32, 48-57.

<sup>25</sup> Careless 1984: 112; Gad 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Walden 1997: 8; Careless 1984: 181.

<sup>27</sup> Gad 1994: 113.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Reeves 1992a: 50.

<sup>30</sup> Goheen 1970: 84-115; Piva 1979: 11; Careless 1984: 89-94, 200-202.

<sup>31</sup> Hutcheson 1978: 3.

<sup>32</sup> Hutcheson 1978: 1-3.



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- <sup>33</sup> Goheen 1970: 73.
- <sup>34</sup> Glazebrook 1971: 104.
- <sup>35</sup> Ganton 1982; Doucet and Weaver 1991.
- <sup>36</sup> Ganton 1982: 212.
- <sup>37</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 9.
- <sup>38</sup> Ganton 1982: 203.
- <sup>39</sup> Ganton: 205; Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 10-11.
- <sup>40</sup> But see Green 2000 and Rodger 2001 for a discussion of their roles in the development of London and Edinburgh respectively.
- <sup>41</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991: 78.
- <sup>42</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Rose 1886: 50-51.
- <sup>44</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 10.
- <sup>45</sup> Ward 1998: 134.
- <sup>46</sup> *Parkdale Register* 1881: 1-5.
- <sup>47</sup> Laycock and Myrvold: 10; York Township Minutes 1874-1878.
- <sup>48</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 12.
- <sup>49</sup> Doucet and Weaver 1991: 43.
- <sup>50</sup> 1881 Village of Parkdale assessment, land registry records.
- <sup>51</sup> *Mail*, September 2 and 5, 1879.
- <sup>52</sup> *Mail*, March 4, 1882.
- <sup>53</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 12.
- <sup>54</sup> *Globe* June 27, 1878.
- <sup>55</sup> *Parkdale Gazette and Brockton Advocate*, September 8, 1881.
- <sup>56</sup> *Globe*, June 29 and July 5, 1878.
- <sup>57</sup> *Evening Telegram*, June 27, 1878.
- <sup>58</sup> Letter from longtime resident A. Gowanlock, in Parkdale's local history collection. Lest this be dismissed as suburban legend, the *Globe* reported at the time that "A camp of Gypsies have occupied three tents at the village of Parkdale for some days past. The men seem to do business in the buying and selling of horses." (July 25, 1878).
- <sup>59</sup> *Globe*, June 29, 1878.
- <sup>60</sup> *Globe*, June 28, 1878.
- <sup>61</sup> *Evening Telegram*, June 29, 1878.
- <sup>62</sup> *Evening Telegram*, July 8, 1878.
- <sup>63</sup> *Globe*, November 25, 1878.
- <sup>64</sup> My analysis of Parkdale minutes 1879-1889).
- <sup>65</sup> Einhorn 1991.
- <sup>66</sup> *Globe*, December 28, 1878.
- <sup>67</sup> MacDougall 1990: 10. Parkdale's Medical Officer of Health, Charles Playter, a Liberal, applied for the position, but lost to William Caniff, who was a Conservative and thus a more palatable patronage appointment to the Tory council majority (MacDougall 1990: 13).
- <sup>68</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 44-45.
- <sup>69</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 46, 56.
- <sup>70</sup> Minutes of Parkdale Council, August 6, 1879.
- <sup>71</sup> *Mail*, May 11, 1882.
- <sup>72</sup> *Empire*, June 21, 1879.
- <sup>73</sup> *Mail*, July 9, 1880; July 8, 1882.
- <sup>74</sup> *Empire*, June 10, 1879.
- <sup>75</sup> *Globe*, December 13, 1879.
- <sup>76</sup> *Mail*, January 10, 1879.
- <sup>77</sup> *Mail*, June 16, July 4, July 27, 1882.
- <sup>78</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 52-53, 42.
- <sup>79</sup> Careless 1991: 112.
- <sup>80</sup> Franklin 1988b.

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- <sup>81</sup> *Globe*, August 4 and 22, 1879.
- <sup>82</sup> *Mail*, April 5, 1881.
- <sup>83</sup> *Globe*, January 30, 1882; *Mail* March 6 and 11, 1882.
- <sup>84</sup> *Mail*, February 24, 1880.
- <sup>85</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 16.
- <sup>86</sup> *Globe*, June 7, 1882; *Mail*, June 3 and July 28, 1882.
- <sup>87</sup> *Mail*, December 27, 1879; July 31, 1882.
- <sup>88</sup> *Mail*, January 4, 1878.
- <sup>89</sup> *Mail*, January 23, 1882.
- <sup>90</sup> *Mail*, June 20, 1882.
- <sup>91</sup> Mulvaney 1884: 257.
- <sup>92</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 20-22; *Mail*, January 8, 1889.
- <sup>93</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 31-32.
- <sup>94</sup> *Mail*, October 20, 1888.
- <sup>95</sup> *World* October 16, 1888; *Parkdale Gazette* October 27, 1888.
- <sup>96</sup> *World*, October 16, 1888.
- <sup>97</sup> *Mail*, October 22, 1888.
- <sup>98</sup> *World*, October 13, 1888.
- <sup>99</sup> *Mail*, October 26, 1888.
- <sup>100</sup> *World*, October 24, 1888.
- <sup>101</sup> *Mail*, October 13, 1888.
- <sup>102</sup> *Mail*, October 24, 1888.
- <sup>103</sup> *World* November 20, 1888.
- <sup>104</sup> *Mail*, March 13, 1889.
- <sup>105</sup> *Mail*, October 24, 1888.
- <sup>106</sup> *World* Sept. 27, 1888.
- <sup>107</sup> (*World*, October 13, 1888).
- <sup>108</sup> *Mail*, October 10, 1888.
- <sup>109</sup> *Mail*, October 18, 1888.
- <sup>110</sup> *World* October 16, 1888.
- <sup>111</sup> *Mail*, October 18, 1888.
- <sup>112</sup> *Mail*, October 24, 1888.
- <sup>113</sup> *World*, October 29, 1888.
- <sup>114</sup> Jackson 1985: 147-150; Keating 1988: 102.
- <sup>115</sup> *Might's Directory* 1881.
- <sup>116</sup> Careless 1984: 200, Tables 1 and 4.
- <sup>117</sup> Careless 1984: 112-113.
- <sup>118</sup> Morton 1973: 43-45; see also Kealey 1980.
- <sup>119</sup> 1881 and 1891 assessments. The home-ownership rate across Toronto was 27% in 1899, according to Harris 1996: xii.
- <sup>120</sup>... R.C. Libby's oral history was taped by the Toronto Between the Wars Project in the early 1970s, and can be heard at the Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library, along with the memoirs of Ethel Abel, Dorothy Goddard, and many others cited in this and the following chapter.
- <sup>121</sup> 1881 assessment.
- <sup>122</sup> Laycock and Myrvold 1991: 56-57.
- <sup>123</sup> Clark 1898: 1-2.
- <sup>124</sup> (City Council Minutes, May 8 and May 22, 1893).
- <sup>125</sup> Einhorn 1991 on Chicago; Lubove 1962 on New York; Briggs 1993 on London.
- <sup>126</sup> Armstrong and Nelles 1977: 68.
- <sup>127</sup> *Mail*, October 25, 1889.
- <sup>128</sup> *Mail*, February 2, 1889.
- <sup>129</sup> Anderson Ruffin Abbott notebooks, Volume Two (Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library).
- <sup>130</sup> Clark 1898: 2.
- <sup>131</sup> *Telegram*, November 28, 1894.
- <sup>132</sup> Assessment records 1881-1913

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- <sup>133</sup> cited in Gatenby 1999: 251.
- <sup>134</sup> Lemon 1986: 7.
- 135... The case, which is deserving of a book in itself (one which I hope to write at a later date), is described by Strange (1992; 1995).
- <sup>136</sup> Parkdale Centennial Research Committee 1979: 54.
- <sup>137</sup> *Mail*, December 12, 1888.
- <sup>138</sup> *Mail*, November 13, 1878.
- <sup>139</sup> *Mail*, March 27, 1882.
- <sup>140</sup> Lillie 1971b.
- <sup>141</sup> City of Toronto Planning and Development Department 1983: 21.
- <sup>142</sup> Middleton 1923: 642; Mulvaney 1884: 54.
- <sup>143</sup> *Mail*, March 20, 1882.
- <sup>144</sup> *Mail*, December 27, 1879.
- <sup>145</sup> Land registry records.
- <sup>146</sup> Land registry records and 1913 assessment.
- <sup>147</sup> Canniff 1968].
- <sup>148</sup> Mulvaney 1884: 257.
- <sup>149</sup> Robinson 1885: 86-87.
- <sup>150</sup> Toronto Street Railway Company 1894: 30, 45.
- <sup>151</sup> Dominion Coach Line 1910.
- <sup>152</sup> *Globe*, February 6, 1912.
- <sup>153</sup> Hoyt 1970 and 1939.

## Chapter Five

### “Becoming a Serious Slum”: Decline in Parkdale 1913 -1966

“First there is that golden age, the time of harmonious beginnings. Then ensues a period when the old days are forgotten and the golden age falls into neglect. Finally comes a time when we rediscover and seek to restore the world around us to something like its former beauty.

But there has to be that interval of neglect, there has to be that discontinuity; it is religiously and artistically essential.”- J.B. Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins*<sup>1</sup>

#### From ‘Suburb’ to ‘Slum’

In 1934, Toronto celebrated its centennial as an incorporated city. The Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, Herbert Bruce, took the opportunity to announce a stirring call to action.

At a centennial luncheon in the spring, he addressed a Board of Trade audience:

“We have a great and beautiful city... blessed by honest and efficient government... but I fear... [it] has acquired the inevitable ‘slum districts’... Would it not be a splendid thing to commemorate this, our hundredth civic year, by the creation of a large and noble plan... that would mould this city more nearly to our heart’s desire, a plan that would recognize the inalienable right of every man and woman and child to a decent and dignified and healthful environment?”<sup>2</sup>

Soon after the luncheon, Toronto City Council approved an enquiry into slum conditions, one of many prepared during the 1930s depression by municipal governments in Canada, the

United States, and Australia.<sup>3</sup> The report, released in November 1934, relied on information prepared by the City of Toronto Department of Public Health and University of Toronto School of Social Work. It concluded that 2-3,000 dwellings were “unfit for a satisfactory family life”, based on a standard of fitness that included adequate “shelter from elements; lighting, ventilation and heat; water and sewage; cooking and food storage; freedom from vermin”.<sup>4</sup> A map was produced of these substandard dwellings. There were only six properties shown within Parkdale’s traditional boundaries of Dufferin, the rail tracks, Wright, Roncesvalles, and Lake Ontario.

The report quickly moved on from the issue of substandard housing, and how to fix it. When describing “those features of bad housing which are particularly injurious to health and decency”, the first element was “overcrowding”. According to the report, overcrowding is “usually associated with the practice of taking in boarders or roomers, often a financial necessity if rent is to be paid”. Yet the apparent costs outweighed the benefit: “The breakdown of family life upon the introduction of another family into the dwelling unit is almost inevitable”.<sup>5</sup>

Using the criteria of “overcrowding” instead of health or housing hazards, the report inveighed against “the ‘bad areas’ of Toronto [that]... may be divided into three parts which exhibit rather different types of slum conditions. On the west, there is the old section of Parkdale”.

The report continued:

“Parkdale’s housing problem is the result of the economic deterioration of what was formerly a prosperous district of quite large, substantial houses. Into these houses are now crowded a vastly greater number of families than the architects ever foresaw. Many

of these families are of foreign origin. The presence of railroads and factories to the south increase the noise, traffic, and dirt. While it is the least undesirable of the three districts we are describing it is fast becoming a serious slum.”<sup>6</sup>

The solution provided by the Bruce Report was the wholesale clearance of areas identified as slums, and their replacement by more rationally planned and designed public housing projects. John Bacher, the historian of Canadian housing policy, calls the Bruce Report the “bible for social housing” in Canada.<sup>7</sup> The showcase urban renewal project recommended in the Bruce Report, complete with housing footprint and new neighbourhood street plan, was completed twelve years later as North Regent Park, Canada’s first public housing project.

The reaction to this description of Parkdale is as startling as the description itself. There was none. In the considerable newspaper coverage that followed the publication of the Bruce Report, there was heated debate about costs of slum demolition and the merits of public housing investment. But there was no questioning, in editorials, letters, or the words of politicians, of the areas described as slums. In two of the three areas, Cabbagetown and the Ward, the Bruce Report was the culmination of over 40 years of newspaper and government reports calling the areas unhealthy, unsafe, and immoral.

Parkdale was different. From the late 1870s to the early 1910s, it was written about as a model suburb, with a healthful physical environment, charming villas, and upstanding middle class citizens. It was proclaimed to be the antithesis of central city slum living. How did the neighbourhood fall so far, so fast? Were there major changes in housing or socio-economic conditions that might account for the former suburb’s rapid image decline in two decades? What other factors may have contributed to the label switch? Was Parkdale really becoming a bad

place to live? And what were the impacts to the neighbourhood when the rhetoric of a modern model suburb “with very aristocratic pretensions” was superseded by the image of a neighbourhood in the inevitable process of “becoming a serious slum”?

To some degree, Parkdale did become less attractive to middle class residents, and investment money, after World War One. Location played a role in Parkdale’s fall from grace. In the 1870s and 1880s, Parkdale was at the periphery of the built-up city. By the 1920s and 1930s, the former suburb had been engulfed by development to the north and west [see Figure 2].<sup>8</sup> Newer and more ‘modern’ middle class suburbs were commanding the lion’s share of attention from newspapers. By 1924, the *Toronto Star* considered Rosedale, Forest Hill and High Park to be the three neighbourhoods “where Toronto’s wealth was greatest”; four years later *Might’s Directory* named these neighbourhoods along with the Beaches (five miles east of downtown), Moore Park (north of Rosedale), and the Humber District (to the northwest of Parkdale) as “matchless suburban residential districts”.<sup>9</sup> Parkdale was now being seen as part of the more anonymous older central city, with many of the problems endemic to formerly prosperous neighbourhoods which were now in an inevitable process of decline. Whereas there are hundreds of newspaper clippings about Parkdale’s character between the late 1870s and the early 1910s, descriptions of Parkdale as a place with a distinct identity are rare between 1913 and 1969. References are almost always negative.

Location was only one factor in the decline of Parkdale’s image. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many observers recognized that supposedly well-to-do “retreats” like Parkdale and Rosedale were exceptions among the less prosperous suburbs springing up in the “goose pastures” just outside the boundaries of the developed city.<sup>10</sup> The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw

industrial and self-built suburbs being built in the periphery, along with a few exclusive developments for the elite. Rosedale maintained its reputation as an elite district throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though it was considerably closer to downtown than Parkdale. More important was the two-fold threat that Parkdale came to represent to Toronto's development as a City of Homes.

First, Parkdale became identified with the moral dangers of single women and men living in apartments and boarding houses. While once Parkdale was praised for offering home ownership opportunities to all classes, it was now derided for offering far too many rental opportunities to both genders. Parkdale had once been described as a chaste young woman who spurned the advances of the promiscuous city, but now it was being identified with potentially promiscuous modern women working outside the home, who at best were delaying marriage and at worst would be responsible for 'race suicide'. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Parkdale had been in the forefront of Toronto's shift to working class homeownership: half of the suburb's households were owners by 1891, as opposed to Toronto's average of a little over one in four [Figure 18].<sup>11</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Parkdale again was in the forefront of housing fashion, with a move to smaller flats in apartments and subdivided houses. But by then, Parkdale was at the wrong cutting edge for its time and place. Its middle class detached houses, which when constructed were considered the acme of modern fashion and healthfulness, became criticized for being too large to be efficient as single family homes without servants, and lacking in amenities such as attached garages. Of particular concern was the conversion of large villas to multiple unit boarding houses and flats. Ironically, the streets in South Parkdale where wealth had been concentrated became the places where economic and social change seemed most rapid



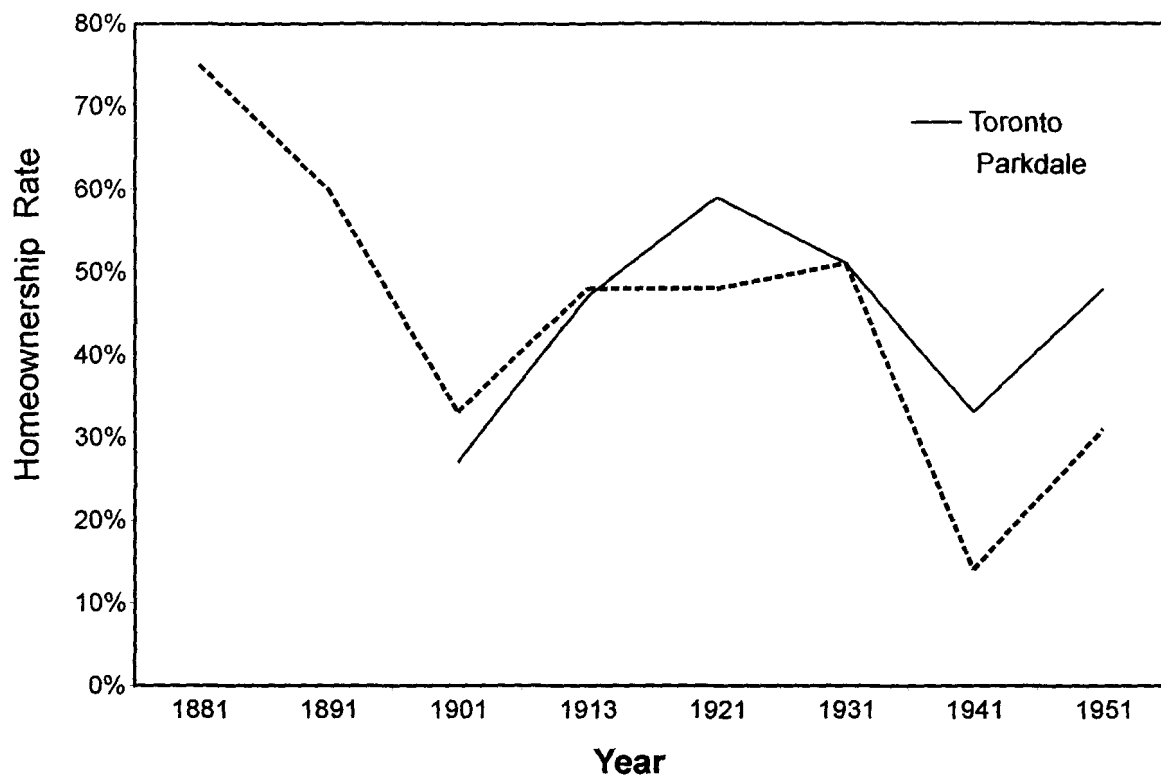


Figure 18. Homeownership Rates, Toronto and Parkdale, 1881-1951.

Source: Assessment Samples.

and harmful. Once Parkdale was considered a good place to live, with good people; now it was becoming a bad place to live, and its housing forms could make women and men go bad.

Second, access to Parkdale's lakeside, once a selling point for the suburb's promoters, became seen as an impediment to the free movement of cars for a new generation of suburban developers. Toronto's waterfront, and eventually the whole city, was being conceived of as a whole efficient organism, with commercial, industrial and recreational uses strictly segregated yet joined by broad new highways. There was no place in these plans for a lakeside residential community so close to downtown. Parkdale was in the way of a bigger and better vision of the city.

In the 1870s, developers were quick to capitalize on innovations in technology, such as the growth of the railway and horse tram network, to promote Parkdale as a suburb. The independent municipality of Parkdale became the testing area for innovations in governance, such as segmented taxation (special assessments for street improvements) and hiring a medical health officer. Municipal by-law and zoning controls over land use and housing development were attempted during the 1879-1889 period, but were ineffective. Innovations in house building and finance also emerged in Parkdale the 1870s, particularly the large development and finance companies exemplified by the Toronto House Builders Association. Developers, builders, and real estate agents were intimately bound up in local politics and governance.

Similarly, the early 1910s were a time when technological change, in particular the growth of automobile ownership, merged with a growth in the scope and powers of local government to create the first real regional planning in Toronto. By-law and zoning controls were once again attempted, this time to great effect in some parts of Toronto, although not in

Parkdale. Developers continued to play major roles in urban politics, with mixed impacts to the neighbourhood. According to Boyer, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the era when the ideal of “the city as a perfectly disciplined spatial order” took hold across North America,<sup>12</sup> and Toronto’s municipal government took an avid interest in this movement towards the new spatial discipline of urban planning.<sup>13</sup> Parkdale’s ‘disorderly’ land use and social diversity, present from the first, increasingly became seen as decline.

#### The turning point of 1911-13, Part One: ‘Slum Conditions’ (Apartment Houses) Arrive in Parkdale

The two year period from 1911 to 1913 saw the publication of two influential civic reports in Toronto, each the outcome of decades of advocacy. One report was an ambitious plan for Toronto’s waterfront, which will be discussed in the next section. The other was Toronto’s first municipal slum report, released by the new Medical Officer of Health, Charles Hastings.

After a string of ineffective political appointments as health officials, the choice of Hastings was the culmination of recent successes in the public health field. In 1886, Toronto first hosted the American Public Health Association. As of 1903, a diploma in public health was available at University of Toronto. In 1909, provincial legislation provided funding for local public health departments, and ensured that the medical officer would report to a small citizen-based board of health, rather than directly to City Council.<sup>14</sup>

Although on the verge of retirement at the age of 58 when appointed in 1910, Hastings was to become a leader of powerful intellect and energy, one of two strong civil servants who

effectively ran Toronto for the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (R.C. Harris, the Commissioner of Works, was the other). Hastings was central in the public health movement in North America, as a founder of the Canadian Public Health Association in 1910, an organizer of the Rockefeller Foundation's international public health education project, which sent students from around the world to do field work in Toronto, and as the president of the American Public Health Association by 1918.<sup>15</sup> One of Hastings' preconditions was independence from City Council interference, although he reserved the right to advise City Council. Lack of oversight by ward councillors was ensured by creating eight public health divisions, whose boundaries were unrelated to the seven City Council wards [see Figure 3]. Hastings immediately embarked on several campaigns: ensuring clean milk, banning outdoor privies, and hiring female 'municipal housekeepers' to teach 'Canadian methods of sanitation' to new immigrants. His most ambitious campaign was for municipally funded suburban housing, such as was being developed in his nation of origin, Great Britain. Hastings replaced his Department's annual reports with monthly reports read directly to City Council, written in the style of short sermons. Over half of the reports delivered between 1910 and 1913 dealt with the evils of lodging, tenements, and overcrowding.<sup>16</sup>

The slum report built on a small subgenre of slum literature in Toronto. In 1884, Mulvaney had spoken of some diseased "arteries of Toronto", with the worst being "that part of York Street [in the Ward]... occupied by dingy and rotten wooden shanties, the dens of Jewish old clothes sellers and recipients for stolen goods" (it will be remembered that York Street was also the centre for the small Black community).<sup>17</sup> Even in a city whose inhabitants were 80% Protestant and 92% of British origin,<sup>18</sup> difference could still be constructed as problematic.

In 1898, C.S. Clark's curious 'social survey', *Of Toronto the Good*, was published. Based on an address to the World Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was held in Toronto in 1897, Clark combined a travelogue of vice (complete with addresses and ratings of bawdy houses), with social commentary on a wide range of topics, from real estate speculation to the essential immorality of women. Clark's theme was that Toronto held itself to a higher standard than other cities, while having the same problems as "every city in America". For instance, "a considerable number of people own their own houses, though the circumstances may be a questionable advantage... [since] people of moderate means are compelled to let furnished rooms or take boarders".<sup>19</sup> While Toronto was at that point "free almost from cheap lodging houses", he expressed concern about the declining standards in boarding houses and inexpensive hotels. Of particular concern was the increase in women living alone. If a young lady was to rent a room above a store, put in a sewing machine, and call herself a seamstress, who was to know what other activities were going on in the evening? If an unmarried young man and young lady had adjacent rooms in a boarding house, perhaps with a door between them, the obvious result would be the ruination of that young lady, assuming of course that she was not a willing participant in the hanky-panky. The author himself had lived in many lodgings where the landlady and servants' morals were "light".<sup>20</sup> The situation was exacerbated by Toronto rents being higher than the rest of Canada, while the supply of skilled labour was in excess of demand. Noting an advertisement for a young lady bookkeeper or cashier paying \$2.50 to \$3 a week, Clark notes: "after paying her board out of the above it may consistently be asked: was the young lady expected to prostitute herself to obtain money for her clothes?".<sup>21</sup> Aside from the "shaky, tumble-down houses" in the Ward, Clark identified "the

extreme east end [ie., Cabbagetown and the Queen-Broadview area] and west end east of Parkdale” as “the abode of poverty”.<sup>22</sup>

According to Mariana Valverde, Clark’s book was one of a series of articles and campaigns that arose at the turn of the century in Toronto and across Canada over issues as seemingly diverse as Sunday observance, temperance, prostitution, divorce, illegitimacy, ‘foreign’ immigration of Chinese and Indians, public education, suppression of obscene literature, rescue of fallen women, and shelters for women and children. What these campaigns had in common was a sense that urban society’s rapid economic and social changes could best be addressed by the ‘scientific’ application of Christian ideals to issues like city planning. For instance, overcrowding and the taking in of boarders were linked to sexual assault, especially of children. This was the so-called ‘lodger evil’. Nighttime inspections of houses were encouraged by Winnipeg’s Medical Officer of Health, to ensure that “innocent looking” couches were not being opened up as beds, and that children of opposite sex were not found in the same bed. Alleyway housing needed to be torn down, in order to bring in light but also surveillance. “Child saver J.J. Kelso” was quoted as saying: “If there could be a drastic measure passed requiring every house in which human beings dwell to front on a 40 or 60 foot street, or else be pulled down, how long would drunkenness, vice and ignorance exist?”<sup>23</sup>

Municipal intervention was an essential part of this campaign for civic moral improvement. Even if Toronto’s housing conditions had little in common with the truly deleterious conditions in some parts of New York, London, and Chicago, local government must destroy signs of incipient slums such as multiple occupancy and laneway housing. Rather than better wages or better housing in the central city, local governments put their hope in charitable

and civic 'philanthropy plus 5%' schemes that would provide model worker housing in suburbs. In fact, it was the role of municipal government to close off avenues of housing change other than single family housing in the suburbs. Hastings' slum report built on these Canadian campaigns, which were similar to anti-slum campaigns in the U.S., Great Britain, and Australia during this period.<sup>24</sup> In turn, the report's template would become the basis for many future reports, including that of the Bruce Commission.

First, the problem needed to be discovered. There was the widespread belief that Toronto had escaped the poor housing conditions experienced in European and older North American cities. Hastings disputed this, pointing to a changing understanding of slums:

"Originally, the term was applied to low, boggy, back streets, inhabited by a poor, criminal population. The term as used here, however, applies for the most part to poor, unsanitary houses, overcrowded, insufficiently lighted, badly ventilated, with unsanitary and in many cases, filthy yards..."<sup>25</sup>

Given this criteria, "there are few conditions found in the slums of European cities, or in the greater American cities that have not been revealed in Toronto, the difference being only one of degree, and the conditions of the lesser degree today, will, if not corrected, become those of a greater degree tomorrow"<sup>26</sup>.

Second, the problem needed to be defined as one of housing type rather than housing conditions. After the introductory definition of slums, the report went on to emphasize not lighting, ventilation, or lack of sewer or water pipes, but the persistence of "common lodging houses" lived in by immigrants whose "ideas of sanitation are not ours". Alarming, "our inspectors have some evidence that certain small hotels and old and roomy houses are about to

undergo the dangerous transformation into foreign lodging houses". Equally alarmingly, "a total of 92 tenement houses", where "three or more families live independently", "may well make us stop and think of the necessity of some action along this line".<sup>27</sup> When it came to recommendations, the first dealt with "the lodging house evil" and the second with "the tenement house problem". The need for indoor privies came sixth, developing an adequate water supply was eighth among the recommendations, and the ninth and final recommendation was finding some mechanism for dealing with "exorbitant rents".<sup>28</sup> The moral health of urban society, beset as it was by 'foreignness' and changing gender roles, was of greater import than its physical health. 'Decent' housing was more important than affordable and adequate housing. The issue of housing type and form was more pressing than actual housing conditions.

The third underlying message of the report was that it reflected a growing social consensus, and that there were simple solutions to the identified problems. The report assured readers that demolishing unfit lodging houses would meet with approval with landlords: "In Birmingham, during a similar campaign, it was known that 73% of landlords were strongly in favour if it", and slum dwellers would happily move to suburban garden cities, if provided.<sup>29</sup> With a strong housing by-law banning tenements and lodging houses, suburban garden cities, and proper city planning, Toronto could still avoid the curse of slums.

Hasting's slum report did not specifically mention Parkdale, since the focus was on the downtown area. However, the report and its aftermath had strong indirect impacts. Until the turn of the century, Parkdale's home ownership rate had been considerably higher than the rest of Toronto. Now, cheap homes were being built throughout a new set of suburbs. By 1913, Parkdale's home ownership rate, 48%, was the same as the Toronto average. Eight years later,



Toronto's home ownership rate was just under 60%, one of the highest figures in North America, while Parkdale's rate had remained at 48% [See Figure 18].<sup>30</sup> The last undeveloped streets in North Parkdale were built out into new homes in the 1906-1913 construction boom, and were mostly bought rather than rented, as we have seen on Galley Avenue.

However, there was also a new kind of housing form being developed in Parkdale. By 1913, some of Parkdale's large villas were beginning to get subdivided into two or three flats, and some of the large lots that had remained undeveloped became the sites of small apartment buildings. For instance, on Dowling Avenue, two 44 by 143 lots which had been the subject of foreclosure in the 1890s, were bought on the cheap by a developer named George Chapman in 1906, who built four triplexes on the site five years later at the height of a city-wide building boom. These 'apartment buildings' were immediately bought as investment properties by the Hutchins brothers, who initially rented the flats to businessmen and clerks.<sup>31</sup>

Richard Dennis, who has written about Toronto's first apartment boom, points out that the first apartment buildings in Toronto, appearing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were luxury flats intended for upper middle class bachelors and couples without children. Like purpose-built apartments for the rich in Paris, New York, and Chicago, the designs of these apartment buildings included rooms or suites for servants, and sometimes communal dining rooms or other shared housekeeping facilities. They were located in high status areas where there were large lots, such as Jarvis Street and the Annex. By 1909, there were 23 apartment buildings listed in *Might's Directory*. In the years from 1910 to 1913, the number of additional apartment houses increased by 108, and in 1914 alone, 78 additional apartment buildings were listed. While there was a shift to smaller projects with more modest efficiency apartments, the builders continued to

locate their apartments in high status areas, including Parkdale. By 1915, Parkdale contained ten large (20 or more unit) apartment buildings, one third of Toronto's total, mostly on the commercial streets of Queen and King [Figure 19]. Another 22 smaller apartment buildings, three or six-suite purpose-built flats like those on Dowling Avenue or conversions of Victorian villas, had also been developed within Parkdale.<sup>32</sup>

It retrospect, it is hard to comprehend the moral panic occasioned by these apartment buildings. The apartments were well-designed, built with good materials and up-to-date plumbing, housed mostly clerical and sales staff, and either filled in vacant lots or preserved the facades of existing villas. They were near streetcar connections, and close to workplaces. Yet newspapers and local ratepayers reacted with horror and indignation to these new apartment buildings, which they termed "tenements". Government action was called for to stop the spreading cancer.

Throughout the spring of 1912, the *Globe* ran a series of strongly worded editorials on the topic. The first one began: "There is going to be a tenement house boom in the spring. Dozens of structures are contemplated that will occupy practically the entire space on which they are to stand... Toronto must look to her building laws or she will be overrun, as San Francisco has been, with a plague of disease-breeding tenements".<sup>33</sup> A month later, the newspaper warned that "promoters of these tenements may seek to disguise them under the name of apartment houses", but they were still the same evil entity.<sup>34</sup> At the end of April, as pressure mounted for City Hall to pass a by-law banning apartments on all but a few commercial streets, the *Globe* maintained that tenements "inevitably lower the housing standard" while artificially inflating central city land values. If apartment construction became more profitable for developers than building self-



Figure 19. Parkdale Mansions apartment building, Dowling Avenue at King Street West, built c. 1915, photographed 1972.

Source: Baldwin Room, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Houses series 979-42-9.

contained houses, Toronto would inevitably drift towards becoming a “city of stunted children and of unhappy adults. Its morals will suffer as well as its health”.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the day before the Council vote, the *Globe* gave Torontonians another cautionary comparison to consider: Chicago, where “within less than a square mile... 65,000 people live in... tenement conditions”, with “thousands of children old before their time, grey-blooded, weak limbed, unfit”, facing “the ruination of all the finer modesties of boys and girls whose very life necessities crowd them out of narrow tenement confines into the open street”. This would be the physical and moral “human product” that would arise if “City Hall allows selfish or ignorant individuals to speculate unchecked”.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime, Parkdale was the site of the two most publicized battles over apartment house construction in early 1912. A developer named Solomon King ran into neighbours’ opposition when he proposed a five storey apartment house built out to the lot line at the corner of Jameson and King. Residents of Jameson’s villas convinced City Council to buy a ten foot setback from the developer, at which point the developer successfully applied to build on another storey.<sup>37</sup> In another case, residents of Maynard Avenue contested a six-suite apartment house on the grounds that the old Parkdale Village bylaws prohibited “dangerous, noisy or offensive trades or businesses”. This dispute wound its way to the Supreme Court of Canada over the next three years, before being dismissed.<sup>38</sup>

Given the heated rhetoric surrounding the issue, it is hardly surprising that in May 1912, after negotiating for the power from the provincial government, a motion to ban apartment houses and garages from all but a few commercial streets was unanimously adopted by Toronto City Council. Politicians pronounced that apartment houses were “breeders of slums”, “chicken

coops” and more damaging to property values “than any institution in the city”.<sup>39</sup> Yet in the two years following the by-law’s enactment, apartment house construction increased in Toronto, with dozens of developers applying for exemptions to the by-laws, or siting their buildings at the corner of a commercial and a residential street and then stealthily expanding along the residential corridor. Exemptions were generally granted along downtown streets, where the decline and demolition of older houses was considered inevitable. In the northern suburbs, like Rosedale and Forest Hill, exemptions were generally denied. Parkdale was the only part of the city where exemptions were allowed or denied in equal numbers.

One reason for this mixed record was the character of Parkdale’s elite. While ratepayers associations in Rosedale, Forest Hill, and the Annex were led by upper middle class professionals and manufacturers wholeheartedly opposed to any non-residential use, Parkdale’s neighbourhood leadership had always included a large number of real estate agents and local developers. Parkdale and Rosedale were often considered rivals in the 1880-1912 period, but they had little in common. Unlike Parkdale, located along railway and streetcar lines and close to a booming industrial conglomeration, Rosedale property holders, grouped around a ravine well to the east of the commercial artery Yonge Street, had been fairly impervious to subdivision pressures during the 1870s and 1880s. In the late 1870s, southeastern Rosedale was still in the hands of only four landowners. In the 1890s, when there was significant building activity during a recession, the relatively few wealthy homeowners saw no reason to deviate from one house per acre initial subdivisions. By 1905, Rosedale had formed the first ratepayer’s association in Toronto, and pressured the city to zone out any non-residential use, from corner stores to manufacturing.<sup>40</sup>

The Annex Ratepayer’s Association, active from the early 1910s, set their boundaries to

exclude poorer streets, and wrote scores of letters to City Council opposing garages and apartments.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, when the South Parkdale Ratepayers' Association formed in 1912, it was to oppose the conversion of an old mansion to institutional use (see next section), and very few letters were written under the association's letterhead opposing apartments or stores. Parkdale's resident apartment developers provided mutual support by signing each other's petitions for exemption from the apartment by-laws. For instance, W.B. Charlton lived on Close Avenue while being involved in 16 applications to built small apartment buildings, although he moved further west to High Park in 1914. J.J. Walsh, who advertised himself as an "estate broker and valuator: estates managed, rents collected, property bought sold or exchanged; money and loans on farm and city properties" was involved in over 50 apartment building permits across the city while living in Parkdale. H.H. Williams, a former resident of Parkdale, was a leader in Forest Hill's fight to keep out apartment buildings, while developing and managing several buildings in his old neighbourhood.<sup>42</sup> His brothers-in-law, the Bryces, while not directly involved in apartment construction, owned or part-owned 77 rental houses and 24 vacant lots across the city, as well as a lumber yard that serviced apartment developers, two factories and a roller skating rink in Parkdale.<sup>43</sup>

Letters and petitions sent to City Council in 1912 and 1913 shed light on the evolving politics of restrictive zoning. The residents association for High Park, the neighbourhood immediately west of Parkdale, said they were opposed to a drug store at the corner of Keele and the Queensway, since it would establish a dangerous precedent to provide any kind of store or business in this residential district. In contrast, Yorkville residents sent two petitions, one in favour and the other against, an apartment building. The owner pleaded with City Council that it

was “impossible for me to erect a first class residence owing to the close proximity of car barns, a public library [!], livery stables, etc”.<sup>44</sup> In Parkdale, the secretary of the South Parkdale Residents’ Association objected to the erection of an apartment building on King Street between Dufferin and Cowan, since “any departure from the by-law will have the result that sooner or later stores and factories will be erected in the present residential district”. Yet within two blocks, there were sheet metal and radiator construction factories, at least three commercial properties, and the bank where the letter writer worked.<sup>45</sup> In more than one instance, an initial effort to establish a commercial establishment on a Parkdale street corner led to a compromise where the developer built an apartment building (probably his initial intent). For instance, a proposed store at the northwest corner of King and Dowling was opposed by local residents in August 1912. A few months later, the same neighbours signed a petition to allow an apartment building, with specified materials and unit sizes, as the lesser of two evils. Coming as they do at the start of the 1913 recession, the letters give a strong impression of fear among property-owners that anything less than the perfection of single-family residences would spoil the resale value of their houses, and be the first step on a slippery slope to decline. Given the limited choices open to South Parkdale property owners in these letters, the ideal of a purely residential neighbourhood may have already been considered past hope.

### The Turning Point of 1911-1913, Part Two: The Drive to Modernity

While new suburbs with more ‘modern’ ideas on housing and neighbourhood planning were springing up to the north and west of Parkdale, the lakeshore to the south was rapidly

becoming engulfed in Toronto's drive towards modernity. Parkdale had one of the few stretches of non-industrialized shoreline in the developed portion of Toronto. Access to the lake was blocked by a rail line crossed by only four Parkdale streets, and the shoreline was without a natural beach. However, this did not stop members of the public from swimming there, to the oft-expressed displeasure of nearby landowners [Figure 20]. Rowing and yacht clubs had joined the private boathouses along Parkdale's lakefront by the first decade of the century. At the southwestern border of Parkdale, where Queen Streets turned into Lakeshore Road, a conglomeration of establishments (the Ocean House Hotel, Mrs. Meyer's restaurant, Duck's Marina) served as a small resort community in the 1890s. In 1894, the year after the Chicago World Fair and its popular 'Midway Plaisance', both the Toronto Industrial Exhibition and several businesses along Lakeshore Road installed merry-go-rounds and other rides. By the turn of the century, Toronto's Easter Parade was held along the wooden esplanade built by owners of the large lakefront estates, a custom that would continue as a highlight of Toronto's social season until the 1950s.<sup>46</sup> In 1906, the City purchased 40 acres of undeveloped lakeshore land at the eastern edge of Parkdale, in order to expand the Exhibition grounds.<sup>47</sup>

The lakeshore fulfilled a transportation, as well as a recreational, function. The intersection of Lakeshore Road and Queen Street was, by the turn of the century, the main western entrance into the City, and now the bottleneck where the Grand Trunk Railway crossed the intersection was as chaotic as Queen-Dufferin had been 20 years earlier [Figure 21]. As early as 1877, "a number of gentlemen who are owners of vacant land on the lakeshore, between the Garrison Common and the Humber contemplate the construction thereon of an esplanade,





Figure 20. The lakeshore at Dowling, looking west, c. 1897. Parkdale's lakeshore was rocky, and separated from the rest of the suburb by the Great Western Rail tracks. Despite these disamenities, the area just west of this point was a popular summer bathing beach.

Source: Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library, Old Toronto series, 975-20-13.

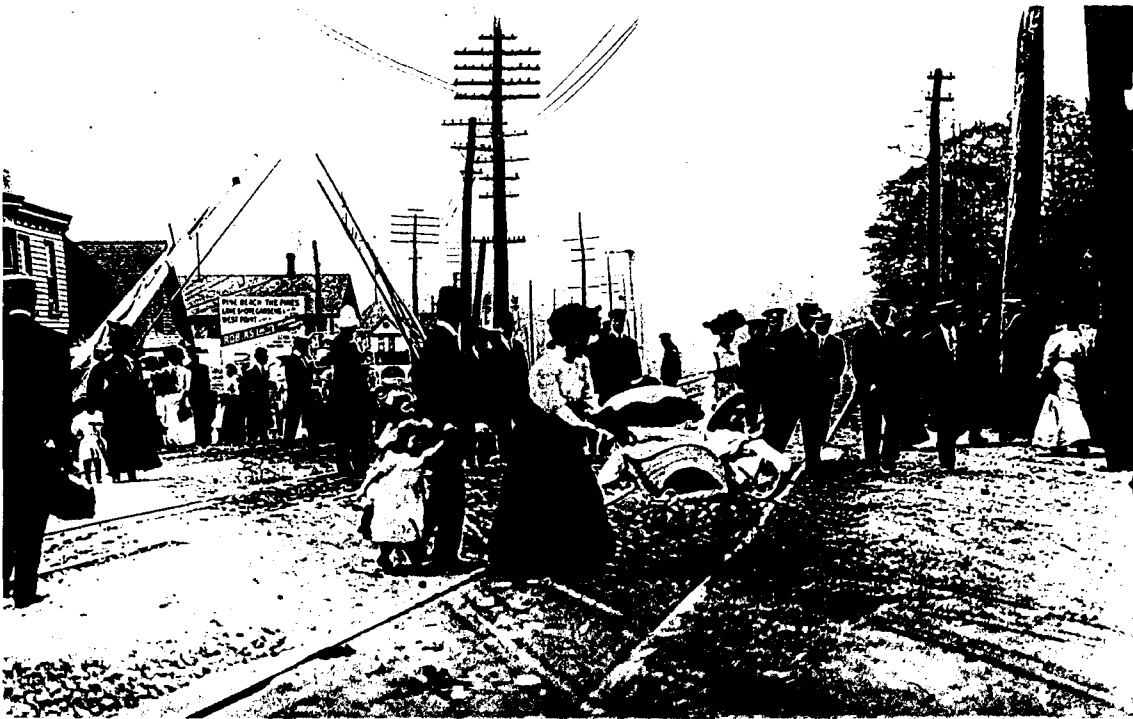


Figure 21. The busy intersection of King Street, Queen Street , Roncesvalles Avenue, and Lakeshore Road, looking west c. 1908. Robert and Minnie Libby, and their oldest three children, are in the foreground (see pp. 140-141, 201 for more information on the Libby family), carefully crossing the Grand Truck rail tracks. They are dressed in their Sunday best. Perhaps they have just returned from a stroll along the lakeshore. Robert looks back anxiously at an automobile on Lakeshore Road, as does the police officer directing traffic. In the background, there is an advertisement for a new lakeside subdivision.

Source: City of Toronto Archives, William James Series, Fonds 1244, Item 245.

boulevard and carriage drive with an ample breadth... block-paved, and planted with trees, and otherwise beautified”.<sup>48</sup> A system of central city boulevards, including a lakeshore boulevard, was suggested by a civic booster group ten years later, again with Chicago as a model: “The first care of [an American] city after it has once entered upon a career of prosperity and growth, is to make itself “smart’ and attractive... Chicago, for instance, a city built upon the site of a swamp, had no natural attractions to begin with, and yet every visitor to it now comes away filled with admiration for its magnificent boulevard”.<sup>49</sup> In 1906, the Ontario Association of Architects repeated the call for a “circumambient line of parkways”. Toronto’s Parks Commissioner again cited American examples when in 1910 he called for “a complete circuit of the city,” and proposed plans provided by the Civic Guild in 1909 and its successor the Civic Improvement Committee in 1911 all advocated for a citywide lakeshore route.<sup>50</sup>

Wayne Reeves, who has written extensively on waterfront plans, calls this a “rich imagining” of Toronto’s lakefront, where City Beautiful thought on a regional scale came at the expense of existing communities. With plan-makers dominated by a small coterie of interrelated professionals, individual personalities mattered, and so did the merger of public and private interests.<sup>51</sup> Nowhere was this more apparent than during the first years of the Toronto Harbour Commission (THC). In 1911, Toronto voters approved the reorganization of the old Toronto Harbour Trust into a new reform-minded commission. The THC, consisting of three members appointed by City Council, one member appointed by the federal government, and one member provided by the Toronto Board of Trade, was granted authority over all 2,026 acres of the City’s Lake Ontario shoreline, from Victoria Park Road to the east, to the Humber River on the west. The first commissioners included two prominent businesspeople associated with the reforming

impulses of the Board of Trade, two long time city aldermen (one representing Ward 6, which included Parkdale) who had been members of the discredited Harbour Trust, and in the role of swing vote, the man who would become the THC's most visible member for the next decade: Robert Home Smith, a lawyer and property developer then in his early thirties.<sup>52</sup>

A long-term waterfront development strategy was the first order of business for the THC. E.L. Cousins, a resident of Parkdale, was hired as the THC's Chief Engineer, and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the famous park and suburb designer, was given a contract to assist him in developing this plan. Cousins was already well acquainted with the problems and prospects of the waterfront. In 1910, the young engineer was hired to supervise the Grand Trunk Railway's grade separation project along Parkdale's lakeshore, which was intended to alleviate the traffic bottleneck at the intersection of Queen Street and Lakeshore Road. The City of Toronto then hired him as Head of the Railroad and Special Works Department, where his vigorous promotion of a plan, proposed by Adam Beck of the new public-owned Ontario Hydro Electric Commission, to integrate a province-wide radial electric railway system with Yonge and Queen Street rapid transit lines, cost him his job within the year.<sup>53</sup> At the THC, Cousins found his niche, and he would preside over the most ambitious plan Toronto had yet seen.

*Toronto's Waterfront Development Plan* was unveiled in August 1913. The plan divided the city's waterfront into three sections. In the Eastern Section, substantial dredging would be required in order to modernize shipping facilities and expedite the expansion of industry. The Central Section, corresponding with Toronto's downtown, would see expanded commercial opportunities and new docks. In the Western Section and the Toronto Islands, new parklands and a grand amusement arcade and beach would be created to capitalize on the recreational potential

of Lake Ontario, using four million tons of cubic muck gathered from the dredging in the Eastern Section, topped with 40,000 cubic yards of topsoil harvested from a farm in Pickering purchased by the THC for that particular purpose. A lakeshore pleasure drive would link the new beach at Sunnyside with the Canadian National Exhibition and the Toronto Islands. A key feature of the waterfront plan was the strict separation of transportation functions. West of Parkdale, a new boardwalk along the waterfront would be joined by an expanded Lakeshore Boulevard to carry automobile traffic, a service road for tracks, and a radial railway reservation. Land uses were also strictly segregated from east to west. The ideal of a purely recreational space would be accomplished by expropriating and demolishing close to 200 Parkdale houses between the Grand Trunk rail line and the lake.

The plan met with universal acclaim by newspapers, politicians, and the general public, despite its impressive \$19 million price tag. The *Globe* overcame its usual suspicions of municipal fiscal irresponsibility and announced the proposed plan would relive Toronto's "torpor of hideousness", while the *Mail and Empire* acclaimed its suitable "magnificence". The waterfront plan was showcased during the Sixth National Conference on City Planning in 1914, the first to be held outside the United States. A municipal referendum in January 1913 resulted in the necessary funds being added to the property tax assessment.<sup>54</sup> At last, Toronto was to compete in the City Beautiful sweepstakes. The founder of the movement, Daniel Burnham, had famously said: "Make no little plans". The waterfront revisioning was Toronto's first successful Big Plan.

It cannot be said, however, that the THC and its members were acting strictly out of altruism. Home Smith, who combined law, business and politics in what a biographer describes

as a “holy trinity”,<sup>55</sup> had been amassing more than 3,000 acres west of the City for his Humber Valley development. According to Reeves, “the scale, character, and marketing of the project was unprecedented, locally or nationally”.<sup>56</sup> A key component of the proposal, which was funded by magnates such as Lord Beaverbrook, was a trade-off with the City: Smith would donate the river valley bottom as a public park, in return for annexation of the area and a municipally constructed Humber Boulevard. Lakeshore Boulevard would feed commuters directly into Humber Boulevard, which is at least part of the reason why Smith (who advocated for a Lakeshore Boulevard when he was a member of the Civic Guild in the first decade of the century) made it such a priority for the THC. Smith and Cousins would later collaborate on a plan for high-status apartments immediately north of Sunnyside, modelled on Chicago’s Lincoln Park, which was never realized.<sup>57</sup>

The City of Toronto almost immediately began buying properties along Parkdale’s waterfront. Several large mansions had already fallen into disrepair. As far back as the recession of the early 1890s, Sunnyside villa had been sold for use as a Catholic boys’ orphanage, and the 16 room Clark mansion (with the Ford/Mackay shack in the back) had become a Salvation Army Rescue Home for Girls.<sup>58</sup> In September 1913, the month after the Waterfront Plan was released, the City of Toronto bought the Dowling Avenue estate of former local MP H.H. Cook. Immediately, rumours flew that the property would be used as part of a plan to disperse the Queen Street Asylum into scattered sites around the City. J.J. Ward, the old labour leader who had fought to keep Parkdale an independent municipality back in 1889, was among the residents who immediately formed the South Parkdale Ratepayers’ Association to oppose any such plan. “South Parkdale is the oldest residential district in Canada”, Ward fumed. “Objectionable

businesses are not permitted to be established, and we certainly will not stand for an asylum”.

Another prominent resident raised the spectre of inmates of an asylum “interfering” with nearby bathers; while yet another compared the idea with opening a small pox hospital in the heart of a residential area.<sup>59</sup> The *Star* shot back in an editorial against what would 70 years later be termed NIMBYism:

“Whenever hospitals or fire halls or police stations are proposed, the people of the district come to Council with tears in their eyes, and say they don’t want to be neighbours to these places. Yet they want them in the city somewhere – somewhere else... Doubtless, an attempt will be made to locate the psychiatric hospital in the East end – from which deputants are either less frequent, or less influential, than from other parts of the city”<sup>60</sup>.

Both the outrage and reaction were soon made irrelevant. By 1920, both the Cook and the adjacent Magann mansions had been demolished as the first step in turning Parkdale’s residential waterfront into part of a grand municipal park with a boulevard.<sup>61</sup> The gradual destruction of Parkdale’s lakefront housing stock was considered a better outcome to the ratepayer’s association than the ‘obsolete’ mansions being used for anything other than single family homeownership.

### Attack of the Planning Reports 1911 to 1934

By World War One, Parkdale was at the forefront of a social, political, and economic transformation of Toronto. Women, migrants from rural Canada, and to a lesser extent, non-British immigrants, were increasingly essential to the industrial, clerical and sales work force in Toronto. They were attracted to the ‘efficiency’ apartments and converted flats found in Parkdale

as well as downtown. Three separate interest groups (organized middle class women, organized labour, and business leaders) were pushing local government in a more scientific and modern direction, and had strong opinions about the nature of future housing in Toronto. Over the next 20 years, these groups, along with academic ‘experts’ and the media, would forge a consensus on ‘a good place to live’ that would vilify the alternatives provided in the central city, including Parkdale.

The theme of the measures proposed by the Toronto Local Council of Women to City Council in December 1911 was separation: separation of women and men in insane asylums, police courts, and prisons. A municipal Housing Committee, to be partly composed of women, should also endeavour to create “municipal lodging houses for the temporary accommodation of newly arrived immigrants, and also for the more permanent housing of single working men and (separately) of single working women as a means of counteracting the ‘lodger evil’”.<sup>62</sup> A 1915 Report of the Social Survey Committee, led by the same organization, posited “overcrowding” along with “economic want” as the primary causes of prostitution, with feeble-mindedness and immigration as secondary causal factors. Recommendations included caps on suburban real estate speculation, especially in the suburbs, along with the construction of women’s hotels and supervised boarding houses.<sup>63</sup>

Immediately before and during World War One, the Toronto District Labour Council was making recommendations for municipally-funded family housing in the suburbs.<sup>64</sup> Concurrently, their sometime foe the Canadian Manufacturing Association was recommending model residences for factory employees in Toronto.<sup>65</sup> The Bureau of Municipal Research, created by civic-minded business leaders in 1915, advocated stronger housing bylaws and suburban Garden



Cities in their strongly titled report *What is the Ward Going to Do with Toronto? A Report on Undesirable Living Conditions in One Section of the City of Toronto... Which Are Spreading Rapidly to Other Districts* (1918), co-written by Hastings and the new federal planning advisor Thomas Adams.<sup>66</sup> The City did create a non-profit Toronto Housing Company in 1913, which built two small 'garden suburb' developments in the east end of the city, but the units were mostly taken up by the same clerks and salespeople who were taking advantage of other apartment units.<sup>67</sup>

In the face of this growing consensus on the virtues of garden suburbs and vices of 'overcrowding', a somewhat dissenting opinion came from a City Council Housing Commission formed towards the end of World War One. The Housing Commission condemned the fact that there were now almost "eight new marriages for every new house", but promoted the idea of rowhouses and duplexes rather than detached new homes in the suburbs. While the "ideal condition would be that every family, large or small, had its own home, separate and distinct", the next best alternative would be the remodelling of larger single family residences into three family apartments, under "strict regulation" to avoid "slum conditions", at least "until broad constructive plans can be got under way". Businesswomen were looking for small apartments to avoid the "regrettable rooming house system" where "the temptations toward immorality" caused by young men and women living in the same house were "a source of grave danger". In contrast, "two or three girls or young women could get together and rent a suite", with a separate toilet and bath, along with a kitchen and room to receive friends'. In short, "There will always be a 'Hub' population, and young and old couples and singles needed properly constructed apartment houses", including the conversion of "declining neglected property".<sup>68</sup> As Robert Beauregard has

pointed out in the U.S. context, there was always at least a hint of ambivalence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century discourse on urban decline. Occasionally, a report would imagine a future to central city neighbourhoods beyond complete demolition.<sup>69</sup>

After the war, the Ontario Housing Act of 1919 created a loan program to build suburban housing for returning servicemen. The five year program was unsuccessful in terms of numbers, with only 6,200 homes supported, less than 15% of the estimated needs. It also, like the Toronto Housing Company before it, tended to be of greater help to regularly employed male heads of household, rather than those more in need of affordable publicly funded housing.<sup>70</sup> These tentative moves, immediately before and during World War One, towards local and national housing policies were successful in that they built up a national network of housing reformers: a national town planning organization, accredited university programs, professional journals, all with international linkages. The national network spread the belief that housing was “planning’s *raison d’être*” and that “planning was ... a Super Health Act ... the Science of the Environment ... a gospel of social regeneration... that obviates the physical slum which breeds the moral one”.<sup>71</sup>

After a near “total... silence on housing issues from 1924-1932” at the national, provincial and local levels,<sup>72</sup> the deepening economic crisis of the 1930s depression led to a new generation of housing reports. Two years before the stock market crash of late 1929, the Assessment Commissioner reported that house prices were beginning to decline throughout the city, and expressed particular concern about “large old-fashioned homes” where

“the high price of land and the necessity of spending a considerable sum in renovating the interior deter prospective purchasers. The result is that the owner has to... dispose of the property at a sacrifice price, often for rooming house purposes.”<sup>73</sup>

By 1931, 79% of Parkdale's housing stock was still single-family dwellings,<sup>74</sup> but the fact that one in five units were flats or rooms did not sit well with some residents [Figure 22]. There were complaints to the police that several residences were becoming unlicensed guest houses, displaying signs in their windows saying 'rooms to rent'. The problem seemed especially acute along Jameson Avenue, the western edge of King Street, and south of the tracks during the summertime, when crowds flocked to Sunnyside and the CNE. Surely, this commercial use of properties was contrary to the by-law stating these streets were for residential use only. The issue was dragged back to City Council at least three times in 1931 and 1932. At first, Council made an exception for doctors' and dentists' offices south of King Street. Then, when advised by the City Solicitor's Office that this by-law would not hold up in court, the City barred all new signs. In the meantime, reported the *Globe*, a resident who pushed for the initial bylaw had placed a sign in his window.<sup>75</sup> Along with some residents, downtown hoteliers deputed in favour of the bylaw, since the guest houses provided cheap competition. The local alderman was strongly against the bylaw, since "many people who have no other work were being desirous of taking in tourists... to help maintain their properties",<sup>76</sup> and "it would surprise you to know the number who are securing relief [welfare]".<sup>77</sup> In the meantime, there were complaints at City Council about the inflated prices some south of the tracks home owners were asking as they were slowly expropriated.<sup>78</sup>

The Bruce Report was the result of a committee that included Eric Arthur, a professor of Architecture at University of Toronto who would remain central in Toronto's planning initiatives until the 1960s, the Toronto Council of Women, and the Public Health Department. The

boundaries for 'Parkdale' were those of the public health district, everything south of Bloor Street, from Bathurst over to Sorauren. So when the Bruce Report compared the 'Yorkville' rate of juvenile delinquency (7.9 per 10,000 population) with 'Parkdale' (189 per 10,000),<sup>79</sup> what it really meant was all of North Toronto versus all of west central Toronto. The Report also signalled a shift from site-specific destruction of lodging houses and multi-unit housing to wholesale redevelopment of areas which were now thoroughly infiltrated with these "slum conditions". While Hastings' 1911 report was intended to prevent the creation of slum areas through inspections and bylaws, by 1934 the inadequacies of a purely reactive system were recognized. High land values in the central city meant that high density housing was inevitable. It was the job of municipal government to acquire large tracts of land in order to build more modern and appropriate housing for low income city dwellers.

Interspersed with the laudatory headlines announcing the report, like the *Evening Telegram*'s 'Slum Demolition a Worth-While Endeavour', we find the one voice raised in criticism, the Central Council of Ratepayer's Associations. They found the planned public housing projects a recipe for segregating the poor.<sup>80</sup> But the Ratepayer's Associations, so vocal and seemingly powerful in the 1910s, were now dismissed in a *Mail and Empire* headline as "Bodies of Little Influence/ Said Bunch of Old Women Piffing Away Time on Trifles".<sup>81</sup> Newspapers, in agreement with government reports, were thinking in bigger terms than mere neighbourhoods, and more expert voices than residents.

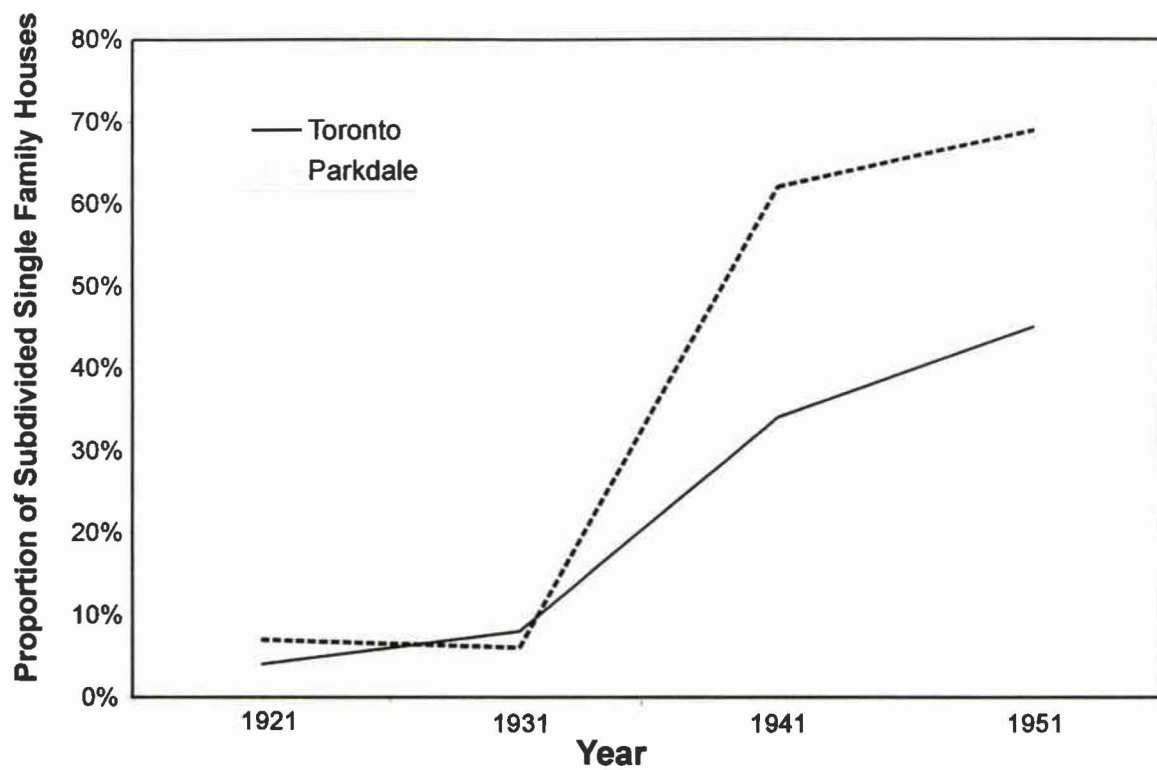


Figure 22. Conversion of Single Family Houses to Multiple Units in Parkdale and Toronto, 1921 to 1951

Source: Assessment Samples

### “Beautiful Sunnyside” to “The Poor Man’s Riviera”: Social change in Parkdale 1913-1951

In retrospect, it is easy to pinpoint the 1911-1913 era as the moment when Parkdale became cut off from its waterfront, and when concerns about multi-unit housing caused a sense of decline which the community was unable to turn around for the next sixty years. But if Parkdale was a community in decline as of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was a subtle process, largely unnoticed by the residents for the next two decades.

Slowed down by World War One, the waterfront development plans were completed by June 1922, when the official opening of Sunnyside heralded the conclusion of this ambitious project. Newspapers which had enthusiastically greeted the waterfront development plans now swooned over the results. The front page banner headline in the *Globe* gives a sense of the tone:

“Beautiful Sunnyside Beach, Front Doorway of Toronto, Is Officially Thrown Open –  
Aesthetic Dream of City History Makers for Past Decade Resplendent Reality Today –  
Peep into the Future Grandeur Conjured by R. Home Smith, Chairman of the Harbour  
Commission, Man Largely Responsible for Making Vision of Past Come True”

The article not only flattered Sunnyside itself, with its combination of the “bizarre colourings of Ostend [and] the dreamy expanse of a Florida Beach”, but also praised its setting within Parkdale: “The approach from the lake as the yacht bearing the Harbour Commissioners’ party rounded the contours of the shore from Dowling Avenue was one of novelty and delight... appropriately set against a background of beautiful homes, luxuriant verdure, and exquisite landscape”. The newspaper’s linkage of Sunnyside and Parkdale as partners in prosperity was shared by the middle-class residents of the neighbourhood:

“Following the toast to the king the proceedings were interrupted by a delegation from

the Parkdale Business Men's Association. Speaking on behalf of that organization, Mr. Parker stated that he had been delegated to present a handsome basket of roses to one whom he might select as being a good friend of the district. That one being nominated as E.L. Cousins".<sup>82</sup>

The district did still seem to be a good place to buy commercial and residential property. The early 1920s were a time when there were not many property transactions in Parkdale, but those that occurred suggested healthy increases in property values. In my sample, one of the few Queen Street properties to shift ownership several times in the early twentieth century, 1416 Queen St. W., was sold for \$3,900 in 1893, \$3,500 eight years later in 1901, and \$3,300 in 1904. After renovations, the property sold for \$4,400 in 1905, \$6,450 in 1912, and an impressive \$9,500 in 1927. Three doors over, 1422 Queen was sold for \$8,250 in 1918 and \$9,000 less than two years later.<sup>83</sup> On Galley Avenue, one semi-detached house initially sold for \$3,800 in 1910 was resold in 1923 for \$7,500, while the adjacent house increased in value from an initial price of \$3,500 to \$6,500 in 1921. A villa on Dowling Avenue, sold in 1905 for \$8,000, was resold to be torn down for an apartment building in 1922 for double that price. A modest row house next to industries on Noble Street initially sold in 1890 for \$1,050, then increased in value to \$3,200 in 1924 (albeit with a vendor mortgage for all but \$500).<sup>84</sup>

World War One had accelerated a trend already noticeable in Parkdale, the neighbourhood's attraction for single women and widows. As both Michael Piva and Carolyn Strange have pointed out in the Toronto context, inadequate 'family wages' for male working class household heads resulted in many wives and daughters working. Even for middle class young women, a period as a wage earner was a virtual inevitability by the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century.<sup>85</sup> The industries surrounding Parkdale hired mostly women during World War One, and after the war, continued to hire women (the Gutta Percha Rubber Company created a training film for its women workers with the encouraging title “Her Own Fault” in 1922<sup>86</sup>). By 1921, Parkdale had a higher proportion of widows, spinsters and others listed as ‘unwaged’ than the rest of Toronto, comprising 13% of household heads, as opposed to 10% in the rest of Toronto. Ten years later, the gap had increased. Now 19% of the household heads in Parkdale were listed as ‘unwaged’, as opposed to the Toronto average of 15%.<sup>87</sup> Single women tended to cluster in boarding houses run by other women, as well as sharing apartment flats. For instance, by 1931, women were household heads in half of the triplex units of 89-95 Dowling Avenue.<sup>88</sup> Newspaper coverage of the 1924 murder of Martha Crooks, a widow running a rooming house on Jameson Avenue, indicates that the building housed mainly female roomers, including teachers at the high school across the street, except for one room reserved for a man. Unfortunately, a potential male tenant being interviewed to ‘protect’ the rest of the household turned out to be criminally insane.<sup>89</sup>

One recent writer traces the origins of Queen Street West’s eventual decline as a fashionable shopping area to the development of Lakeshore Boulevard in the 1920s.<sup>90</sup> It is true that with the opening of Sunnyside and Lakeshore Boulevard, Queen Street ceased to be the western ‘triumphal entranceway’ to Toronto. It is also true that Sunnyside attracted hordes of people in the summer to the western end of Parkdale, which actually increased commercial traffic along Queen and Roncesvalles. The old ‘South Parkdale’ rail station had been moved to the Queen-King-Roncesvalles corner in 1912, and within the decade, there were four movie houses within six blocks of the intersection.<sup>91</sup> The Parkdale Curling Club at Queen and Cowan, built in



1898 by the local architect who also designed the central block of Canada's Parliament Building, was converted to the country's first indoor roller rink in 1906. By 1915, it was known as the Pavlowa Dance Hall, and was famous for the soft drink served there, known as 'Honey Dew'.<sup>92</sup> The suburb called "pleasantly old-fashioned" in 1912 was re-inventing itself as the "amusement centre of the city".<sup>93</sup>

The 1910s and 1920s saw an increasing sense of difference between the older houses of South Parkdale and the newer and smaller houses northwest of Queen Street. In 1912, the local alderman complained about "fortunes [being made] in Parkdale bars"; the money coming "not from the people who lived in the good houses of South Parkdale... [but] from the men with their dinner pails, passing by on their way to or from work".<sup>94</sup> However, a *Star Weekly* series that ran from 1916 to 1918 on the 'character' of Toronto's public schools and their surrounding districts, suggests that the locus of affluence and family formation had shifted from South Parkdale to the northwest. Parkdale School on Landsdowne, which served the northeastern corner of the neighbourhood along the rail tracks, was described as serving a "substantial industrial class, with only a very small foreign contingent". Its specialties were manual training and domestic science, well suited to the "industrious" students who worked on farms during the summer, sold and delivered newspapers after school, or worked in Queen Street stores on weekends.<sup>95</sup> Queen Victoria School, which served South Parkdale from a site on the corner of Close and King, boasted a "uniformly high class" of residents, with "neither extreme wealth nor extreme poverty". But the building itself was now "undergoing gradual and inevitable deterioration", due to its age (it would have been 30 years old in 1917). "A few years ago", the article continued, "it was suggested that the big Parkdale school might be placed in the list of decadent institutions on

the theory that the growth of Parkdale as a residential section had ended and that its houses would be occupied for the most part by older people, whose children had grown up, married, and were raising families in other parts of the city”; but a new life had been granted by the development of duplexes and apartment buildings, where according to the article, a new generation of children would presumably be found.<sup>96</sup> In this assumption, the article was wrong. Assessment records from 1913, 1921, and 1931 indicate that the occupants of flats and apartments were mostly single people or older ‘empty nesters’. Meanwhile, the “original report” on Fern School, at the northwest edge of Parkdale, was “that the district bore none too good a reputation, but that day is long gone”. Now it was “probably one of the best all-round school districts in the city”, particularly west of Roncesvalles, where new houses were springing up rapidly. East of Roncesvalles, “the population is composed of a solid class of people who make their living for the most part in offices and warehouses”.<sup>97</sup>

Unfortunately, due to ward boundaries, the assessment samples for the 1901-1951 period cut off eight blocks of northwest Parkdale, consisting mostly of houses constructed in the 1906-1913 period. Although it could be argued that there was a general decline in the ‘class’ of residents during this period, the decline was not straightforward or consistent [see Figure 10]. The extremely high proportion of self-employed people (mostly small local businessmen and salesmen) in Parkdale, 37% in 1901, decreased to 14% by 1921, but did not go below the Toronto average, which was between 10-12% during this period. The proportion of Parkdale’s household heads who were managerial or professional increased to 25% in 1921, well above the Toronto average of 15-17%. Even in 1941, by which time the proportion of managers and professionals had fallen to 11%, there were still a substantial number of middle class residents.

The proportion of skilled workers as household heads declined from the City average of 28% in 1913 to 15% in 1931. Then it increased again to 29%, as compared to the City average of one in four, during World War Two. The proportion of clerical workers tended to match the City average of 6-9%, with the exception of a relatively large 11% of Parkdale household heads in 1931. It is only in that infuriatingly vague category of 'unwaged', with women heads of household merely identified by their marital status as opposed to employment, where Parkdale consistently has a higher proportion than the City average. Across Toronto, the proportion of these 'unwaged' household heads increased from 10% in 1921 to 22% in 1951. In Parkdale during the same period, the proportion doubled from 13% to 26%.

Assessment records depict a pattern of housing filtering downward over time, from professionals and managers to clerks and salespeople in the bigger houses of South Parkdale, from skilled workers to female heads of households in the growing number of flats and apartments. On Dowling Avenue, for instance, a house owned by a barrister in 1913 is rented by his son to a car cleaner in 1931. By 1951, it was owned by an absentee landlord and had been subdivided into four flats, lived in by a clerk, a salesman, a stationary engineer and a postal clerk. James Beaty's villa, occupied by his widow in 1913, had been subdivided into three flats, rented to a civil engineer, a designer, and a widow by 1931. In 1951, the three flats were rented to another widow, a barber, and a booker. On Empress Crescent, south of the tracks, one house rented by a clerk in 1913 was owned by a caretaker in 1931, and another house rented by a clerk in 1913 was owned by a compositor in 1931. None of the houses on Empress changed ownership after 1914, due to the fact that houses were under expropriation orders. There was also considerable stability in the houses on Galley, Gwynne and Noble, with fewer than half the

houses changing hands in the two decades, and the social composition remained virtually unchanged (mixed on Galley, predominantly working class on Gwynne and Noble). Subdivision of houses increased slightly on Galley, and Queen Street business owners seemed slightly more likely to rent apartments over their shops, rather than live in them. The population of assessment area 6.1 increased from a little over 15,000 in 1913 to almost 19,000 in 1931, and over 21,000 in 1951, with most of the increase being accounted for by apartment construction and conversion of single family houses to multiple units [Figure 23].<sup>98</sup>

Robert Libby, who continued to live in his family home on Callendar after he married, was one resident who benefited from Parkdale's growth and intensification in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He left the CPR rail yard at King and Dufferin in 1905, because he could get better wages working for J.J. Walsh, one of Parkdale's local developers, as a 'jobbing carpenter'. During World War One, he found work in a munitions factory, and saved up enough to buy a second hand piano for his six children.<sup>99</sup> Young people seemed to have little difficulty obtaining work. Albert Crosswell, whose father owned a grocery store on the corner of Rideau and Macdonell, was one of the industrious students mentioned in the Parkdale Public School article. He made deliveries to boarding houses on King, Dufferin, and Gwynne at lunch and after school during World War One. On Saturdays, he would go sledding at High Park in the winter, and as he grew older, enjoyed dancing at the Pavlowa and the Top Hat at Sunnyside.<sup>100</sup> Aubrey Bone, whose father worked for Russell Motorcars, delivered newspapers mornings and Saturdays. Ruth Ellis, whose father was a grocer, found a job that paid \$5 a week in a confectionary shop after she left school in the mid-1920s. Ethel Abel, daughter of a prison tailor, left a job at a bookstore that paid \$7 a week during the same period because they weren't paying her enough.<sup>101</sup>

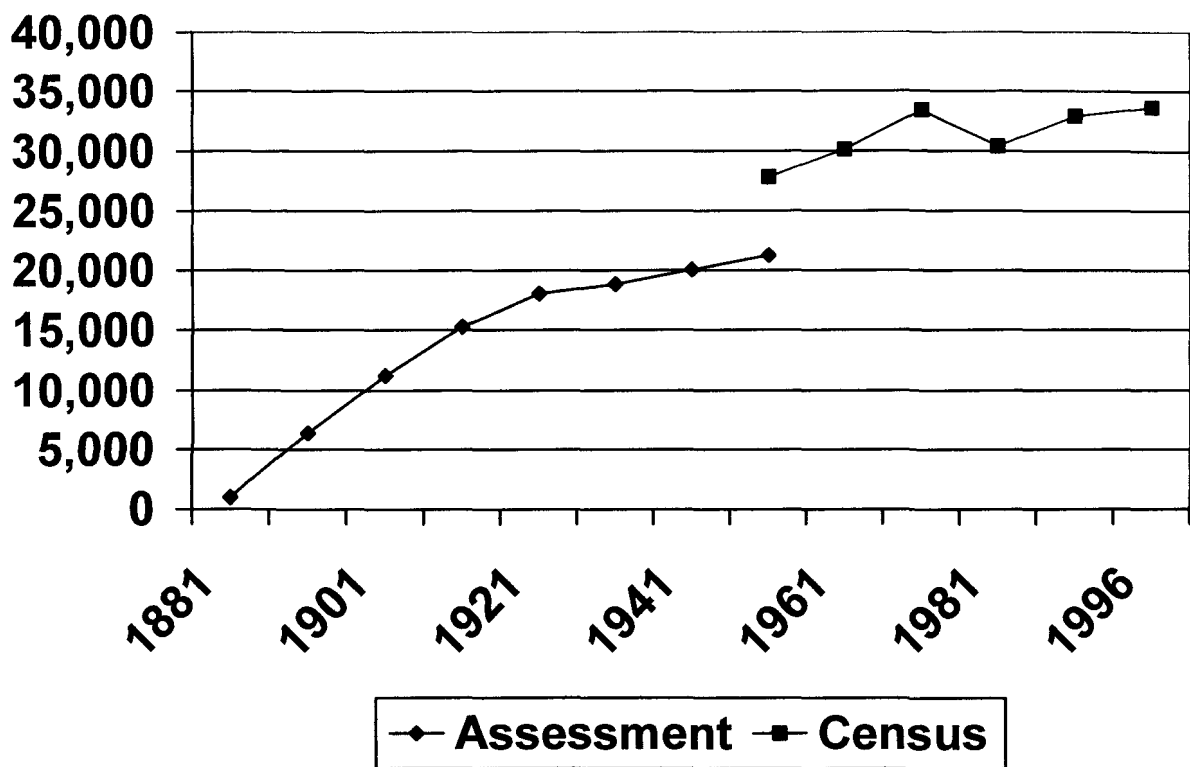


Figure 23. Population of Parkdale 1991-1996

Note: Assessment Area 6.1, used for 1901 to 1951 population figures, covers a smaller area than the boundaries of the Parkdale study district used for 1951-1996 figures.

Sources: Assessment Rolls, Census of Canada.

Although Parkdale was still overwhelmingly British in origin, there were some signs of emergent ethnic diversity. By the end of the 1920s, the Queen Street sample block had a substantial number of resident shop owners of Jewish and Italian origin: Vincenzo Leo and Frank Delisi, fruiterers at 1406 and 1422 respectively, Samuel Weisberg the tobacconist at 1414, Ida Geller and Gershon Ginsberg with ladies' wear stores at 1424 and 1432.<sup>102</sup> There were also rumours that 'foreign' workers were getting jobs at some of the larger Parkdale factories, such as the Gutta Percha Rubber Company.<sup>103</sup>

Rapid social change would seem to have made Parkdale a fertile ground for prejudice during the brief life of the Ku Klux Klan of Canada. The original Ku Klux Klan had been a short-lived southern U.S. movement during the late 1860s. But by the early 1920s, the notion of vigilante Protestant white people restoring 'order' and 'purity' enjoyed a resurgence in American cities of the north. The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s was as much about greed as it was about racial and religious hatred. Ten dollar membership checks enriched the coffers of local organizers.<sup>104</sup> According to a contemporary account, a Torontonians named Richard Cowan saw the "marvellous accession of wealth by the promoters" of the American Klan, and decided to bring the movement home. In December of 1924, Cowan signed an agreement in New York City with J.H. Hawkins, a seasoned Klan organizer who had been the Baltimore 'Grand Dragon', and Lewis Fowler, a Baptist minister from Virginia. The contract focussed on profit-sharing details rather than any philosophical content.<sup>105</sup> The three men returned to Toronto, where by early 1925, prominent members of the Orange Lodge were being telephoned about joining another "good Protestant organization".<sup>106</sup> The *Toronto Star*, whose coverage was extensive and usually strongly supportive (a February story headlined "Klan Issues Warning to Protect Children"

uncritically repeated claims that “white children” were being lured into cars by “foreigners”<sup>107</sup>), reported that the organization was applying for registration in February, with a \$50,000 loan from the American Klan, and further alleged that 1,000 members had been already been initiated.<sup>108</sup> The principles of the Canadian Klan were said to be “to advance and protect the interests of white, Gentile, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon citizens of this Dominion by waging war against Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Negroes, the use of the French language in Canada, separate schools, and the immigration of foreigners”.<sup>109</sup> Throughout the spring and early summer, there were reports of crosses being burned in smaller Ontario towns, while secret meetings were supposedly being held in Toronto. Toronto membership was said to approach 2,000 by July.<sup>110</sup>

On Friday, August 7, 1925, the first public demonstration by Klan members in Toronto took place, starting at Queen and Landsdowne in the heart of Parkdale. At 11 p.m., over a dozen sedan cars, each packed with six people dressed in Klan regalia, left Parkdale Assembly Hall. The occupants of the cars included both men and women. They had removed their hoods, and the glow of the dome lights on their faces added to the “strange sight” as the sedans drove slowly eastward along Queen Street. At Spadina Avenue, the centre for the Jewish garment trade, the “parade” turned northwards, then east along Bloor. The sight unnerved many who were out that night, but the police claimed it was a “youth stunt” or a “masquerade”. The Klan spokesman, Hawkins, said it was merely a “dress rehearsal” for larger demonstrations.<sup>111</sup> Two days later, a public meeting at the same location, Parkdale Assembly Hall, drew 160 people. The meeting was held to coincide with a march on Washington that was said to have drawn 40,000 U.S. Klan members. According to the *Star*, whose headline was “Bolshevik Menace Threatens Canada”, there were six white robed, hooded figures on the dais, along with a “traditional fiery cross in

background, an open bible lying upon a cushion with the Union Jack sewn upon the top of it, two great Union Jacks backstage, and another fluttering in the breeze created by an electric fan on the front left of the platform". Speakers' remarks focussed on the threat from eastern European states, who were importing communism and threatening "our womanhood". Canada was in danger of losing its "Anglo-Saxon element". Although many of the crowd were said to be plainclothes policemen, the *Star* also noted that dozens of people signed membership cards before leaving.<sup>112</sup>

The meeting would seem to have been the high water mark for the Toronto Klan, just as the March on Washington was the high point for the American Klan of the 1920s. By October 1925, Hawkins was embroiled in a lawsuit with his former partners over unpaid salary, and by 1926, had moved on to much more fertile ground in Saskatchewan, where the Klan went on to influence the course of the 1928 provincial election.<sup>113</sup> A rash of criminal incidents in rural Ontario, including arson at Catholic churches and extortion associated with Klan members, further tarnished the image of a kinder, gentler Canadian Klan. By March 1926, a turn-out of a dozen members at City Hall, where a wreath was laid on the cenotaph, was labelled "weird rather than impressive" by their erstwhile supporters at the *Star*.<sup>114</sup>

The short life of the Toronto Klan mirrors the experience of many northern U.S. cities, where, according to Kenneth Jackson, the Klan drew its strength from middle-class and skilled blue-collar workers were concerned about rapid urban social change. The residence and profession of Toronto Klan members is hard to know, given the short, secret life of the organization and absence of records. Cowan, for example, is called an "optometrist" in one report, but neither he nor Hawkins show up in directories of the period. The Canadian



Communist newspaper, *The Worker*, claimed the Klan was the refuge of lawyers and “real estate sharks”.<sup>115</sup> The staging of the two demonstrations at Parkdale Assembly Hall could have simply been a function of a sympathetic or lackadaisical hall manager. Nevertheless, Parkdale’s demographics do match those of Chicago and Detroit neighbourhoods where the Klan was strongest. In all of these neighbourhoods, there was a high proportion of people in business, sales, clerical and industry foremen employment, and the threat of rapid neighbourhood transition.<sup>116</sup>

The Klan flare-up suggests a difficult transition for newcomers to Canada who settled in Parkdale. The earlier opposition to a possible asylum by the lakeside points to a hardening of attitudes towards those Parkdale residents we know so little about, the institutionalized. In 1911, as part of the move towards modern and efficient governance, the City of Toronto created a Charities Commission to examine private charities to which the city gave funds. The Monastery of Our Lady of Charity, as the Magdalen Asylum on West Lodge was now called, housed 134 “delinquent females and feeble minded girls and women” who were there to be “reformed, or as explained by the sisters in charge, converted and protected”. There was also an industrial school for 29 girls aged 12 to 18, who were admitted on three year ‘terms’ by parents, friends, police, or sometimes inspectors of prisons. There, the girls learned sewing, cooking, and housework. The Charities Commission approved of the \$500 annual grant by the City, noting that “the inmates appear to be a contented, happy, lot... [the premises] clean and bright, with rooms well ventilated”.<sup>117</sup> The Commission was less impressed by the Toronto Hospital for Incurables on Dunn Avenue, which housed 166 mostly elderly inmates, many of them senile. They noted that the 40 year old building needed repairs, and when built, was expected to house 250 occupants.

The hospital needed to find some way to increase revenues from their patients, or crowd more in, since the \$11,760 annual grant was too much for the City to continue to provide.<sup>118</sup>

The Central Prison had been replaced by industries in the late 1910s, although the Mercer Reformatory for Women remained until 1968.<sup>119</sup> The Queen Street Asylum was expected to follow in the prison's footsteps. In 1888, when a branch of the Provincial Asylum opened in suburban New Toronto, the City complained that the presence of the central city asylum was hindering commercial and industrial growth in the area. The Province replied that the Asylum would eventually be removed, and in the meantime would only "give shelter to those afflicted who are more docile and perhaps to women patients alone".<sup>120</sup> In 1912, when another branch at Whitby opened, again the province promised to close the central asylum down, since it was now surrounded by noise and polluting industry instead of the rustic farm environs of the Howard's initial vision.<sup>121</sup> In 1929, the property was sold to the Grand Trunk Railway, and 500 patients were shipped to Whitby, but 700 patients remained in the overcrowded Ontario Hospital for the Insane, as the premises had been renamed. Few patients left the asylum. A 1931 newspaper article bragged of the "fine results in this tragic hospital", where 20% of those who entered would eventually be judged "cured" and "let out on probation".<sup>122</sup>

James Lemon uses the publication of the Bruce Report to denote a turning point when "Cabbagetown [the 'slum' soon to be redeveloped as public housing] was moving up to South Rosedale, to the Annex and out to South Parkdale".<sup>123</sup> While all parts of Toronto saw massive conversion of single family houses into flats during the Depression and World War Two, including wealthy central city areas such as Rosedale, no part of Toronto changed as rapidly and as completely as Parkdale. Six percent of single-family dwellings, mostly larger villas in South

Parkdale, had been converted to two or three unit flats in 1931, slightly below the Toronto average of 8%. Ten years later, 62% of single-family dwellings had multiple household occupancy, almost twice the Toronto rate of 34%, although the vast majority of these new flats consisted of two or three units being carved out of a single family house. As a function of the increase in tenants, along with an increase in absentee landlords, Parkdale's homeownership rate plummeted, from 51% in 1931 to 14% in 1941, considerably below the Toronto average of 33% [see Figure 18]. Most of the new tenants were single people, which accounts for Parkdale's population only increasing by a little over a thousand people in those ten years, to 20,061. In comparison, Rosedale's homeownership rate slipped by a little over a third between 1931 and 1941, from 64% to 42%, and the number of subdivided houses increased from 23% to 38%, with the majority of new units accessory apartments. The Annex's homeownership rate decreased from 56% to 36% during the same period, while the number of subdivided houses went from 2% to 6%. Most of the subdivisions in the Annex created rooming houses, while other residential properties were being converted to offices and university-related institutional uses.<sup>124</sup> Still, Parkdale was unlike these other neighbourhoods, where subdivision could be rationalized as a temporary response to a housing and income crisis. By now, Parkdale, with its units over stores on Queen, King, and Roncesvalles, residential hotels, apartment buildings large and small, rooming and boarding houses, villas converted into flats, and accessory apartments, was undisputedly a community of landlords and tenants in a 'City of Homes'.

Richard Harris and Richard Dennis, who have written most extensively on rental options in Toronto during the first half of the twentieth century, agree that there was considerable social diversity amongst landlords and tenants, at least until the 1920s.<sup>125</sup> Widows ran rooming or

boarding houses as a respectable form of providing income. Blue and white collar home buyers took on lodgers as a way to help pay mortgages, which typically had a five year term, with quarterly interest instalments, and the principal payable at the end of the term. A higher rate of lodging in Canadian cities was correlated to higher levels of homeownership than was the case in American cities. Lodging also became attractive to both landlords and tenants during recessions and housing supply crises, when young singles and couples would also return to the family home, or two unrelated households would share in rent or mortgage costs (known as ‘doubling up’). Thus *Might’s Directory* indicates that 35% of Toronto households had lodgers in 1890, but the rate was halved to 17% in 1897. The housing crisis of 1913 saw lodging rates of 37%, then a decline to 20% in 1925. By 1931, the lodging rate was back up to one in three, topped out during the housing crisis of World War Two, then rapidly declined in the post-war suburban boom. Harris calls this phenomenon “the flexible house”, and points out that the typical 1880-1913 Toronto house form, a narrow semi-detached house with two or three storeys and basement, was ideally suited for subdivision into two or three relatively separate units, although they were not purpose-built for multiple occupancy, as was the case in Boston and other northeastern US cities.<sup>126</sup>

Autobiographical material, which is admittedly fragmentary and possibly atypical, suggests that Parkdale housing continued to provide flexible alternatives for clerical and industrial workers, both owners and tenants, throughout the 1930s depression and into the Second World War. For instance, Joseph Brunelle, born in rural Quebec in 1892, migrated to Toronto when he was in his late teens. In 1915, he married Mary Ann Flood, the daughter of a fellow railway worker. Three years later, they purchased 84 Wright Avenue, a three bedroom rowhouse

in North Parkdale. Over the new few years, Joseph installed a new roof, an indoor toilet, and electricity, with the help of friends and family. A chicken coop and vegetable garden helped supplement Joseph's wages as a brakesman for the CPR. The Brunelles also rented out their second floor for \$25 a month. By the mid-1920s, the ground floor was rented out as well, as the Brunelles followed employment around Toronto. Joseph lists his jobs as book-keeper with R.A. Lister, pot salesman, and during the first years of the Great Depression, service station attendant. Finally, in 1931, he was offered a job as the "French correspondent" for Massey Harris. The family, which included 14 children by then, moved back to 84 Wright. Joseph details the small economies by which the family survived the depression. He bought six dozen cracked or fertilized eggs three times a week from a co-worker at Massey Harris who lived on a farm; he walked the three miles to and from work each day; Mary Ann performed sewing wonders in preserving clothes from child to child. Joseph took pride in the fact that his wife never turned anyone away who knocked on their door and asked for food. The Brunelles lived at 84 Wright until 1965.<sup>127</sup>

In 1930, Magdalena and Wilfred Eggleston, both making precarious wages as freelance writers, moved into a flat on 143 Dunn. They soon met and became friends with another struggling newlywed couple with literary aspirations, who rented the flat upstairs from them. Even though Raymond Knister had published his first novel to critical acclaim, his wife Myrtle needed to supplement the family income by working at a nearby textile factory. Wilfred later remembered: "I have some dim recollections of bill collectors handing around and a brush with the bailiff when they were living above us."<sup>128</sup> Alan Skeotch's father was born in Fergus, a small farming community in Western Ontario. He moved to a farm in Saskatchewan in the 1920s, then

when farm prices fell, decided to seek his fortune in Toronto one winter in the early 1930s. His boots were stolen off his feet as he slept during the three day train journey eastward. When the conductor announced Parkdale Station, he ran barefoot through the snow to the nearest hotel that offered cheap rooms. He was next door to a bootlegger and across the hall from a prostitute, but it was a place to start looking for work.<sup>129</sup>

The depression slashed Sunnyside's revenues, but people still flocked to the free attractions throughout the 1930s and into the war years. It became known as the "unemployed man's Riviera". The Toronto Transit Commission offered free summertime bathing service to any child holding a towel, and as many as 20 streetcars along seven routes were packed on weekends.<sup>130</sup> The Pavilion Restaurant at Sunnyside, one of the city's poshest restaurants during the 1920s, became the Club Top Hat in 1939, which was reputed to be much less elegant.<sup>131</sup> Parkdale, along with Sunnyside, had made the journey from splendour to shabbiness, in a mere two decades.

#### "The Natural Habitat of the Poor and Unfortunate": Image and Social Conditions 1941-1966

World War Two precipitated a housing crisis in Toronto much more acute than problems experienced during the First World War. Workers, many of them female, flocked from the countryside to work in industries adjacent to Parkdale. For instance, the Inglis Company just east of Parkdale hired over a thousand women to produce Bren guns, and opened the 'John Inglis Recreation Club' in the old Parkdale roller skating rink to retain the possibly lonely and homesick new recruits. Open 8 a.m. to 11.30 p.m. on weekdays and weekends, the club offered

dance lessons, friendship clubs, a snack bar, a library, and “safe, wholesome pastimes” such as beauty exercises and handicrafts lessons. The most popular feature seemed to be the showers, and women preferred to spend their time in more exciting pursuits, such as outings to Sunnyside’s Palais Royale Dance Hall.<sup>132</sup>

By mid-war, the growing housing crisis in Toronto precipitated a flurry of planning documents. Two municipal reports on housing conditions as well as Toronto’s first comprehensive zoning plan and first master plan all appeared in 1942-43. The reports were compiled by many of the same housing reformers who had worked on the Bruce Report. An attempt to raise \$2,000,000 in city bonds for public housing had foundered in 1937, when the Bureau of Municipal Research charged that dwellings marked for “slum clearance” were hardly “slum properties”, and that enforcement of the Housing By-Law was forcing renovation of 1,700 dwellings at the owners’ cost, as opposed to only 600 new dwellings proposed in the plebiscite.<sup>133</sup> Renovating multiple family dwellings might be less expensive than building new housing. Undeterred, the 1942 report on housing conditions again conflated “overcrowding” with multiple occupancy. There were now far more “family units” than “dwelling units”, and that was a problem in and of itself. Despite recommending a temporary relaxation of by-laws to permit roomers (as did the similar report in the World War One), it emphasized the importance of a post-war housing construction program for new suburbs and rebuilt central city ‘slums’. It estimated that 30,000 dwelling units in the central city would have to be eventually removed because of their decrepitude. They were damp and leaky, lacked central heating, or were verminous. Solutions short of demolition, such as further enforcement of the Housing By-Law or loans to owners to fix up their properties, were not considered.<sup>134</sup> A 1930s home renovation

program by the National Employment Commission had resulted in the evaluation by housing reformers that the program had merely produced “rumpus rooms for the bourgeoisie”.<sup>135</sup> Many older neighbourhoods, with their ‘promiscuous’ mix of land uses, noise, car traffic, and other hazards, were simply judged to be beyond rehabilitation. By 1944, all of Parkdale was described as “declining”, since subdivided housing was an “inevitable sign of decline”.<sup>136</sup>

The end of the World War Two housing crisis did not bring about a de-conversion of Parkdale’s dwellings. Indeed, by 1951, seven in ten of Parkdale’s former single family dwellings were converted to multiple units, and area’s population continued to rise. The population of assessment area 6.1 increased from a little under 19,000 in 1931 to 20,000 in 1941 and over 21,000 in 1951, while the census counted almost 28,000 inhabitants within the slightly larger historic boundaries of Parkdale by 1951 [see Figure 23].<sup>137</sup> Although density was increasing, the neighbourhood could no longer be considered declining, at least in terms of actual housing and social conditions. Home ownership began to increase again in Parkdale. The neighbourhood’s class composition in 1951 resembled that of the rest of the City of Toronto, whose boundaries encompassed the affluent ‘suburbs’ of Rosedale and North Toronto as well as lower income neighbourhoods. The median household head income was slightly lower than the CMA average in 1951, \$2,457 versus \$2,653, and the proportion of people earning less than \$1,000 was higher in Parkdale than in the Toronto region, but the population could hardly be characterized as low-income. Fewer than 2% of Parkdale dwelling units were deficient in the base level housing conditions of running water and furnace heating, as opposed to the average of 7% across the CMA. Fifteen percent of Parkdale households did not have exclusive use of a flush toilet, a slightly higher proportion of households than the CMA average of 13%, but unsurprising in an



area with so many subdivided houses. After a local economic downturn immediately after the war's end, probably due to war industry lay-offs,<sup>138</sup> land registry records show large price increases, especially in the northwest corner of Parkdale, where a new Polish credit union provided mortgage funding for the neighbourhood's first substantial community of non-British residents.<sup>139</sup>

For instance, a two-unit property on Galley with an absentee landlord, which had sold for \$7,500 in 1923, had declined in value by 1949 to the point that it was sold for \$2,700 with no cash down. Eight years later, it was sold to a purchaser with a Polish surname for \$7,200 (again with no cash down, but with a mortgage provided by an institutional lender). The next year, 1958, it was sold to another purchaser with a Polish name for \$9,000, who transferred the mortgage to St. Stanislaus' Credit Union, and by 1964, it had sold to a third Polish purchaser for \$16,500. A few doors down, a house that had sold in 1938 for \$2,900 found a \$4,300 sale price in 1948 and a \$9,000 price, with a Polish purchaser who obtained a mortgage from St. Stanislaus, by 1961. By 1970, St. Stanislaus had held mortgages on half of the houses in the Galley sample block.<sup>140</sup>

Even in South Parkdale, where institutional lenders were rare until the 1970s [Figure 24], house prices were beginning to exceed the average for Toronto and its suburbs. By 1961, the median house price (not including apartment buildings) was \$19,076 in Parkdale versus \$17,301 in the census metropolitan region. A house on Dowling Avenue that had sold for \$15,500 at the height of the market in 1927, sold for \$13,000 in 1946, but soon increased in value to \$36,000 by 1957. A house on Gwynne that had been repossessed by the agents of a private lender was sold under power of sale for \$1,200 in 1940. By 1952, it had been purchased (by someone with an

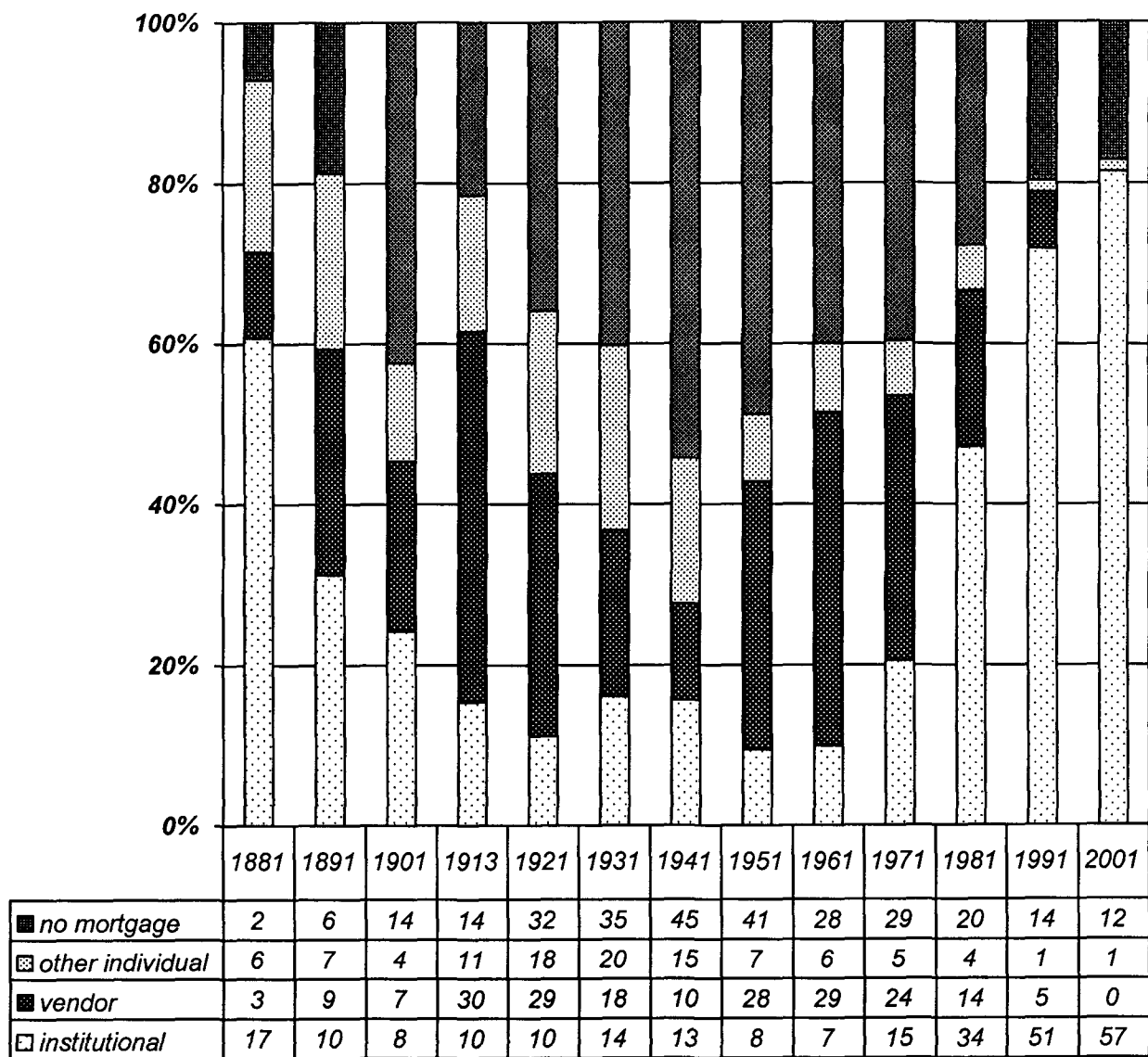


Figure 24. Mortgage Type in Parkdale 1881-2001.

Source: Land Registry records sample.

Eastern European surname) for \$2,350 with a full vendor mortgage. Another house sold for \$6,000 in 1953 and \$9,500 in 1956; and a third house on the street sold for \$2,200 in 1943 and \$8,500 in 1965 and \$11,500 in 1969, all with full vendor mortgages. Even into the 1970s, a third to one half of sales in west Toronto (including Parkdale) involved vendor mortgages.<sup>141</sup> To Robert Murdie, who has written on residential mortgage lending in Toronto during the post-World War Two period, this does not indicate classic American 'red-lining' by institutional lenders. Instead, there was a long history for this practice in Toronto (as has already been seen in Parkdale), prolonged and exacerbated by a mutual distrust between postwar immigrants and most trust companies. Furthermore, unlike American cities, banks were not permitted to provide mortgages until 1958, and even after legislation changed, were slow to enter the central city market. I would argue that contrary to Murdie's hypothesis, there was de facto redlining for some institutional lenders to individual homebuyers in central Toronto, including Parkdale, from the late 1940s into the 1970s. There may not have been maps and formulas, as there were in the U.S., but federal government policy did guarantee loans for 'limited dividend' new apartment developers and suburban new homebuyers, while doing next to nothing for central city renovators.<sup>142</sup> In Parkdale at least, most institutional lenders ignored the needs of central city homebuyers, until the strength of the central city home ownership trend became impossible to ignore.

While house prices were increasing in Parkdale by the 1950s, and there was growing homeownership, there had not been significant changes in class composition. The Polish immigrant homeowners on Galley were factory workers, labourers, and contractors, much like the tenants of British origin they had displaced. The Dowling Avenue apartment buildings,

including two new buildings dating from the late 1950s, still had salespeople, bookkeepers, and accountants, with a high proportion of women-led households.

In the meantime, the idea of metropolitan government had risen in the Toronto region, bringing with it recycled grand plans. While the limits of the City of Toronto had remained essentially unchanged since annexations ended in 1912, the edge of development had by now gone far beyond this boundary. Most of the 17 outlying municipalities had gone bankrupt during the 1930s. In 1942, the City of Toronto established a commission with the mandate to prepare a master plan for the entire region, including a green-belt system, metropolitan-wide zoning, a transportation plan that would include both expressways and rapid transit, and public housing.<sup>143</sup> The 1943 Master Plan championed a combination of massive rebuilding in the central city, with a network of highways that would allow further decentralization of housing and industry. In the central city, “residential areas, generally, south of College Street have reached a point where age, obsolescence and actual physical dilapidation indicate that at no very distant date widespread demolition will become most desirable if not essential”. These residential areas should be replaced by massive public housing undertakings, since “haphazard rebuilding by private enterprise... [will] never be a factor in arresting the processes of central decentralization”.<sup>144</sup>

The first step in revitalization would be adoption of a city-wide zoning by-law, which was intended to replace the patchwork of restrictive bylaws regarding land-uses. As we have seen in the example of apartment buildings, these restrictive bylaws had often been honoured in the breach. While large American cities had been developing comprehensive zoning plans since the early part of the century, Canada had been much slower in realizing the permissive as well as the restrictive powers inherent in zoning. As a result, most of central Toronto got “overzoned” in

1943, with the result that property values shot up in some central districts, although there was no immediate impact in Parkdale.<sup>145</sup> In Parkdale, for instance, conversion to group housing and multiple dwelling houses were now permitted in every lot north of Queen Street (R3 zoning), with apartment house buildings now permitted on most lots south of Queen Street (R4 zoning), subject to a public meeting and planning approval. On the one hand, the new zoning was a welcome recognition, after thirty years of moral opprobrium, that many larger houses had become “obsolete, unsuitable, and unmarketable for single family use”.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, the combination of open zoning in the central city and extremely restrictive zoning (R1 or single family use only) in most of North Toronto set the stage for a hierarchy of ‘good’ neighbourhoods to be preserved, and ‘bad’ neighbourhoods to be destroyed. A *Globe and Mail* article from 1948 makes this distinction explicit:

“Regardless of the conflicting estimates of need, provision of land within the city boundaries remains a primary consideration in solving the problems of those who must live close to their places of work. It is to this end that the Toronto City Planning Board has classified some areas as being slums and others as being ‘blighted’. The board feels that extensive re-development, following the general pattern of the Regent Park project, would provide room for new homes and thus more economic use of available land”.<sup>147</sup>

Parkdale continued to be classified as a neighbourhood in need of major renewal, along with most of central Toronto, in master plans and urban renewal strategies of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Plans to tear down housing continued even as surveys of housing conditions continued to show the stock in Parkdale was “fair to good”.<sup>148</sup> However, a shift can be identified in city planning reports from the mid-1950s. Some parts of central Toronto were successfully

resisting urban renewal. For instance, from 1952 onwards, the West Annex and East Annex Neighbourhood Associations sponsored a campaign that proclaimed “It’s smart to live in the Annex”. Along with advertising the neighbourhood to stores and home buyers, the Associations, led by women homeowners and tenants, sponsored clean-up and beautification campaigns, and pushed local planners towards a 1958 neighbourhood plan with zoning (R2) that would preserve the neighbourhood’s “distinct single family flavour”.<sup>149</sup> Rosedale successfully fought for a change in zoning (R1A) that would allow no new rooming houses.<sup>150</sup> Towards the end of the 1950s, the City of Toronto and the metropolitan government began what would become a 40 year planning debate, with Metro Toronto stressing transportation improvements (especially expressways) in its master plan of 1959, while the City of Toronto put its emphasis on attracting the middle class to central neighbourhoods in a parallel master plan. In fact, by 1957, the City had quietly changed most central residential neighbourhoods’ zoning from R3 and R4 to R2 and R1. The exceptions were St. James Town and South Parkdale, where apartment construction companies, particularly Meridian and Belmont, had assembled large holdings by the mid-1950s.<sup>151</sup> The president of Belmont Realty dated his interest in Jameson Avenue to 1951, when he noticed the wide street and large lots while driving to a wedding west of Toronto. He bragged that his company almost single-handedly increased the assessment value on the street from \$1,500,000 in 1954 to almost \$7,000,000 by 1959.<sup>152</sup>

The increase in assessment values points to one reason why the City would support apartment buildings in Parkdale. Government encouragement to institutional lenders demonstrates another reason for massive housing change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While owners of single family houses found it difficult to find institutional lenders in the post-

World War Two period, the federal government guaranteed and part subsidized low-interest loans for almost all of Parkdale's new apartments through the Federal Limited Dividend program, intended to stimulate apartment construction intended for low and moderate income tenants.<sup>153</sup>

To give the example of one highrise apartment redevelopment, two detached houses on Dowling were constructed by William Murray in 1898. One of the houses was sold to a widow, Barbara Cromer, for \$4,400 cash, who in turn sold it to another widow, Bessie Evans, for \$7,000 cash in 1910. Her family lived there until 1955. The other house was rented to William Dockrill, who worked for the CPR, for ten years, at which point he bought the house for \$5,000. In 1931, Phoebe, his widow, obtained a mortgage from Capital Trust Company for \$4,800, and began to rent it out. The trust company foreclosed in 1941, and two years later, sold the property to William Vale, an inspector, for \$500 cash and the value of the mortgage (a total of \$5,300). This is one of a number of foreclosures found in land registry records from the time, suggesting good reasons why institutional lenders were so reluctant to lend to private mortgage holders. In 1954, Agnes and John Zouzelka bought these two properties, along with third on Dowling, for \$15,000. For 50 years, the increases in property price had been modest. Now apartment development radically increased the value of property. By 1955, the Zouzelkas had a \$680,000 mortgage from Prudential Assurance to construct two 8 storey apartment buildings, and five years later, they obtained an additional mortgage from Toronto Dominion Bank for \$500,000.

In 1959, Toronto's Planning Department projected a need for 37,000 new apartment suites, mostly serving single person households, over the period 1956 to 1980, with Parkdale taking the second largest share of this new construction. Finally, the needs of poor singles were being recognized, albeit in a manner that reflected the primacy of concentric zone theory:

“As Metro Toronto grows, the natural tendency will be for larger numbers of the poor and unfortunate, and the floating element of the Metropolitan concentration to congregate in the City. They cannot and should not be planned out of existence or even out of town. Rather their needs and natural habitat in the city must be recognized.”<sup>154</sup>

Why did the master plan assume so much redevelopment for Parkdale? Partly, the City was bowing to decisions made by private developers and institutional lenders, abetted by federal housing policy. Even more critical was the fact that the area lay in the path of ‘Superhighway A’, the first and most important of the new metropolitan government’s proposed expressway systems that were projected to ring the region. Apartment dwellers would presumably use the expressway as a quick and easy way to reach downtown jobs.<sup>155</sup> Superhighway A would merely be the first in a ring of highways surrounding Toronto. A northbound expressway would extend from Dufferin Street up to the new Trans-Canada Highway (the 401), and the site of Sunnyside would be used as a parking lot for commuters wishing to transfer to a proposed Queen Street Subway line. By the early 1950s, uncertainty about the lakefront’s future led to the THC granting single year instead of multi-year leases to concessionaires at Sunnyside. The boardwalk had become run-down, with the city refusing to repair or replace it, and the last Easter Parade there took place in 1953.<sup>156</sup> Sunnyside had gone from being a destination, to being an impediment to reaching other destinations. By 1954, the City had proceeded with expropriation plans that had remained more or less dormant since 1913, and demolished the remaining housing ‘south of the tracks’ in Parkdale, dehousing 800 people in 170 houses, along with Sunnyside Amusement Park.

While 45 articles, dating from 1951 to 1958, have been located that argue the pros and cons of Superhighway A options in terms of potential impact on Sunnyside, the Canadian



National Exhibition, regional parkland, and industry, I have found only one article to give “the other side of the... story... a tale of 800 people who will lose their homes to civic progress”.

Those interviewed for the article were mostly unwaged women using their homes as a form of income. One resident, Mrs. Dorothy Wood of Jameson Avenue, had moved to her present address when her childhood home was expropriated for Lakeshore Boulevard in the late 1910s. Now she was being asked to move again, but her “house is my living as well as my home. I have an apartment here which I rent. This is awful”. Another resident, Miss Viola Brown of Starr Avenue, echoed her neighbour’s words: “This has been my home for 30 years. It is my income too. I keep boarders here”. In contrast, a man who had obtained his house eighteen months earlier said he did not “care about moving so long as I get full value for the house”... Mr. Kalika said he would not be one to stand in the way of progress.”<sup>157</sup> Parkdale’s transformation from modern model suburb to obstacle in the way of progress had become complete.

### Conclusion: the Nature of Decline in Parkdale 1913-1966

In 1960, the future playwright and novelist MT Kelly was 14 years old, and had just moved with his widowed mother and brother to a new apartment in South Parkdale. By then, “Parkdale was a construction site. All the Victorian houses, including the one next door to where my best friend lived, were being torn down for apartment houses. The great trench of the Gardiner went through, further cutting us off from the Lake. While it was being built, we played there, pretending we were wolves; the ramp led up and fell off, as eerie and windswept as a desert...”<sup>158</sup>

After complaining about overcrowding in Parkdale for close to 50 years, the City of Toronto had devised a seemingly contradictory planning remedy: permitting the construction of over 45 high-rise (eight to 23 storey) apartment buildings in South Parkdale. Next to Regent Park South, where a public housing superblock was constructed in 1956, South Parkdale had the highest population increase of any census district in the City of Toronto between 1956 and 1961.<sup>159</sup>

The available evidence suggests that Parkdale was a mixed-income, mixed-tenure, mixed-use neighbourhood from its origin in the 1870s until the 1960s. The neighbourhood went through three changes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which could be termed ‘decline’: perceptual, socio-economic, and housing stock. First, it ceased to be spoken about as a ‘good place to live’ and began to attract negative coverage because of the affordable housing options it provided. This change occurred in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the construction of several dozen low-rise apartment buildings, and the conversion of a limited number of single family homes. There would seem to have been a decline in institutional mortgages at the time, although this could have been a function of mortgages getting paid off. Second, the proportion of upper middle class household heads (business people and professionals) declined from well above the city average in 1913 to slightly below average by 1941, before stabilizing by 1951 [see Figure 10]. The loss of a critical mass of middle class homeowners meant that Parkdale was without influential advocacy during the period when the powers of planning and zoning ‘grew up’ in Toronto. However, during the period that Parkdale was supposedly “becoming a serious slum”, the socio-economic class of the neighbourhood was hardly that of communities traditionally thought of as slums. There were very few unskilled labourers, and police reports do not mention any particular problems in Parkdale, unlike their regular complaints about Cabbagetown and the

Ward. Third, conversion of single-family homes into flats, which had occasioned such a moral panic in the 1910s, became the norm for Parkdale before, during and immediately after World War Two. There is, however, no evidence that the actual condition of the housing was substandard during the period that the area was repeatedly called 'obsolete' and suitable for demolition. It seems fair to conclude that the 40 year discourse of decline which preceded an era of rapid social and housing change in Parkdale was based more on firmly held beliefs, and the absence of powerful advocates, than actual conditions.

So why was Parkdale called a slum? One factor was its movement in symbolic space from an outer edge new suburb to the city's aging inner ring. Its prime location close to the lake and along a major transportation route, which had been central to its initial marketing as a suburb, eventually meant that the land on which its larger old houses sat was too valuable in the larger scheme of urban progress to survive. However, the most important factor would seem to have been its large stock of "flexible houses"<sup>160</sup> on large lots, which could be easily converted into flats times of economic recession and high housing demand (and, of course, just as easily deconverted in other times). The pursuit of a societal norm, perfect nuclear families each encased in their own purchased home, brought contempt on neighbourhoods, such as Parkdale, which accommodated differences from the norm. By the 1940s, after 30 years of housing reports, the City established a zoning system, supported by federal housing policies, which encouraged the redevelopment of 'declining' mixed use neighbourhoods with 'obsolete' housing. The existence of a more complex picture, the 'other Parkdale' of people who did not see their neighbourhood as a 'slum', was ignored.

Neighbourhood decline was a two-edged sword for Parkdale. Calling the neighbourhood

a slum undoubtedly depressed property values and made institutional home loans difficult, although the limited evidence available suggests that Parkdale's sales prices and tendency towards vendor and other non-institutional mortgages matched the norm for Toronto in the early and middle 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>161</sup> However, a bad reputation may also have been a boon for lower income renters and new property owners, especially newcomers to Toronto who might not otherwise be able to buy or rent in the central city. Unmarried women and men, Polish immigrants, and young couples would all seem to have benefited from Parkdale's increasing reputation as a 'slum' between 1913 and 1966.

What were the real differences between Parkdale as a suburb and Parkdale as a slum? Was it that the housing stock was once new, and then aged and went out of fashion? Yet Rosedale and Forest Hill, developed slightly later, did not go out of fashion as they aged. Was it that land developers and housebuilders had more of a stake in promoting land in Parkdale, and once they disappeared, so did the good reputation of the neighbourhood? Again, the examples of Rosedale and Forest Hill would seem to disprove that theory. Was a 'critical mass' of relatively well-to-do people considered necessary for a neighbourhood to stay 'good'? Was it essential for ratepayer's associations in well-to-do neighbourhoods to continually attempt to keep out non-residential land uses and rental housing in order for a neighbourhood not to lose its good reputation? Quite possibly. Did non-British immigrant and women-led households inevitably lead to decline? Planning reports of the time certainly thought so. Perhaps the greatest difference was the 'lens' used to distinguish a well-to-do suburb from a deteriorating slum. During Parkdale's development, its as-yet undeveloped open space to the south and west, with market gardens and lakeside views, made it seem more affluent and less industrial than it was,

especially to the people living in villas who promoted their community to the larger city. During Parkdale's supposed decline, the increasing street and rail traffic, with attendant noise, smoke and bustle, the seeming 'disorder' of small apartment houses, detached villas, row houses, commerce and limited industry led to a 'cluttered' impression to the outsiders who described the community, especially those who came from neat and 'orderly' suburbs, with everything in its 'proper' place.

Once Parkdale had been a cynosure, a guiding star for Toronto's suburban development, with daily coverage in the newspapers. Then it drew visitors to the Boardwalk for Easter Parade, the beaches at Sunnyside throughout the summer, to the Canadian National Exhibition in late summer. Now, it was now an increasingly strange place, viewed through the window of a car along the Gardiner Expressway, or cruised by people looking for parking at the CNE. "You can now pass through Parkdale in 65 seconds," said local historian Alan Skeotch after the Gardiner Expressway was built.<sup>162</sup> Parkdale seemed barely worth a glance.

### Notes to Chapter Five

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- <sup>1</sup>Jackson 1980: 101.
  - 2.Cited in Lemon 1985: 59.
  3. See Bacher 1993: 69-72; Howe 1994: 153.
  - 4.Bruce 1934: 13-14
  5. Bruce 1934: 34-35.
  6. Bruce 1934: 23.
  7. Bacher 1993: 10.
  - 8.Harris and Luymes 1991.
  9. Cited in White 1993: 88, 187.
  - 10.Clark 1898: 2.
  11. Assessment sample (Harris 1993).
  - 12.Boyer 1983: 60.
  - 13.Moore 1979.
  14. MacDougall 1990: 10-27.

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15. MacDougall 1990: 26.
  16. Toronto City Council Minutes 1910-1913.
  17. Mulvaney 1884: 44.
  18. Census figures for 1881, in Careless 1984: Tables 7 and 8, 201-202.
  19. Clark 1898: frontpiece, 3.
  20. Ibid: 101-104.
  21. Ibid: 62.
  22. Ibid: 1-3.
  23. Valverde 1991: 17-18, 136-138; 444-47.
  - <sup>24</sup> See Mayne 1993.
  25. Hastings 1911: 3.
  26. Ibid: 4.
  27. Ibid: 8.
  28. Ibid: 17.
  29. Ibid: 18.
  30. Assessment Samples (Harris 1993).
  31. Land registry records, City of Toronto Assessment Rolls 1913 and 1921.
  32. Dennis 1989: 9-10, 16; Dennis 1998: figures 1-3, 23.
  33. Globe, March 5, 1912.
  34. Globe, April 4, 1912.
  35. Globe, April 27, 1912.
  36. Globe, May 3, 1912.
  37. Dennis 1989: 31.
  38. Star, May 1, 1912; Dennis 2000: 269.
  39. Dennis 1989: 36-37.
  40. Crawford 2000.
  41. Lemon 1986: 14-16; City of Toronto Board of Control correspondence boxes for 1912.
  42. Dennis 1989: 23-24.
  43. Dennis 1987: 33.
  44. City of Toronto Board of Control correspondence boxes for 1912 and 1913.
  45. Letter from WA Stratton, Secretary South Parkdale Ratepayers Association, February 6, 1913, Board of Control correspondence boxes for 1913, City Archives.
  46. Filey 1996: 40-60; Reeves 1992a: 59.
  - <sup>47</sup> Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Committee 2000.
  48. Evening Telegram January 12, 1878.
  49. Mail, October 24, 1897.
  50. Reeves 1992b: 46-56.
  51. Ibid: 98-99.
  52. Ibid: 65-67.
  53. Ibid: 47-50.
  54. Ibid: 67-74; Filey 1981: 49-50; Reeves 1992a: 13.
  55. Gunn 1990: 236.
  56. Reeves 1992a: 43.
  57. Filey 1980: 79.
  58. World, December 5, 1892.
  59. Star, September 9 and 10, 1912.
  60. Star, September 12, 1912.
  61. See Letter from City Solicitor, July 12, 1912, indicating that the Magann estate is being bought for park purposes (Board of Control correspondence boxes); the properties do not appear in the 1913 assessment records.
  62. Letter from Toronto Local Council of Women, December 1911 (Board of Control Correspondence Boxes).

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63. City of Toronto Social Survey Commission, 1915: 37-45.
  64. Correspondence from Toronto District Labour Council, entitled "The Housing of the Working Classes", undated but probably 1912, Board of Control Correspondence Boxes.
  65. Labour Gazette, November 1912, p. 856.
  66. Bureau of Municipal Research 1918.
  67. Purdy 1997.
  68. City of Toronto Housing Commission 1918.
  - <sup>69</sup> Beauregard 2003.
  70. Sendbueller and Gilliland 1998.
  71. A 1926 article in Town Planning magazine, cited in Sendbueller and Gilliland 1998: 44.
  72. Bacher 1993: 62.
  - <sup>73</sup> City of Toronto Assessment Commissioner 1927: 6-8.
  74. Assessment sample (Harris 1993).
  75. Globe, April 19, 1932.
  76. Telegram, February 8, 1932.
  77. Globe, April 19, 1932.
  78. Telegram, May 5, 1931.
  79. Bruce 1934: 35.
  80. Star, November 8, 1934.
  81. Mail and Empire, November 6, 1934.
  82. Globe, June 29, 1922.
  83. Land registry records.
  84. Land registry records.
  85. Piva 1979: 39; Strange 1995: 176.
  86. Sobel and Meurer 1994: 43fn.
  87. 1921 and 1931 assessment sample (Harris 1993).
  88. 1931 assessment roll.
  89. Star, January 25, 1924.
  90. Globe and Mail, August 4, 1993.
  91. The Kum-C, Parkdale Theatre and Odeon, all on Queen Street west of Sorauren, run advertisements in a edition of the local paper, Parkdale Topics, in 1923. The Brighton, on Roncesvalles and Pearson, also dates from this period. The Revue, further north on Roncesvalles, has been in continuous operation as a movie theatre since 1911.
  92. Potts 1971.
  93. Phrase from Skeotch 1979.
  94. Globe, June 8, 1912.
  95. Toronto Star, April 20, 1918.
  96. Toronto Star, February 2, 1918.
  97. Toronto Star, March 3, 1917.
  98. Assessment rolls, 1913, 1921, 1931.
  99. R.C. Libby oral memoirs, Toronto Between the Wars project.
  100. Albert Crosswell, Oral History Project.
  101. Aubrey Bone, Oral History Project.
  102. Assessment records 1931.
  103. Assessment records 1921 and 1931.
  104. Jackson 1967, Robin 1992: 2-5.
  105. P.M. Richards, "How the Ku Klux Klan came to Canada", *Saturday Night*, June 26, 1926.
  106. Star, February 9, 1925.
  107. Star, July 28, 1925.
  108. Star, February 12 and 16, 1925.
  109. Saturday Night, June 26, 1926.

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110. *Star*, June 4, 1925.
  111. *Star and Mail and Empire*, August 8, 1925.
  112. *Star*, August 10, 1925.
  113. *Star*, October 1, 1925; Robin 1992.
  114. *Star*, March 5, 1926.
  115. *The Worker*, February 28, 1925.
  116. Jackson 1967: 108, 128.
  117. Hudson et al 1912: 37-38.
  118. *Ibid*: 14-15.
  - <sup>119</sup> *Globe and Mail*, October 26, 2002.
  120. *Mail*, September 27, 1888.
  121. Dear and Wolch 1989: 87.
  122. *Toronto Star*, August 27, 1931.
  123. Lemon 1985: 65.
  124. Lemon 1986: 17-18.
  125. Dennis 1987; Harris 1992.
  126. Harris 1994; Harris 1996: 116-121.
  127. Brunelle 1972.
  128. Cited in Gatenby 1999: 250.
  129. Skeotch 1979.
  130. Parkdale Centennial Research Committee 1979: 40-41.
  131. Filey 1996: 58.
  132. Sobel and Meurer 1994: 66-69
  133. *Evening Standard*, November 29, 1937.
  134. Arthur et al 1942: 3-14.
  135. cited in Bacher 1993:96.
  136. Toronto Planning Board 1944: 15
  137. As of 1951, census tract information is available for the 1879-1891 boundaries of Parkdale.
  138. 'Delaying Factors in Industrial Readjustment', *Labour Gazette*, May 1946 (Vol. 46, No. 5, 587-589), describes difficulties in retooling plants for peace-time production as a factor leading to unemployment in Toronto and other cities.
  139. land registry records; Parkdale Centennial Research Committee 1978.
  140. Land registry records.
  - <sup>141</sup> Murdie 1986 and 1991.
  - <sup>142</sup> Bacher 1993: 169.
  143. Reeves 1993: 1-10.
  144. Toronto Planning Board 1943: unpaginated
  145. Moore 1979: 317-319.
  146. City of Toronto Independent Committee on Zoning 1942: 10.
  147. *Globe and Mail*, May 11, 1948.
  148. City of Toronto Planning Board 1956b: map 4.
  149. Lemon 1986: 23-25; City of Toronto Planning Board 1959a.
  150. City of Toronto Planning Board 1954.
  151. Whitzman 1991; land registry records.
  152. *Parkdale Citizen*, February 1971.
  153. Young 1987: 13.
  154. City of Toronto Planning Board 1959a: 25.
  155. The 1967 South Parkdale Planning Proposals explicitly state that further high density development in Parkdale would be served by the Gardiner Expressway along with the proposed Queen Street Subway Line.
  156. Filey 1996: 91, 125.



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157. *Star*, May 4, 1954.

158. cited in Gatenby 1999: 250.

159. Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board 1962: unpaginated.

160. Harris 1994.

161. Murdie 1991, Paterson 1991, Harris and Ragonetti 1998.

<sup>162</sup> Skeotch 1979.

## Chapter Six

### **“From Bowery to Bohemia”: The Urban Village 1967 - 2002**

Me: “I’ve just finished reading a book that talks about Parkdale. It’s called *Landscapes of Despair*.”

Real estate agent (quickly): “You can see why we prefer the term ‘Roncesvalles Village’”.

“Tell me, would you like to live in Ghetto Village Land?” - Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*

#### Bowery and Bohemia: Parkdale’s New Double Life

On August 8, 1970, 45 years after a highly symbolic Ku Klux Klan ‘parade’ starting in Parkdale protested perceived negative change in the central city, and 91 years after an equally symbolic tree-planting ceremony announced the birth of the Flowery Suburb, the *Toronto Star* carried news of another form of ceremony. A housing developer was announcing his latest Parkdale offering. This, in itself, was not unusual. The 1950s and 1960s, like the 1910s and 1920s, had seen apartment buildings springing up by the dozen in Parkdale, all with their claims to greatness. For instance, West Lodge Apartment buildings, two 17 storey towers in North Parkdale, had boasted an architectural award in 1963.<sup>1</sup> In 1971, the “gleaming 23 storey” Lake Shore Place, “possibly the neighbourhood’s last high rise” attracted tenants with saunas, an exercise room, and an outdoor pool.<sup>2</sup> However, there were two elements that were different

about this developer, George Herczog. First, he was offering not some new apartment block, but modest two storey rowhouses, called ‘tenements’ when they were built in 1883. Second, he was marketing these former tenements by proclaiming what was, for Parkdale, a new way of seeing the neighbourhood.

Herczog claimed: “An unlimited number of older houses close to city conveniences can be modernized and provide reasonably priced living for scores of families”. He had recently “reclaimed” more than 200 houses, and had no problem disposing of the refinished product. In his latest project, Melbourne Place, he was following his usual method of gutting the interior with the “exception of things worth saving for effect”. Then he was adding modern kitchens, heating, wiring, and bathrooms. The houses would sell, he predicted, for \$31,000 to \$33,000. Not only would he prosper in his work, but the improvements would cause a positive “chain reaction to other properties” [Figure 25; contrast with Figure 14].<sup>3</sup>

To some extent, Herczog’s claims were a return to Parkdale’s early days, when “reasonably priced housing” “close to city conveniences” was being marketed to “families”. In another sense, Melbourne Place was at the forefront of a new aesthetic. For the first time in Parkdale, age had become a virtue. Instead of destroying old-fashioned houses, modern conveniences could be added, while preserving original features “for effect”. Preservation might be as profitable as demolition.

There were several chain reactions happening in Parkdale in early 1970. Within the year, a Community Coalition had formed to “save the neighbourhood”, a necessary step, suggested *The Globe and Mail*, for a “village that had lost its identity”, a “disorganized community, with little community spirit”, a place that might have become Rosedale, but did not.<sup>4</sup> Activist lawyers



Figure 25. Melbourne Place, 2000. The alleyway has been pedestrianized, and 'authentic' gaslights installed.

Source: Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Committee 2000.

were creating the storefront Parkdale Community Legal Services, and a block away, South Parkdale Health Centre was being organized by equally activist health care workers. A Parkdale Tenants Association had formed. The revival of the Parkdale Businessmen's Association was being supported by the recently revived South Parkdale Ratepayers Association (now called the Residents Association, in tacit acceptance of the predominance of renters within the neighbourhood).<sup>5</sup> As it had been during its development, Parkdale was in the news on a daily basis. Parkdadians were reinventing a strong identity for the neighbourhood.

But there were hints, even then, of splits within this new community consensus: Mayor William Dennison, backed up by the local Alderman Ben Grys, had called Reverend Graham Cotter, chair of the Community Coalition, a "Marxist" at an October meeting where a \$6,000 municipal grant was refused. An attempt to set up a youth drop-in on Queen Street had foundered when local businesspeople made clear that they would prefer a vacant storefront to that particular use.<sup>6</sup> As in every stage of the neighbourhood's history, identity would be formed through conflict.

There was another chain reaction building in and around Parkdale. While some groups within Parkdale were seeking to build new community spirit and tools for local control, the neighbourhood was also being visualized as part of a larger scheme of reform and control. In December 1969, the provincial government announced, as it did nearly every decade, that it was going to reform the Queen Street Mental Hospital (the former Ontario Lunatic Asylum). By 1973, it hoped that it would become a visiting clinic rather than a place of permanent confinement for over 600 people. A major renovation would take care of problems like 50 women in a ward sharing four toilet stalls with no doors on them, and patients sleeping in open

wards with no privacy.<sup>7</sup> This time, the changes were real. By 1976, there were less than a third of the beds in psychiatric institutions that had existed in the early 1960s. Most of the 12,000 patients discharged from institutions in southern Ontario found accommodations in rooming houses in central Toronto, over half of which were located in Parkdale.<sup>8</sup> There, many experienced similarly inhumane conditions to what they had suffered in institutions: a dozen people sharing a bathroom without locks or towels, three or four people sharing a room without a lock or even a private drawer.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly hostile and well-organized neighbours were determined to eliminate even these substandard housing options, or any other housing alternative provided for the de-institutionalized. Parkdale, supposedly in the process of “becoming a serious slum” since the 1930s, began to attract the rhetoric of an ‘urban ghetto’ where exclusion was measured not by race (as in U.S. cities) but by dependence on social services.<sup>10</sup> By 1972, a “clash in values” was described by one reporter, with “houses, well kept by frugal immigrants who moved there 20 years ago” next to “decrepit apartment buildings”, filled with “boisterous welfare recipients, drunks, and drug addicts”.<sup>11</sup> Parkdale, once again, seemed to be getting ‘out of control’ and in need of government intervention.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Parkdale began to develop a dual identity. A 1997 *Toronto Star* article spoke of the “bowery to bohemia” conversion that Parkdale had undergone in the last thirty years, but it might be more accurate to describe the conversion of the neighbourhood to a place where ‘bowery’ and ‘bohemia’, a world of extreme poverty and powerlessness, and a world of artistic and personal creativity, co-existed in space. In its formative years, Parkdale had a strong identity as a model community of homeowners. It was the cutting edge of a suburban movement where the values of middle-class wives and daughters would predominate. From the

1910s onwards, Parkdale began to be seen as a cautionary tale of decline. It was a community of landlords and tenants in a 'City of Homes', and a place where difference in the form of women-led households and supposed foreignness was constructed as problematic. In the 1970s, Parkdale developed a third strong identity. It was the site of a new generation of slum literature, the unnatural "habitat of the poor and unfortunate". At the same time, it was a battleground for neighbourhood control, a place that was fighting to regain a "lost identity". One hundred years after Parkdale was incorporated as a village, it began to be spoken of as a village again. The nature of this special place, and particularly, who would be included and excluded in this newly empowered urban village, was hotly contested.

#### The Context for Change: Social Conditions in the 1960s

In 1962, *The Parkdale Pictorial*, a community newspaper, bemoaned changes in South Parkdale. Before World War One, it claimed, Parkdale had been "a town unto itself", but "people moved on to North Toronto and Forest Hill Village". Now the neighbourhood had "a lot of dust" from new construction. But comparing the newspaper's advertisements with a community newspaper from 40 years earlier, the overwhelming sense is of continuity rather than change. Hay's Men's Wear, the Kum-C Movie theatre, and Loblaw's Supermarket were among the many businesses that had not changed location in since the 1920s. Dr. Stanley Haidasz, the Liberal candidate for the Parkdale-High Park provincial riding, bragged that his father had worked for the CPR for 40 years, and he had bought his home after 17 years of hard savings, a common enough tale for Parkdale.<sup>12</sup> A report on ethnic origins in Toronto from 1961 placed

Parkdale in the lowest category for change, and furthermore added that the Germans, Poles and Ukrainians who made up the predominant non-British immigration groups were “minglers” rather than “displacers”.<sup>13</sup>

Census information also suggests that it was the 1960s, rather than the 1950s, that were the transformative decade for Parkdale. The 1951 census is the first to use census tracts small enough to compare Parkdale with the rest of greater Toronto. In 1951, the social and economic conditions of the neighbourhood were average, although the neighbourhood was more densely populated than the rest of Toronto. Despite the new presence of Eastern Europeans (Polish and Ukrainian immigrants each accounting for 6% of Parkdale’s population), Parkdale’s 28,000 residents were still overwhelmingly of British origin: 73% in both the neighbourhood and greater Toronto. The proportion of those with a grade eight education or less was 42% in Parkdale and 41% in Toronto. The median household income was only slightly lower than average. The occupational classification, by and large, mirrored the greater city [Figures 26 and 27]. Forty percent of the area’s occupied dwellings were apartments or flats, double the rate for the rest of Toronto. However, a little over half of the households in Parkdale owned their own homes, the result of an influx of immigrants with internal credit networks, as seen in the previous chapter. Parkdale’s occupants were slightly more stable than the rest of the city: 55% had lived in their homes for five or more years, as opposed to 49% for the rest of Toronto.

By the 1961 census, both greater Toronto and Parkdale had begun to change. The population of the City of Toronto was now, for the first time, a minority within the census metropolitan region. The proportion of non-British immigrants began to rise, more rapidly in Parkdale than in the rest of Toronto. Now only 61% were of British origin in greater Toronto,



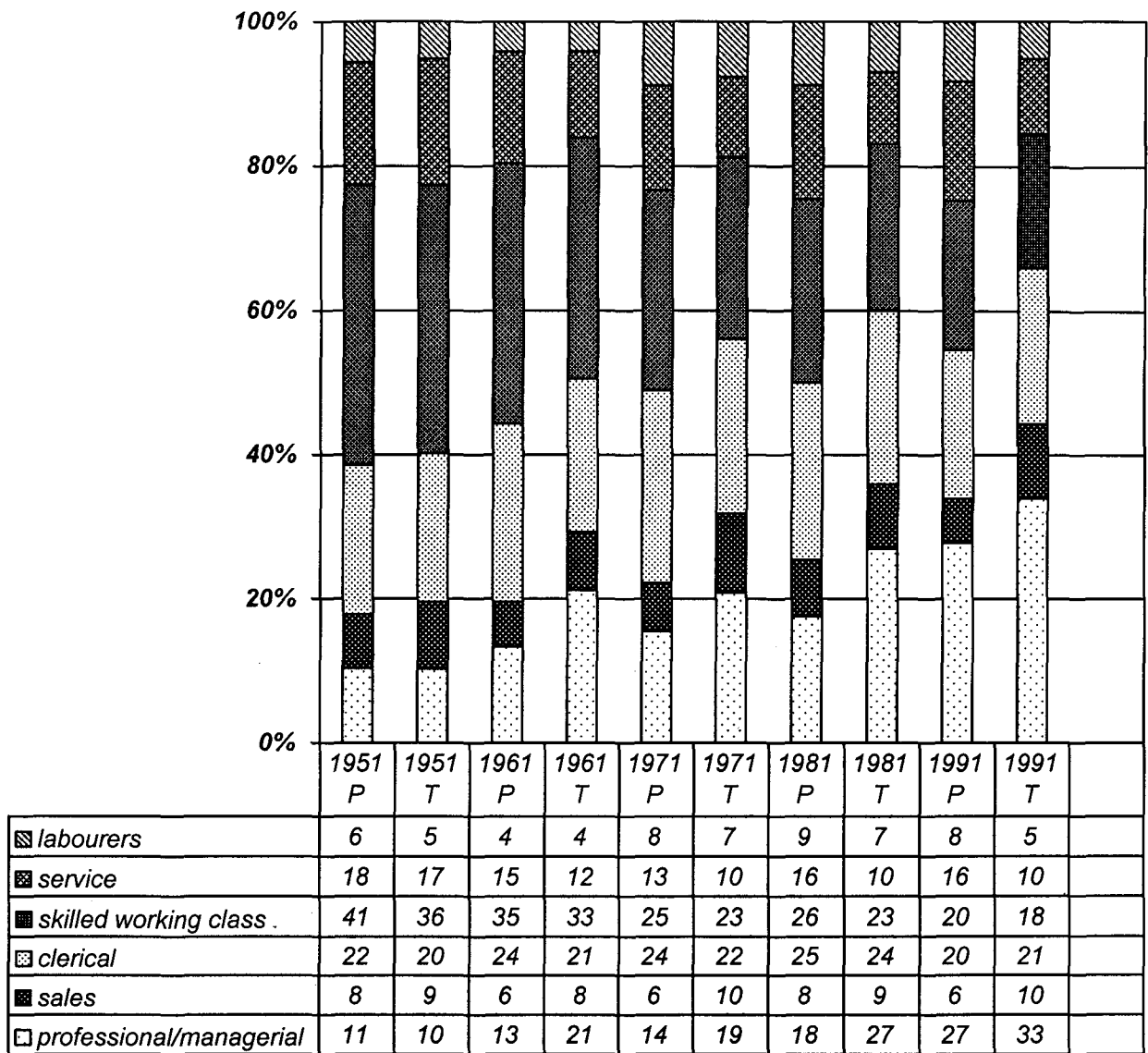


Figure 26. Occupational Classification, Parkdale and Toronto 1951-1991

Note: Occupational classification changes radically in the 1996 census, so the figures are not included.

Source: Census of Canada.

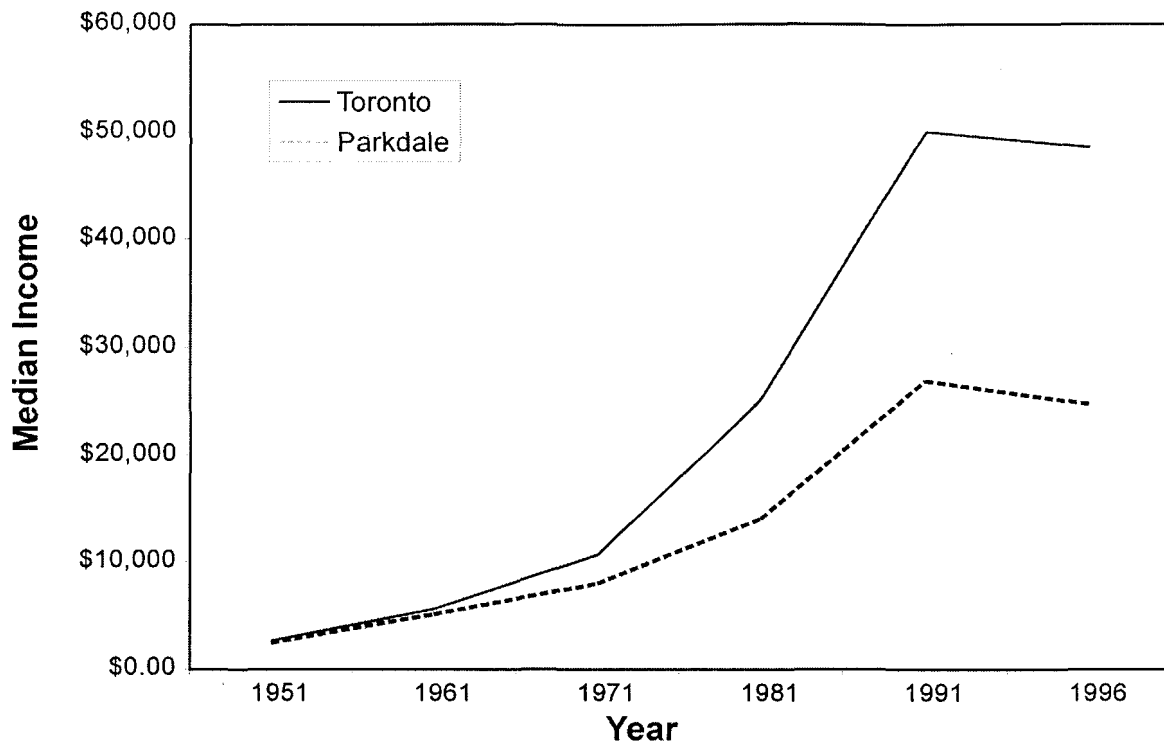


Figure 27. Median Household Income, Toronto and Parkdale, 1951-1996.

Source: Census of Canada.

and only 55% in Parkdale. The gap in median income between Parkdale and the rest of Toronto increased slightly from 7% to 9%, with median income more than doubling in the ten years between 1951 and 1961. This was the result of increasing affluence and occupation change among most Torontonians. Twice as many workers could be classified as managerial or professional in 1961 than 1951, and the number of those considered skilled working class had begun to decline. Parkdale, which had a slightly higher than average proportion of managerial and professional workers in 1951, fell far behind the Toronto average by 1961. The most significant changes were in housing stock. Now three-fifths of the dwelling units in Parkdale (90% south of Queen Street) were apartments or flats, as opposed to a little over a quarter in the rest of Toronto. Only one third of Parkdale households owned their unit, as opposed to two-thirds in the rest of Toronto. As in the late 1930s and during World War Two, Parkdale could be characterized as a community of tenants, and like that earlier era, there were an increasing number of absentee landlords. There was also a far more transient population in Parkdale, with less than a third living in their home for five years or more. Finally, there were significant differences in access to home finance between Parkdale and the rest of Toronto. Whereas 45% of Parkdale owner/occupiers reported a mortgage in 1951, as compared to a Toronto average of 57%, only 15% reported a mortgage in 1961, as opposed to the Toronto average of 51%. While some of the difference could be rationalized as the post-World War Two influx of Parkdale homebuyers retiring short term mortgages, that kind of gap does suggest reluctance by both individual and institutional investors to put their money in Parkdale.

The changes between 1951 and 1961 to some extent support the argument, seen in planning documents and newspapers from the 1970s onwards, that Parkdale underwent sudden

and precipitous 'decline' in the mid-1950s, after eight decades of 'stability'. Unlike earlier definitions of decline, based on housing type, this definition of decline was measured in increasing poverty and neighbourhood disintegration. The causative factors of this decline are said to be the construction of the Gardiner Expressway and the high rise apartment 'canyons' of South Parkdale. The motor of decline is therefore assumed to be municipal urban planning decisions, such as zoning that allowed wholesale destruction of the 'historic' housing stock. Yet the first residents of the high rise apartments in South Parkdale were not significantly different from the residents of low rise houses in Parkdale in terms of income or occupation. In 1961, a little less than one in five Parkdadians earned less than \$2,000 when the average salary was \$3,673, the same proportion as the rest of Toronto. A stronger argument can be made that the mid-1950s was the middle of a 30 year period of de facto redlining for homeowners, where large developers found it easy to buy up housing since most home buyers could not obtain mortgage financing and they could, at subsidized rates. House prices in Parkdale were going up in relation to the rest of Toronto, and it is easy to hypothesize that potential profits from high rise apartment construction were fuelling this boom. It was federal government housing policy, supporting as it did the construction of high-rise apartments, as much as local zoning or transportation issues, which stacked the cards against older housing in Parkdale.

Significant differences between Parkdale and the rest of Toronto begin to show up in the 1971 census, suggesting that the 1960s are the crucial decade in understanding how Parkdale began to become a community of poor people. Median income in Parkdale was now 25% lower than the median income in greater Toronto. One in three Parkdadians earned less than half the average wage, twice the poverty rate of the rest of Toronto. Fewer than half of Parkdadians were

now of British origin, indicating a growing importance as an immigrant reception area. The average rent in Parkdale was 12% cheaper than in the rest of Toronto.<sup>14</sup> After six decades of record keeping, public health statistics begin to diverge in the 'Parkdale' public health area (ie., all of west central Toronto) only in the late 1960s. By 1970, the tuberculosis rate, often an indicator of poor housing conditions, was two and a half times the City of Toronto average.<sup>15</sup>

M.T. Kelly's autobiographical play *The Green Dolphin* describes Parkdale in the mid-1960s as "a paprika-reeking slum" of lower-income immigrants. Although the teenagers in the play are of Irish and Ukrainian heritage, they affect a 'wannabe' look based on Black stereotypes, an "apprentice pimp" outfit of stovepipe pants, silk shirts, wool suits, and carved umbrellas. They listen to rhythm and blues music from Buffalo radio stations at their hang-out, the Green Dolphin Restaurant, instead of attending Parkdale Collegiate. They sniff glue, drink cheap booze, flunk school, and fancy themselves tough.<sup>16</sup> A 1971 newspaper article on political changes within Parkdale described the southern portion of riding as consisting of three storey brick homes betraying their "past Anglo-Saxon prosperity. They're rooming houses now. Lunch bucket country." Moving north, the reporter found "smaller homes, rows of verandahs reminiscent of summer screen door bang, over-railing voices in English and Scottish accents. Now vivid colours, potted plants, foreign tongues".<sup>17</sup> From some perspectives, Parkdale seemed to have fulfilled the Bruce Report prediction. It had become a "foreign" "lunch bucket" slum. From other perspectives, Parkdale still seemed monocultural and exclusive. Mary Reid, who immigrated in 1970 from Jamaica, thought when she arrived in Canada that Parkdale was "a posh area, the rich lived here, you could not buy a house here".<sup>18</sup>

### The Turning Point of 1967-1972: the Parkdale Community Coalition

In the meantime, Toronto planners were slowly beginning to respond to a paradigm shift among central city dwellers. A 1960 City of Toronto Planning Board response to Metro's Urban Renewal Strategy stressed that "slum clearance will be increasingly seen as an element in urban renewal rather than an end in itself". In addition to "clearance of blighted properties and non-conforming uses", local planners wanted to improve roads, increase parks and recreation services, and beautify commercial streets.<sup>19</sup> A critical testing point for this shift from 'urban renewal' to 'urban redevelopment' had been the Downtown Area Review and Plan for the Annex, the first of a series of neighbourhood planning exercises promised in the 1959 City of Toronto Official Plan. Even though the 1959 document was considered by the planning department to be a "compromise" with the newly unified Annex Residents' Association, with most buildings judged "sound and suitable" for family housing, and the majority of the district zoned as R2, the association was not pleased with the plan. It began a 12 year campaign of opposition to new apartment buildings that resulted in several positive Ontario Municipal Board judgements, as well as successful opposition to proposed Spadina and Crosstown Expressways. The leaders in the fight for a more humane neighbourhood were professors living near the University of Toronto campus, social service workers, and people working in arts and media, exemplified in the Annex's two most famous residents: urbanist guru Jane Jacobs, and novelist, poet, and essayist Margaret Atwood.<sup>20</sup>

The 70 year era of unbroken political consensus in Toronto, which Harold Kaplan dates from the reform of civic government in the 1890s, was beginning to unravel. The City of Toronto had combined an activist local government, which municipalized hydro power and mass

transit by 1920, with a relatively laissez-faire attitude towards developers. Occasional blazes of ‘Toronto the Good’ moral fervour, such as the anti-apartment building by-law of 1913, were soon undone by the realpolitik of “old fashioned, pressure-group, oiling the squeakiest wheel politics”, which meant that more affluent neighbourhoods successfully opposed most non-single-family home development, while less affluent neighbourhoods got what developers wanted. An urban reform coalition consisting of organized labour, the Association of Women Electors, University of Toronto, the Board of Trade, the Bureau of Municipal Research, and the *Globe and Mail* achieved a relatively professional and uncorrupt municipal government throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but public discontent, led by a growing number of “anti-car, pro-neighbourhood, neo-reform” populists, were about to change the face of local politics.<sup>21</sup>

The test case of the new reform movement was the 1966 proposed redevelopment into public housing of a working class neighbourhood in east downtown Toronto, Trefann Court. North and South Regent Park had been joined by three other large central city public housing projects: Moss Park and Don Mount east of downtown, and Alexandra Park west of downtown. Parkdale did not see much public housing development in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the exception of a 400 unit seniors building on the site of the former Magdalen Asylum. However, publicly subsidized private redevelopment was rapidly changing the neighbourhood, as it had in the east downtown neighbourhood of St. James Town. In Trefann Court, residents were organized by a young activist lawyer, John Sewell, resulting in the first major victory for a neighbourhood that was not predominantly middle class. Instead of the destruction of the housing stock and dispersal of the community, residents won money for a tenant-run non-profit co-operative that would rehabilitate much of the existing housing.<sup>22</sup> By 1967, the City’s Official

Plan proposals declared: “We must preserve and enhance the best of our older low density districts”, illustrated with a photograph of the Annex. A study co-funded by the City of Toronto Planning Board and the federal Central Mortgage and Housing Commission had concluded that housing rehabilitation should be supported through government funding mechanisms, a solution supported by the Social Planning Council (which included representatives from Parkdale social agencies) in their response to the Official Plan proposals.<sup>23</sup>

The paradigm shift was not yet evident in South Parkdale, where a Downtown Area Review and Plan was released that same year. As in the case of the Annex, the Planning Department believed it was offering a compromise to the community. The area west of Jameson would be stabilized, protected from further apartment redevelopment, in exchange for additional high rises in southeast Parkdale. The document argued that Parkdale could easily withstand double the 5,000 apartment units that had been constructed in the previous ten years, since transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure was good. The majority of houses remaining in the area were over 70 years old, and were of “declining suitability” due to the proximity of apartment buildings. In fact, although the properties were generally well maintained, “major repairs have not been extensive because of the uncertainty of the area’s future redevelopment”. Furthermore, the large volume of traffic on Queen, King and Jameson, leading to the Gardiner Expressway, should be relieved by an additional expressway on Dufferin.

At least one apartment developer, Philip Roth of Meridian, who had bought nearly a dozen properties on Springhurst and Dowling on the assumption that he would be able to create an apartment complex, was not amused. He argued for an extension of the high density area westwards.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, although the newly revived South Parkdale Residents’ Association



considered the draft plan's zoning a workable compromise (they remained opposed to the Dufferin expressway), 220 other residents immediately gathered at a public meeting to protest the "land grab spectre".<sup>25</sup> It took five more years and dozens of public meetings, but South Parkdale finally began a new, "resident led" process for a neighbourhood plan in 1973.<sup>26</sup>

Kaplan, wrongly I think, suggests that the 1967 South Parkdale neighbourhood plan was the cause of massive private redevelopment. He says that both the Beaches and South Parkdale were slated for substantial apartment construction, yet "for some reason, apartment developers ignored the Beaches area but invaded Parkdale in full force. Parkdale residents fought back in each case, but they were too socially heterogenous, poorly educated, and poorly organized to mount a countervailing campaign."<sup>27</sup> I would argue that the opposite is true. The reaction to the 1967 draft neighbourhood plan (never adopted by City Council) marks the end of a 12 year era of high-rise urban renewal in Parkdale. Planning documents make clear that the majority of high rise apartments were constructed or approved prior to 1967. It is true that the Annex and Rosedale, described by Kaplan as "two relatively affluent areas lying close to the central core... in contrast to Parkdale... had well-organized, articulate ratepayers associations",<sup>28</sup> but it is also true that increasingly heterogenous Parkdale was spurred by massive redevelopment to organize its own urban political movement.

Neighbourhood activism in Parkdale during the late 1960s grew out of two separate issues. The first issue was an attempt to preserve the neighbourhood's older housing stock, and to renew the sense of the community as a special place. The second was a concern for the growing number of poor people living in the neighbourhood. At first, the two issues were linked. Uncontrolled apartment construction was causing the destruction of decent affordable housing.

“Stabilizing’ the neighbourhood would benefit both those living in the rooming houses and flats, and the small but growing number of those interested in renovating older houses.

Howard Walker, a noted architect and president of the South Parkdale Ratepayer’s Association (SPRA), was a key figure in late 1960s community activism. The SPRA’s concerns included declining business along Queen Street, heavy car and truck traffic in the neighbourhood, and the uncertain future of Parkdale’s older homes. Under Walker’s leadership, the SPRA successfully pursued several short term goals, such as banning truck traffic along Jameson, and getting new trees planted along that avenue, while pursuing a longer term neighbourhood preservation plan that would be coupled with a promotion plan stressing the neighbourhood’s fine houses and ‘elite’ history. By 1970, a local alderman, Archie Chisholm, had been elected based on his involvement with the SPRA and the local chapter of the New Democratic Party. Like Walker, he espoused a “new community spirit” based on “issues” rather than “politics”.<sup>29</sup>

A more controversial approach was championed by two religious community leaders. Reverend G.R. Evans was the minister at the Parkdale United Church. When constructed in 1889, the Parkdale Methodist Church was described as being “after the Metropolitan Church, the finest structure for worship in the city”.<sup>30</sup> By 1967, the “monstrous Victorian Cathedral”, designed for 1,500 parishioners, served a congregation of less than 250, and Reverend Evans was attempting to give the land to the City or metropolitan government for a low-income singles housing development, to be called Phoenix Place. Despite the fact that the City was happy to approve the 23 storey Lakeshore Place one block to the south two years later, both levels of government agreed that an apartment building made up of single room occupancy units did not meet the building code, which specified a minimum standard for new units of 750 square feet.

Evans retorted that “the building codes in the City are just as Victorian and outmoded as this cathedral” and that was better to spend money on housing now than on penal institutions later.<sup>31</sup>

Reverend Graham Cotter was the priest at St. Mark’s Anglican Church, and the leader of a movement to unite community agencies, religious institutions, and residents. The movement began with the re-establishment of Parkdale Library, at the corner of Queen and Cowan Avenues, in 1964. The dynamic head librarian, Rita Cox, a Caribbean immigrant, ensured that books in 60 languages were available for the rapidly increasing diversity of Parkdale residents, and the library also offered ESL courses within the year.<sup>32</sup> The Parkdale Library became a gathering place for those interested in organizing the neighbourhood, Parkdale’s first publicly owned ‘community centre’ since the days of its existence as an independent municipality. In 1965, Cotter and several other religious leaders had been approached by Peter Loebel, a community organizer hired through the Parks and Recreation Department, to take part in a social planning study that would address recreation and other community services. Cotter said later that he had constantly “been challenged by the head of the SPRA” (identified as Gordon Thatcher, not Howard Walker) because of his position that middle class residents must help their lower-income neighbours before they helped themselves.<sup>33</sup> Although he disagreed with the SPRA on strategy, Cotter and the SPRA shared a common vision of Parkdale’s history. For Howard Walker, Parkdale was a neighbourhood of fine houses and former wealth, and could still attain some of that past glory.<sup>34</sup> According to Cotter, Parkdale had been intended as a rail suburb of villas, a mix of prosperous merchants and holders of large estates who sought escape from a central city that was “going down”. Meanwhile, “poor people did not live in early Parkdale, but were imported to work here”. As “not so prosperous” people moved in, middle class people moved out, “a function of the

market system, but what of love of “strangers”?”. For Cotter, Parkdale’s “recurrent pattern from the past” was of middle class people moving outward to avoid rather than help the poor people in their midst. Cotter combined an implicit concentric zone theory with a passion for social justice, sounding very much as though he had read David Harvey’s *Social Justice and the City* before writing his memoir in 1979. But unlike Harvey, and belying his reputation as a ‘Marxist’, Cotter’s solutions were liberal rather than radical. In order for Parkdale to “come up again”, it must recognize its strength in diversity, and provide adequate housing and services for the poor. For Cotter, as for many other left-wing residents of Parkdale, the growing number of rooming houses, and the new phenomenon of self-contained rooms known as bachelorettes, were degrading and polarizing housing options, a “dragon” to be slain rather than viable elements in the housing mix. If bachelorettes and further rooming houses were made illegal, and new apartment development stopped, then houses would once again “come on market at reasonable rates”, family housing would become “stable”, and the community could begin to rebuild.<sup>35</sup>

Despite differences in strategy and outlook, the SPRA was able to work with the Social Planning Council, the West End branch of the YMCA, the Toronto Public Library and the two Protestant congregations to come up with a funding proposal in 1970 that included a part-time community worker to build links between agencies, and a community newspaper. Their stated priorities were to organize “failing businesses”, address “inadequate recreation” for youth, and stabilize the “shifting population”. But despite the consensus approach, the Parkdale Community Coalition was attacked by some politicians for “excluding” the local police division, the Boulevard Club (one of the few buildings to survive the Gardiner Expressway’s construction, the Boulevard Club was an exclusive recreation club at the waterfront) and the area’s three Catholic

churches.<sup>36</sup> Of the three omissions, the most serious was the Catholic leadership. By now, Catholic churches were by far the most active congregations in Parkdale, and each of the three congregations in the area served as the central rallying point for separate immigrant groups. St. Stanislaus on Roncesvalles, the newest church, had served the Polish community since 1946. Holy Family, at the corner of King and Close since 1901, served a growing Filipino immigrant populace. St. Helen's, the old Brockton Catholic Church dating from the 1870s, had shifted to Portuguese language services.

In 1971, the Coalition received funding from both the City and the federal government. They launched *The Parkdale Citizen* in September of that year. The *Citizen*, a monthly newspaper, combined articles on local history that would help instill a sense of community, with updates on new social services. By 1972, these services included the tenant's association, legal services, community health centre, a single parent's group, a community information post housed in Parkdale Library, the Atlantic Centre, a drop-in service for the large number of young single men who had recently migrated from the Maritime Provinces to Parkdale, and a joint project by George Brown College and the Queen Street Mental Health Centre to provide job counselling and training for "long term mental patients" who were also beginning to live in Parkdale in growing numbers.<sup>37</sup> *The Citizen* took a strong editorial stance against any new highrise construction, supporting a North Parkdale group, that with the help of Parkdale Community Legal Services, successfully fought to obtain a park instead of an apartment building on Landsdowne Avenue.<sup>38</sup> They also began to advocate a City-run recreation centre in the building originally constructed as the Parkdale Roller Skating Rink, later the Pavlowa Dance Hall and the John Inglis Girls' Club, and most recently, the Jan Masaryk Centre, serving Czech immigrants.

The Community Coalition was not proceeding without challenges. In Toronto at the time, the two top candidates in each ward at municipal elections served as junior and senior aldermen. The latter also sat on Metro Council. There was a tradition of the two politicians being opposed,<sup>39</sup> and Parkdale, by now part of Ward Two, was no exception. While Archie Chisholm, the junior alderman, came out of the SPRA and the resurgent reform movement, Senior Alderman Ben Grys was part of an older pro-development faction. He helped organize a parallel 'Ward Two Property Owner's Association' that by early 1972 was calling for a police investigation of the Coalition's dispersal of funds.<sup>40</sup> At a raucous public meeting held the end of February 1972, the Coalition was defeated in an attempt to obtain community input into the selection of a new principal for Parkdale Collegiate Institute. One resident, a former refugee from Eastern Europe, declared that the Coalition was "a small group of newcomers... [pursuing] a total program to gain control of all social services in the area. In Europe, they do this with armies; here they do it with the taxpayer's money".<sup>41</sup> Almost immediately after this debacle, a temporary youth centre run by the YMCA within Parkdale Collegiate was closed down after allegations that they were not adequately controlling "glue sniffers".<sup>42</sup>

Despite political and financial setbacks, the Community Coalition continued to attempt consensual reform politics within Parkdale. By 1973, organizations involved in developing the new community centre included police, Catholic Children's Aid, Catholic Lay Advocates, and two new groups, Parkdale Home Renovators, and an Information Centre for West Indians run out of St. Mark's Church, as well as the 'usual suspects'. But in February 1976, when the Masaryk Cowan Community Recreation Centre opened, Grys' successor as senior alderman, Tony O'Donahue, was successful in overturning the election of the centre's first board, which he called

“Commies”, in favour of a slate of conservative ratepayers.<sup>43</sup> By then, the Community Coalition was in disarray, its once consensual politics undermined by the battle that would dominate Parkdale’s tenth decade, the drive to ban bachelorette apartments.

### The Failed Promise of ‘Living Room’: Housing and Social Change in Parkdale 1973-1977

The consensual reform politics of Parkdale in the 1964-1973 period reflected larger political changes within the City of Toronto, which in turn came out of post World War Two urban economic and social transformations. From the end of World War Two, industrial employment was beginning to decline while service, professional, and managerial jobs soared. According to the 1951 census, over 150,000 workers were employed by almost 4,000 manufacturing firms within the central city. By 1971, the number of industrial workers and firms was halved. By 1981, there was a further 28% decline in the industrial workforce. The Gutta Percha Rubber Company, whose opening and closing whistles at 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. helped keep time throughout the neighbourhood, closed in 1960, followed by the local sheet metal, radiator, and furniture factories. The closures of the Massey-Ferguson and Inglis plants east of Parkdale by the early 1990s were the final severance in the neighbourhood’s link with its industrial past.

In the meantime, the value of shares sold on the Toronto Stock Exchange increased from \$2.1 billion in 1963 to \$83.5 billion in 1990. By 1985, professional, managerial, and service occupations accounted for three quarters of Toronto’s employment.<sup>44</sup> These economic changes affected urban form, producing soaring land prices in the CBD and a new series of office towers. The growth in affluent white collar workers led to a boom in central city restaurants and

boutiques, and increasing interest in downtown living. The growing numbers of young people in the 1960s, products of the post World War Two baby boom, were delaying marriage yet were seeking (and were able to afford) living space independent from their parents and close to downtown. They formed the demographic group most open to gentrification in Toronto. They were also the group most likely to support reform politics.<sup>45</sup>

The 1972 municipal elections, which resulted in a reform majority on Council and the election of David Crombie as Mayor, brought together two potentially contradictory visions of urban reform, according to Caulfield. One vision, exemplified by Crombie, was a new version of classic 'slow growth' politics, which feared that apartment redevelopment was occurring too quickly, developers were out of control, and the built form of the city needed to be preserved against the depredations of those out for the quick buck. A second vision, held by the man who would become mayor in 1978, John Sewell, was associated with left-populism. These so called 'radicals' on City Council combined planning concerns with a commitment to preserve low income housing and industrial jobs in the central city. The second group was more likely to support paid community organizers, such as those requested by the Parkdale Community Coalition. There were at this point, more grounds for political agreement than disagreement among the reform majority, just as there was at the neighbourhood level in Parkdale. For the moment, four quite disparate groups--the 'slow growth' advocates of the city's traditional elite in North Toronto, a new generation of urban activists influenced by Jane Jacobs, 'bohemians' living in the countercultural hangouts of Yorkville, Church-Wellesley (by the early 1970s, Toronto's 'gay ghetto') and Queen Street West, and 'townhousers' or 'white-painters' (early 1970s terms for what would later be called 'gentrifiers') -- could together create a new plan for Toronto.<sup>46</sup>



This new consensus vision for Toronto surfaced in a 1973 document prepared for Toronto's new Housing Department called *Living Room: an approach to home banking and land banking for the City of Toronto*. According to *Living Room*, local government's previous concern with "the regulation of the quality of new housing produced and the policing of the existing stock to prevent the spillover of 'blight' to surrounding neighbourhoods with sound housing stock" needed to be replaced with an activist program that would build 4,000 affordable housing units per year in the central city. The need for an activist housing policy was demonstrated by the growth in "white painting", which was causing 1,000 houses annually to be transferred from low and moderate income households to middle and upper income ones. The program would be driven, not by holding the invisible hand of the private development market, nor by large scale public housing projects that stigmatized inhabitants. Rather, a range of programs were proposed to ensure that a full half of all new units created in the central city were government assisted low-cost, or 'social', housing. The programs included the encouragement of community-based non-profit housing companies, municipal "land banking" of all forms of housing ("older apartments, duplexes, townhouses and single-family buildings") in neighbourhood where house prices were increasing rapidly, and use of most publicly owned land for new affordable housing construction. The report claimed that the federal government was "no longer prepared to rely simply on old houses 'filtering down' to low and moderate income families, in the same way as used cars do. It has stated that social housing is a right".<sup>47</sup> The City of Toronto, in collaboration with senior government, should act to make affordable housing an attainable right for all its citizens.

In the early 1970s, after federal government limited dividend mortgages were extended to non-profit organizations and municipalities,<sup>48</sup> there was a boom in social housing development in

Parkdale. The John Bruce Co-operative renovated two low-rise apartment buildings on Elm Grove, while the Dufferin Grove Co-op bought two small apartment buildings along with several houses in vicinity of Melbourne Avenue. The new municipal public housing agency, Cityhome, purchased almost 50 houses in Parkdale from individual owners and large developers, renovating several for use by low-income families, while maintaining others as rooming houses and flats pending eventual redevelopment for non-profit apartments. Beverley Lodge, a halfway house for young men who had been in trouble with the law, opened on Beaty Avenue in 1970, and Arabon House on Wilson Avenue, a boarding house run by nuns serving runaway girls, opened in 1973.<sup>49</sup> Churches and non-profit organizations also purchased houses in Parkdale. The provincial public housing program, still preferring massive public housing projects over small-scale infill, constructed a 400 unit 'tower in a parkette' on Dunn Avenue in 1974, the same year that Phoenix Place, the former Parkdale Presbyterian Church's conversion to 131 bachelorette units, was finally approved by Council. By 1975, there were 12 group homes in Parkdale, three serving children, two serving adolescents, five for psychiatric out-patients, one for seniors, and one for recovering alcoholics.<sup>50</sup> There were also 11 privately operated nursing homes within Parkdale. These social housing initiatives still accounted for less than 10% of Parkdale's total housing stock.

There is no doubt that Parkdale was getting a disproportionate share of some forms of social housing. One third of the privately operated nursing homes in greater Toronto, and five of eleven group homes for psychiatric out-patients were found in South Parkdale by the late 1970s.<sup>51</sup>

The problem was not so much that there was 'too much' social housing in Parkdale, it was that there was not enough supportive housing, social housing, or indeed affordable housing, being built elsewhere. As early as 1954, a special bylaw banned new rooming houses in Rosedale.<sup>52</sup> By

the early 1970s, there were distance restrictions for rooming houses and group homes in the Annex and Don Vale,<sup>53</sup> and many other central city neighbourhoods had been rezoned R1A, a designation that did not allow conversion into group homes or rooming houses.

Even where multiple occupancy was allowed, increasingly stringent standards made conversion of older houses into multiple units a bad investment even as conversion to a single unit became more common. The Ontario Building Code specified a minimum size of 355 square feet for a rooming house unit, and 750 (later 650) square feet for a legal apartment. One parking space was required for every three rooming house tenants, and one parking space per legal apartment tenant. Every suburban municipality outside the City of Toronto had either an outright ban or extremely limited zoning (a few commercial streets only) for group homes, rooming houses, and even accessory units in single family houses.<sup>54</sup>

By 1980, Parkdale had lost 25% of its rental units in owner-occupied houses: 328 units north of Queen, and 122 units south of Queen.<sup>55</sup> The 1986 evaluation of the *Living Room* report gave a figure of 19,452 assisted housing units created by the City of Toronto, an impressive amount over 13 years, if far short of the 4,000 unit annual goal set in 1973. At the same time, it estimated that over 5,000 affordable housing units had been lost to luxury renovation in the six years since 1980 alone, with the likelihood that at least as many had been lost in the late 1970s.<sup>56</sup>

In the meantime, demand for low-cost units had increased even as supply decreased. Not only was shelter required for the 12,000 people who had been de-institutionalized from psychiatric hospitals during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but there were also a growing number of seniors, single mothers, people with disabilities living independently, and recent immigrants who needed to be housed. In 1981, the Ontario Health Minister stated that “Discharged

psychiatric patients are independent citizens... As private citizens, they can and do, choose to live where ever they choose". The promise of supportive housing was forgotten, and 68% of recently discharged patients ended up in rooming houses or bachelorettes without social supports.

Increasingly, Parkdale was one of the few places in the province where cheap small units and landlords willing to rent to discharged patients could be found.<sup>57</sup>

Land values rose rapidly throughout the central city. Caulfield estimates that an "unremarkable" three or four bedroom house in central Toronto would have sold for \$15,000 in the early 1950s, \$25,000 in the early 1960s, \$50,000 after the mid-1970s real estate boom, \$100,000 after a second boom in the early 1980s, and \$250,000 after still another boom in the late 1980s.<sup>58</sup> There were particularly acute pressures within Parkdale. Large developers were continuing to pay high prices for properties, especially along streets where they had already been successful in building high rise apartment buildings. For instance, two 60 year old apartment buildings, each with three units, had been converted to rooming houses on Spencer Avenue in the early 1970s while the developer awaited permission to construct a new apartment house. Several families were living in the rooming houses, since children were allowed in these units but not in newer 'adult only' apartment buildings. There were also single men living there on a weekly basis who were not able to afford the first and last month's rent demanded by most apartment owners. Tensions were mounting between the occupants of these temporary rooming houses and neighbours who were subjected to the "filth and noise" emanating from poorly maintained buildings. A fire had recently been started in one of the two "old decrepit garages filled with junk" behind the properties, and the body of a 38 year old "hard drinking man" who had died in one of the buildings went undiscovered for several days. In April of 1972, the developer had not

paid the gas or electricity bills for the buildings, so there was no heat or power. The Parkdale Tenants' Association was attempting to find new places for the occupants to live, thus far without success. One neighbour, a Ukrainian born widow of a man who had worked in the nearby metal plating factory, was considering the developer's offer of \$104,000 for her house.<sup>59</sup> Soon after, Cityhome bought the rooming houses, along with several other properties. It planned to renovate the properties, but maintain a mix of flats and rooming houses within the buildings. Residents bitterly opposed the planned renovation. They applauded the demolition of the properties in 1975, when the City decided it could no longer afford the renovations.<sup>60</sup> The site was empty for 20 more years, before being redeveloped as non-profit housing.

Individual home buyers, finally getting loans from banks and other institutional lenders [see Figure 26], were also fuelling house price inflation in Parkdale. One renovator, who worked as an "estimator" according to the 1971 assessment rolls, bought a house on Gwynne Avenue for a \$8,043 vendor mortgage in 1970. By 1975, he had borrowed a total of \$28,000 based on the value of the property, including a \$7,500 loan from the Ontario Home Renewal Program. A house on Galley that had sold for a \$5,000 vendor mortgage in 1968 received a \$25,600 second mortgage from an investment company five years later. A store on Queen Street, with two apartments above, sold for a \$21,000 vendor mortgage in 1969, then was resold for a \$70,000 mortgage, covered by the Toronto Dominion Bank, in 1978.<sup>61</sup> These increases of between 300 and 500% were reminiscent of the 'boom town' flavour of Parkdale in the 1880s.

As the City of Toronto began to fall behind in its ambitious social housing targets, the population living within rooming houses started to change. A 1974 study on rooming houses counted 1,500 within the City of Toronto, with over two thirds concentrated within four areas:

east downtown, the Niagara neighbourhood east of Parkdale, Parkdale and the Annex. Nine hundred and fifty houses were inspected, accounting for 7,400 rentable units in 9,900 rooms. This meant an average of eight units per house, with almost a third of the units consisting of more than one room. Two-thirds of the tenants were employed, and one third had lived in their unit for more than 12 months. Although two-fifths of the buildings had inadequate fire exits, the report suggested that additional fire exits could be constructed at a “not unreasonable cost”. The report also recommended that all buildings with absentee landlords be licensed, and subject to annual inspection.<sup>62</sup> These changes were incorporated in two new bylaws. Reports written 25 years later contend that these bylaws caused an immediate decrease in the number of legal units. Coupled with the release of a large number of mentally and/or physically disabled singles released from institutional care, a qualitative change within rooming houses was soon evident.<sup>63</sup>

Pat Capponi, who moved to a Parkdale rooming house in the mid-1970s, vividly describes conditions at a licensed rooming house in her memoir *Upstairs at the Crazy House*. Recently released from the Queen Street Mental Hospital, her welfare worker assigned her to Channon Court, a block of three adjacent houses on King Street West. Seventy people lived there, crammed three or four to each bedroom. The front door had no lock, nor did the individual rooms. Petty theft was common, and when one woman was sexually assaulted, the police told her to “lock the door” while clearly disbelieving her claim. The rooming house was licensed to receive former inmates of psychiatric institutions, but apart from an occasional visit from a welfare worker, there were no social services available at the house. Capponi tells of one friend, Gary, who spent 17 years (half of his life) at an institution in Whitby, 30 miles east of Toronto, before being discharged with no more than a bus ticket and address for Channon Court. After

attempting suicide soon after arriving, he spent the night at Queen Street Mental Health Centre, then was sent back to the rooming house. A repeat arsonist was continually sent to new rooming houses, whose operators were not told of his previous history. He nearly succeeded in burning down Channon Court, along with its occupants, one night. Welfare cheques were sent directly to the landlord, who doled out the \$10 or \$12 left after paying for the rent. There were no laundry facilities and no money for tampons or deodorant, let alone coffee or cigarettes or a bus ticket. The bathroom had no lock, no plug for the sink or tub, no hand soap, towels, or shower curtain. Conditions, in short, were squalid and dehumanizing, conducive to an atmosphere of violence replicating what many inhabitants, including Capponi, had gone through in their childhood.

Something needed to be done. Capponi, who had been a social worker, attended a public meeting on group homes at Masaryk Cowan Community Centre one night in 1978. She heard a flurry of speakers blast the province for all the “weirdos and crazies” that had been “dumped” in Parkdale. When she spoke up on behalf of her fellow “weirdos and crazies”, she was told that she must be pretending to be crazy, one of those communist social workers sent to these meetings to stir up the pot. Absent social supports, inadequate income, and horrific living standards, had become transformed for many Parkdale residents into an issue of how best to eliminate a particular form of low-income housing that was being ‘dumped’ on them.

#### What class warfare looks like: the Bachelorette Clean-Up Squad 1977-1986

The consensus politics of the SPRA, the Parkdale Tenants Association (PTA) and various social agencies had broken down by the late 1970s. In 1972, both the SPRA and the PTA wrote

letters strongly urging the provincial government to prioritize local residents for the Dunn Avenue public housing in 1972, since 1,300 local applicants for the 400 units had been identified by local family and friends, congregations and physicians.<sup>64</sup> Parkdale Community Legal Services supported the SPRA in its efforts to ban conversions to bachelorette apartments as late as 1976, because of the need for family housing in the face of ‘adult only’ apartment buildings.<sup>65</sup> However, broadly based social improvement battles were being replaced by issue-specific advocacy, in Parkdale and across central Toronto.

Residents’ associations, supported by homeowners and some tenants, began to fight for restrictive bylaws banning further conversions of houses into apartments and rooming houses. By 1973, residents of North Parkdale, with a new residents association of their own, obtained a bylaw limiting new construction to 30 feet or three storeys.<sup>66</sup> Also in 1973, the City of Toronto Planning Board issued “A Report on the Desirability of the Intense Proliferation of Group Homes, Rest Homes, Halfway Houses and Children’s Homes in the South Parkdale Area”. The report recommended an end to as of right applications for institutional use in the parts of South Parkdale still zoned R4, and suggested a by-law similar to the ones in the Annex and Don Vale, that would disallow new group homes within a 400 foot proximity of an existing group home. The report argued that de-concentrating group homes would result in “therapeutic effectiveness” for their residents. This specious rationale ignored the fact that there were few other sites in Toronto whose zoning would allow the creation of this form of housing.<sup>67</sup> The 1976 neighbourhood plan, “Trends and Planning Goals for South Parkdale” took restrictive zoning a step further. The “primary objective” of the plan was “to strengthen the residential character of the neighbourhood” by limiting “the expansion of institutions and institutional-related uses”, including group homes



and bachelorette apartments.<sup>68</sup>

In the meantime, the PTA, in conjunction with Parkdale Community Legal Services, began to focus on deteriorating conditions in some high rise apartment buildings. West Lodge Apartments, two 18 storey buildings in North Parkdale, were bought by Phil Wynn in 1968 for \$8 million. In 1973, Wynn attempted to sell the two buildings for over \$10 million to a German consortium, but soon took the buildings back when they defaulted on the vendor mortgage. By 1975, there were 1,100 outstanding building code violations, including malfunctioning front door locks, no intercom system, unreliable elevators, and filthy garbage rooms.<sup>69</sup> The PTA, assisted by local Councillor Archie Chisholm and the Parkdale Community Legal Services, organized a rent strike in late 1973, but only 18 of 720 households participated.<sup>70</sup> Wynn, who was called “a contemptible landlord” by a judge and “The Most Hated Man in Town” by *The Canadian Magazine*, claimed that he took a personal interest in his tenants and that they trusted him to sort out the problems. The PTA claimed that he personally beat up local organizers, and the tenants lived in fear of eviction.<sup>71</sup> What is certain is that Wynn rented his units to new immigrant families who were shunned at this point by other local apartment managers. The PTA telephoned 31 buildings in West End Toronto in early 1975, and found only one willing to rent to a family.<sup>72</sup> By 1977, the City had stepped in to repair the “bottomless pit” building, and added the costs to the property tax bill. Despite Wynn being behind in both mortgage payments and property tax, the City refused to expropriate the buildings.<sup>73</sup>

The growth of bachelorette buildings in South Parkdale during the early 1970s was the outcome of a range of city-wide and local factors. First, despite the proliferation of highrises with one bedroom and bachelor units in Parkdale, there was a large and growing unmet demand for

cheap single person accommodation throughout the central city. In 1957, 10% of Toronto's population lived in single person households. By 1976, the proportion had risen to one in three, and many of these households were living in poverty.<sup>74</sup> Parkdale, having gained a reputation as a cheap place to live, attracted many of these households. Second, the bylaws governing rooming houses were increasingly restrictive throughout the city, and aside from a limited municipal program, there were few attempts to preserve this stock from the depredations of renovators. So choices were narrowed. Third, rooming house owners, by adding a kitchen or bathroom, could claim that a room was a self-contained apartment, and increase their rent while avoiding the costly and contentious licensing process as a rooming house operator. Fourth, a provincial land speculation tax in 1974 on residential investment properties held for less than ten years, intended to prevent property flipping, led some of the larger developers to maximize interim profit from their poorly maintained old houses in Parkdale by conversion to bachelorettes pending apartment redevelopment. Fifth, and possibly most important, institutional mortgages for illegally converted properties were readily obtainable. In 1978, for instance, 6 Elm Grove was one of seven properties that together accounted for a total of \$2 million in mortgages held by Sterling Trust, a reputable lender whose directors included a well-known Canadian publisher specializing in left-wing books.<sup>75</sup> Finally, conversion to an illegal use (illegal because the units were smaller than the minimum size for an apartment in the Ontario Building Code) was facilitated by a corrupt civic bureaucracy. From 1976 to 1978, the chief plumbing inspector and several other building inspectors were charged with taking bribes, after 57 files concerning over 40 buildings vanished from City Hall.<sup>76</sup> By 1977, City officials estimated that there were 300 illegally converted buildings in South Parkdale. While some buildings had only one or two bachelorette apartments,

it was reported that there were 30 single units in one Cowan house, and 43 in another house on Spencer.<sup>77</sup>

Although some bachelorette buildings were owned by large developers, many other buildings had been converted from rooming houses or larger apartments by small developers specializing in bachelorettes. One developer eventually charged with illegal conversions, Benislav Ivanovic, had immigrated to Canada from Croatia when he was 23, in 1968. His career as a bachelorette owner began in 1972, when he was given a stake in a building as payment for his services as a drywall contractor. In 1978, he lived in a suite in one of the 14 Parkdale properties he had converted. He described his tenants as better off now that he had installed kitchens, since they couldn't afford to eat out, and had previously cooked on hotplates and washed up in communal bathroom sinks. However, his claim that he was "buying a slum and converting it into luxury accommodations" was nonsense. There was nothing luxurious about leaking toilets not properly bolted to the wall, kitchens without cupboards, and plywood unit dividers.<sup>78</sup> The business was profitable. Ivanovic boasted that a building he bought for \$180,000 would be worth over \$1 million when he was finished his renovations.<sup>79</sup> Tenants might be spending \$160 a month where previously they had paid \$100 for a room or a half of a large two bedroom apartment, which exerted an upward pressure on neighbourhood rents.<sup>80</sup>

Bachelorettes were a step up for many of the tenants living in the squalid conditions of some group homes and rooming houses in Parkdale. Capponi, for instance, treats the move from Channon Court into a bachelorette apartment at the end of *Upstairs at the Crazy House* as the start of her new life. They met a growing need for small self-contained units that had been recognized in 1973 when City Council approved Phoenix Place, with an average apartment size of

240 square feet, and in 1975, when a Planning Board report on Housing Low-Income Single recommended that 20% of all new accommodation built by the City consist of self-contained units with a minimum size of 225 square feet, including bath and cooking facilities.<sup>81</sup> The City could have created new standards for small apartments and legalized apartments which met these standards, although it would have required permission from the provincial government. It could then have cracked down on maintenance violations in all rental units, including high rise apartments and licensed rooming houses in South Parkdale. The City had been given provincial permission to make repairs and add the cost to the landlord's property tax bill, and rent controls in place at the time would have allowed small rent increases to cover improved maintenance. Instead, City Council decided placate a new resident group called the Parkdale Working Group on Bachelorettes (PWGB).

The PWGB, comprised of local home and business owners and also owners of legal rooming houses, were opposed to the legalization of bachelorettes, on the basis that they "threaten the stability of family neighbourhoods, strain community facilities through overcrowding, destroy streetscape, and bring a host of social problems because of the often rowdy transients they attract as tenants".<sup>82</sup> In 1977, the City proposed setting standards such as a minimum unit size of 145 square feet as a preliminary to legalizing some of the units. This was an extremely low minimum unit size. Even the Toronto Guest Home Association, the bachelorette owners' lobby group, said they would be happy with a 190 square foot minimum.<sup>83</sup> The PWGB responded with recommendations that were clearly untenable, not to mention contradictory. They demanded a minimum 25% landscaped open space and no alterations to the exterior, plus a minimum of one on-site parking space for every two units.<sup>84</sup> The dispute formed the back-drop to a municipal

election in which Barbara Adams, the Chair of the PWGB, successfully unseated Ed Negridge, who supported policies that encouraged 'bedsits' throughout Toronto, as the junior alderman for Ward Two.<sup>85</sup> The local campaign was bitter, and full of 'dirty tricks'. According to *The Toronto Sun*, photocopied documents distributed to the media detailing Negridge's arrest for impaired driving several years earlier bore the same Queen's Park legislative postage meter as letters of support for Barbara Adams signed by Jan Dzuksza, the NDP Member of Provincial Parliament.<sup>86</sup>

John Sewell, the reformist who had helped organize Trefann Court, was elected as Mayor. Although the Council majority was now called progressive, Sewell was the one dissenting voice at Council when Phoenix Place was approved in 1974, saying that a lower building with more family units was appropriate, and Adams had made elimination of illegal bachelorettes a major plank in her platform. Immediately after the election, in January 1978, a by-law banned all new and converted boarding or lodging houses in Parkdale, with the exception of those legalized before that date.<sup>87</sup>

The ban did little to diminish the number of bachelorettes, nor did it seem to affect further conversions in Parkdale. Barbara Adams wrote a stream of letters to City Council passing on complaints from constituents. For instance, 156 Dowling, once a 'traditional' boarding house with one self-contained dwelling unit, 10 rooms, three kitchens and 3 and a half bathrooms, received a permit for "small alterations" in 1977. A 16 by 33 foot addition had been built, and now there were a total of 18 self-contained units with bathroom and space for a kitchen in each unit, although the gas and water lines had been capped. Their average size was 240 square feet. There were only four parking spaces instead of the required 13.<sup>88</sup> What seemed missing from all of these accounts of "bombed out buildings", as Adams called them, was a discussion of

acceptable standards, whether based on aesthetics or public health, for all buildings in Parkdale. After all, many single family houses were getting building permits for much larger additions. There seemed to be no proof backing up the need for a particular ratio of parking spaces. In fact an early 1980s study found that one space for every three units was ample for single room occupancy units.<sup>89</sup> Nor was there any substantive discussion of the rationale behind various minimum unit sizes.

By January 1979, Sewell had created a Mayor's Task Force on Bachelorettes. The report's recommendations, released in April of that year, included the establishment of a "clean up team" to "speed up the process of getting rid of about 300 properties in South Parkdale that currently violate by-laws".<sup>90</sup> Clayton Ruby, a civil liberties lawyer associated with progressive causes, was hired to lead the process, at a rate of \$90 per hour. He was later replaced by Ian Scott, the future Liberal Attorney-General of Ontario, who charged \$900 a day. By September of 1979, hundreds of charges had been laid, not only against 20 bachelorette owners, but also against 28 tenants.<sup>91</sup> After that initial splash of publicity, the process bogged down. More than a year later, fewer than half the landlords charged had been convicted, only five buildings had been closed down, and the 14 month process had cost \$211,000, not including the wages of nine City Hall staff seconded to the project.<sup>92</sup> Ivanovic, one of the landlords convicted of multiple charges, faced a \$2,750 fine, hardly a deterrent to future action.<sup>93</sup> Sterling Trust, facing 20 charges of violating by-laws, was fined \$525.<sup>94</sup>

The Bureau of Municipal Research, the business-supported think-tank that had been one of the few voices against 'slum demolition' in the 1930s, spoke up once again for the rights of tenants with a report entitled *A Case for Bachelorettes* in 1982. They pointed out that the City

had the legislative ability to expropriate and manage buildings that persistently violated fire and health safety regulations once it established minimum standards for single room occupancy units,<sup>95</sup> instead of closing down buildings or letting landlords abandon them, which was the practice with the Clean-Up Squad.<sup>96</sup> Parkdale Community Legal Services had also swung around to embrace bachelorette tenants, helping to organize a separate 'Parkdale Bachelorette Tenants Association' affiliated with the PTA.<sup>97</sup> Newspapers, led by the *Toronto Star*, began to provide sympathetic coverage of the approximately 1,200 "elderly widows and war veterans, welfare mothers with small children, and unemployed persons" who would lose their homes if bachelorette buildings were closed down. Juliane Dubay, a 29 year old mother of three, had been told to leave her Cowan Avenue apartment, but "I got used to it here... To find a new place you need your first and last month's rent". A 32 year old single tenant on Dowling, Jim Donnelly, feared that "all that will be left are flophouses with 15 people using one bathroom. At least you have your own bathroom here".<sup>98</sup> At a bachelorette building on Wilson Park Avenue owned by Sterling Trust (the redevelopers having defaulted on a mortgage), tenants were told that the building was substandard, in part because it needed to provide 12 parking spots for the 40 tenants. Yet only two tenants owned cars. Beare Weatherup, a seconded City of Toronto employee whose sole task it was to find alternative accommodations for tenants displaced by the crack down, admitted that it was "not realistic to get rents" as low as the \$55 a week charged for the units.<sup>99</sup> By 1986, when the Clean-Up Squad was effectively disbanded, the cost for the five year project was \$315,000 in legal bills and at least \$600,000 in employee hours. A total of 60 buildings had been closed down, and approximately 300 people left without a home.<sup>100</sup> The Gardiner Expressway had accomplished more 'slum' dehousing in less time for less money, and at least it

left behind a road.

Not only was the Bachelorette Clean-Up Squad an ineffective and costly regulatory exercise, and not only did it harm the most vulnerable members of the neighbourhood while not helping to improve housing conditions for the majority, it was remarkably divisive, creating scars among neighbourhood groups that remain to this day. Alderman Adams and the PWGB felt that despite the “crackdown”, they had been betrayed by a “change in focus” as Sewell’s office slowly came around to the idea that regulations needed to be relaxed to ensure the viability of single room occupancy units in the City.<sup>101</sup> As Mark Connelly, from the Parkdale Village Residents Association (the new name of the SPRA) said when the ‘clean-up’ was formally shut down in 1986, “this is like saying to a drug-dealer that his goods should be legitimized because the people want his product”.<sup>102</sup> In turn, housing agencies charged that the same small group of homeowners and local politicians stirred up “local hysteria” every time a social housing project came along.<sup>103</sup> By the time the City attempted to legalize bachelorette units on a building by building basis in the late 1990s, Parkdale Community Legal Services and the Parkdale Tenants Association refused to sit down at the table with the residents and business associations, claiming that any attempt to regulate these buildings would amount to “social cleansing”.<sup>104</sup> One bachelorette owner, caught in an uneasy alliance with his tenants and anti-poverty organizations, asked plaintively: “What about the bastard slumlords in the legal highrises?”.<sup>105</sup> A tenant said, with an air of resignation, that he had been pushed from house to house by renovators and regulators, “and the next thing you know, we’ll all be in the fucking lake”.<sup>106</sup>

#### The Resurgent Urban Village: the renovation of Parkdale’s history

How did a small group of homeowners dominate politics in a neighbourhood that was so



overwhelmingly made up of tenants? Why did a particular form of housing, bachelorettes, get the lion's share of opprobrium and municipal government action while conditions in legal rooming houses and apartment buildings were steadily declining? What kind of justifications were offered for a million dollar dehousing program in Parkdale during a period when the supply of affordable small units in Toronto was evaporating in the face of growing demand?

Graham Cotter had written of the "recurrent patterns" in Parkdale's history. It is possible to view the Parkdale Working Group on Bachelorettes as the latest and most successful step in a century-old dance of images and social conditions within the neighbourhood. In the 1880s, rowhouses along alleyways were described as 'tenements' by residents who unsuccessfully fought the construction of this form of housing. In the 1910s, the term 'tenement' was applied to new apartment buildings and conversions of villas into flats in another unsuccessful attempt to stop a particular form of housing. The signage bylaw in the early 1930s was a third attempt to control a particular form of housing, rooming houses, in Parkdale. By that time, the City had decided that all houses within Parkdale were declining and on the road to obsolescence. In the 1970s, the municipal government, institutional lenders, and developers found new value in Parkdale's older houses. Banning bachelorettes was a way to accelerate the process of reclaiming these older houses for the single family market.

Despised housing forms were associated with particular social groups who were felt to be a threat to Parkdale's identity. Rowhouses would attract "mechanics", who in turn would frighten away middle class families from the growing suburb. Apartment buildings and rooming houses would be lived in by single women and men and childless couples who were perceived as a threat to family formation and a sign of "decline". Bachelorettes would attract "transients" with mental

illness or addictions, who would prevent “the lost village” from regaining its communal “identity”. They would turn Parkdale into a “ghetto”.

When Parkdale was first described as becoming a serious slum in the 1930s, its supposedly stable middle class residential past was recalled as a contrast to present conditions. As Parkdale gentrified in the early 1970s, its mythic past began to assume ever greater importance. In April 1973, the Parkdale Baptist Church sponsored a Toronto Historic Night, and by 1974, the *Citizen* was reporting on meetings of the Parkdale Local History Club.<sup>107</sup> In 1976, a non-profit Parkdale Village Foundation was created to channel federal funds for a 1979 celebration of the centennial of Parkdale’s incorporation as a village. In the same year, a \$1 million Neighbourhood Improvement Program grant went towards creating a fountain and benches at “the historic centre of Parkdale” in front of the Public Library and across the street from the new Community Centre. *Parkdale: a Centennial History*, was produced in 1979. In these local histories, planning reports, and in newspaper coverage of the neighbourhood’s current issues, a version of Parkdale’s history gained authenticity through sheer repetition. Like one of the houses on Melbourne Place, this redeveloped history gutted much of the record, while keeping certain details in place for effect.

Oddly enough, given the secular nature of Canadian society by that time, the story of Parkdale that emerged was rife with religious parallels. An affluent and stable past was referred to as a ‘state of grace’ with the Village of Parkdale as Eden. The fall from grace was caused by hubris and greed, the tree of redevelopment, as it were. The new generation was trying to find future meaning through turning away from the sins of the fathers, and rediscovering past virtues of the forefathers. “Parkdale: where graciousness fell victim to the greed of progress” read a

*Toronto Sun* headline in 1977. “The passing years have seen Parkdale’s slow fall from grace”, said the *Toronto Star* in 1979. The latter article begins:

“The past is present again for the three young women in T-shirts and jeans.... Morning ‘til night, they work over faded photographs, ancient land surveys, old records... Not a word is spoken about Parkdale’s current blights: Illegal bachelorettes, oppressive traffic, more and more transients... It’s Parkdale’s centennial celebration this year, and hope for the future is being sought through a backward glance at the neighbourhood’s romantic and optimistic beginnings.”<sup>108</sup>

Although the local historians did not talk of Parkdale’s ‘current blights’, the enquiry was an attempt to place a pattern on the past in order to explain the present and suggest a future.

Carole Corbeil, the novelist and arts critic who wrote an elegaic newspaper article on Parkdale’s past and present in 1980, described the former state of grace: “Parkdale, with its lake view, its old houses, with its shoreline of boardwalks, of bathing pavillions and dance halls... [was] possibly the only true vision of beauty that Toronto ever had”. Corbeil quoted a “Parkdale resident of 36 years, a 78 year old retired bricklayer” who remembered walking “home from work at five o’clock [to] see all these old ladies on the porch gettin’ served tea and biscuits by their maids. It was a village, not a slum”. A 1976 Neighbourhood Improvement Program report said that South Parkdale originally “housed a class of wealthy, well-educated professionals” living in “large homes on large properties”.<sup>109</sup> The industrial workers in row houses, the lodgers living in the villas, the seamstress in the shack, had all been forgotten, as had the fights over ‘tenements’, ‘foreigners’ and ‘room for rent’ signs.

The actual moment of the fall from grace varied somewhat. A 1973 *Real Estate News*

article by Howard Walker referred to the “early twentieth century rivalry with Rosedale” ending in the 1930s, as the second generation of residents moved on. *The Parkdale Citizen*, in a two part history of the neighbourhood published in 1974, said by 1950 “Parkdale was losing ground almost daily in its feud with Rosedale as first choice of the wealthy in Toronto”. In 1978, another two-part series in the *Real Estate News*, contended that by 1950, people who inherited the “huge, gracious homes, well-kept gardens, and well-maintained streets” found them difficult to maintain. The loss of an articulate middle class thus gets implicit blame for the planning follies that followed, as it did in Reverend Cotter’s history. The 1976 neighbourhood plan for Parkdale also gave the 1950s as its turning point, using as an example Jameson Avenue, with “no apartments” in 1955, two by 1957, 16 by 1959 and only two original houses left by 1962. Yet this last example was completely ahistorical. The six-storey Kingsway Apartments and at least two other apartment buildings fronting Jameson dated from the 1910s, and by the 1930s, most of the villas had become rooming houses.<sup>110</sup> The *Toronto Sun* said that in 1974, with the sudden growth of illegal bachelorettes, “three quarters of a century of relative stability came to an end”.<sup>111</sup>

In all these articles, the present was unpleasant. Corbeil used another religious comparison, Parkdale as the scapegoat for Toronto’s sins: “All other parts of town can bask in the illusion of urban victory, but illusions always exist at the expense of something, and that something often turns out to be Parkdale”. Parkdale had become a “dumping ground”, first for a much needed urban expressway, then for low-cost housing and group homes. Another article in this genre from 1982 said that Parkdale, with its “leafy” streets and “jewel” like homes, had become a “dumping ground” (that phrase again) for the poor.<sup>112</sup> As one rooming house resident, Pat Capponi, later put it, if Parkdale was a dumping ground, then poor people like her must be

garbage. Parkdale had its life drained out of it along with its wealth. Jameson Avenue's highrise corridor was, to Corbeil, a "mini Jane Finch [a suburban public housing 'ghetto' northwest of the central city]... unrelentingly sunny, barren and sterile".

Parkdale had become a scapegoat, a dumping ground, barren and sterile. The 'new poor' of Parkdale were already dehumanized by these terms, and residents drew on other slum literature tropes that denied citizens their identity as people. Now, according to the long time resident who had described the afternoon tea parties, the older houses were "cut up into bachelorettes" filled with "two legged rats", who "sleep all day and roam the streets at night". "You don't get families [in bachelorettes]", another resident complained, "you get riff raff".<sup>113</sup> Even for those who granted the poor some human characteristics, they really were a breed apart. Corbeil interviewed a former "tough guy" (almost certainly M.T. Kelly) who described the old Parkdale Hotel, now called OV's, with its "clientele in and out of jail... [who] never do a day's work in their lives"<sup>114</sup>. Another resident said in 1979 that Parkdale had become "an unbearable hell not fit for decent people", although a year later, after the start of a crackdown on bachelorette apartments, she amended her views.<sup>115</sup>

Even in the slough of despond, a re-awakening or rebirth could be predicted by some journalists. In 1977, a *Toronto Sun* journalist in search of "chic streets" described Melbourne Avenue. Now that the Dominion Radiator Factory was gone, it was "so quiet you can hear your footsteps at 5 o'clock' in the afternoon. Aside from "fat cats" and "kids setting out street hockey nets", there was restful peace, with trees rustling in the gentle lake breeze. It could be a "scene from a planning student cribbing Jane Jacobs". Parkdale, like the Annex, Riverdale, and Don Vale (the gentrifying area soon to take on the name 'Cabbagetown', which had previously

belonged to the 'slum' redeveloped as public housing to the south), offered a fine prize to a new generation of urban "pioneers".<sup>116</sup> In 1980, Corbeil, too, wondered whether Parkdale could, like some neighbourhoods, rise "phoenix-like... out of their ashes". Parkdale was certainly showing "signs of picking up on its own". The "attractive homes", including those subdivided into bachelorettes, were finding middle class buyers. A local real estate agent proclaimed: "For value, nothing in the city can beat Parkdale right now. You're paying as much as \$35,000 less for houses of comparable size and condition to other areas... It's a very good area right now." An art gallery owner living on Cowan Avenue, only the second owner since 1915, told Corbeil: "I've lived in American cities, in pretty bad areas, and compared to those this is a suburb". In 1981, the *Toronto Star* proclaimed "Old Parkdale reborn in new splendour" and, profiling a gay couple's conversion of a rooming house, predicted that it would once again become "the Rosedale of the west end".<sup>117</sup> A long-time resident was quoted in 1982: "Parkdale is like a sleeping Cinderella waiting for a fairy godmother to wave a magic wand and bring back the good old days".<sup>118</sup>

Almost alone among other writers of the period, Corbeil expressed doubts about some of the plans for revival, such as a private consortium burying the Gardiner Expressway, and a complete elimination of bachelorette apartments. She wondered whether these ideas were merely "mammoth bureaucratic measures to correct previous mammoth bureaucratic measures". And where would the poor people go if bachelorettes were eliminated? Why had a \$1 million Neighbourhood Improvement Program grant gone to create a fountain and benches in front of Parkdale Library, almost immediately removed because of the low-income people sitting on the benches and using the fountain to wash themselves and their clothes? Would it not have made

more sense to use the money to make existing housing better? Could Parkdale find a “middle ground” between “arrogant suburb and neglected dumping ground”?<sup>119</sup>

By the early 1980s, local newspaper coverage featured Parkdale almost daily. A scan of the *Toronto Star*'s “Pages from the Past” searchable database shows 415 “hits” for Parkdale in its news section in 1981, as compared to 128 for Rosedale and 114 for the Annex. An explanation for this attention is suggested by an article on “Parkdale as a neighbourhood to watch” in the November 1984 issue of *Toronto Life*. “For longer than we care to recall, gung ho realtors, local activists, and this magazine have been proclaiming that Parkdale is on the brink”, it began, “to which it is fair to reply, ‘of what?’” It described the “pitiful rubbies [who] congest a park designed to commemorate the village’s centenary” and how the “group home juggernaut” was rolling on. “Parkdale is a Cautionary Tale, an example of how well-meaning planning can go awry”, and this was certainly one strand of contemporary coverage. Then the magazine turned to the other strand: “And yet when two years ago we suggested Parkdale as a possible next Hot Area for middle class renovators, we weren’t whistling totally in the dark”.<sup>120</sup> Parkdale seemed to represent both the best and the worst of what the central city had to offer. On the one hand, it contained a fine stock of affordable houses to be renovated. It was, potentially, a peaceful suburb for the brave urban pioneer. On the other hand, it was the home of a growing urban underclass of (literally) shiftless “two legged rats”. It seemed to offer an ‘either/or’ choice for the future. Surely these two land uses could not co-exist for long, especially if there was competition for the same limited stock of old houses. The fact that both had co-existed uneasily for most of Parkdale’s history had been effectively air-brushed out. The newly renovated version of Parkdale’s history helped guide and justify city planning efforts that brought ‘special treatment’ into the hands of the middle class.

### Parkdale at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By the late 1980s, Parkdale had been made safe for gentrification, even as median incomes continued to decline and housing conditions worsened for the majority of residents. By 1981, one in four families with children in Parkdale lived below the poverty line, as compared to 11% throughout greater Toronto. Claims that Parkdale was losing its 'family' housing due to bachelorettes was belied by the fact that 9% of Parkdale's population was under five years of age, as compared to 7% in the rest of Toronto. Disparities within the neighbourhood were increasing. The median income in northwest Parkdale, now being called "Roncesvalles Village" by real estate agents, was \$18,608, while the median in south central Parkdale was only \$10,129. By 1991, 40% of northwest Parkdale wage-earners were classified as professional/managerial, as compared to 21% in south central Parkdale and 33% across Toronto.<sup>121</sup> Ghetto and gentrified village co-existed uneasily.

The last two decades have seen improvements in the neighbourhood that have benefited all residents. There have been attempts to reconnect Parkdale with its Lake Ontario shoreline. The lakeshore finally obtained a new boardwalk, along with the restoration of Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion as a free municipal swimming pool. A new pedestrian bridge over the Gardiner Expressway at Roncesvalles has facilitated access to the boardwalk and pool. The Dufferin Expressway plan had been shelved by 1975,<sup>122</sup> and a plan to deck over the Gardiner Expressway was first raised in 1980, reappearing at intervals ever since.<sup>123</sup> Several new parks and playgrounds were created in the neighbourhood, and Parkdale Public School was rebuilt with a



community centre and pool open to the public. The Flowery Suburb finally obtained its first public parks after 100 years of settlement.

As in the first years of the Village of Parkdale, policing public morality has assumed great importance. There have been several well-publicized crackdowns on the Queen Street drug and sex trade, in the last 20 years. On the first night of the “prostitute patrol” in 1984, alderman Chris Korwin-Kukczynski was a bit embarrassed when the group, armed with t-shirts, whistles, and cameras, were unable to find any women plying their trade.<sup>124</sup> The Ku Klux Klan reappeared during the early 1980s, attempting to distribute leaflets at schools on “morality issues”, but were soon evicted from their Springhurst Avenue base of operations by a community coalition.<sup>125</sup> In 1991, the New York City-based Guardian Angels, a vigilante group, attempted to open an office in Parkdale. They soon disbanded.<sup>126</sup> Parkdale Focus Community, a provincially funded community development organization set up in the early 1990s, shifted from an early emphasis on crime prevention through environmental design (with campaigns to remove phone booths on the grounds that they were encouraging the drug trade) to ‘softer’ anti-drug campaigns in the schools by the end of the decade.

Regular articles referred to the choice between costly enclave or dumping ground, with a 1987 article suggesting that Parkdale was well on its way to becoming “another Cabbagetown, ejecting down-and-outers”. According to this article, a house on Cowan that had sold for \$130,000 the previous year, had been renovated, flipped twice, and was now asking \$259,000.<sup>127</sup> Some bohemians were drawn to the area by the picturesque contrast between rich and poor. One artist, Sandor Ajzenstat, told an interviewer in 1996: “I think that if the community accepts someone who is walking down the street with their pyjamas on, then that means the community

will accept me".<sup>128</sup> By 1997, the article on Parkdale's "Bowery to Bohemia" conversion could point to 1313 Queen, the former Six Division police station converted to artist's apartments with a gallery on the ground floor, the Pia Bowman School of Dance in one of Parkdale's former churches, various local arts festivals, and a growing number of fashionable cafes and restaurants.<sup>129</sup> Three years later, the same newspaper would claim that the "gentrification of Parkdale" had effectively squeezed out artists from homeownership, while home-work lofts in the older industrial buildings were being transformed into condominiums and expensive offices. Now artists, having successively made Yorkville, Queen and Spadina, and Parkdale fashionable, would have to find a new "bohemia".<sup>130</sup>

Opposition to local affordable housing and social services continued. The Parkdale Village Residents Association and the Parkdale Business Improvement Association, active members of the anti-bachelorette movement, opposed the relocation of Archway drug and alcohol rehabilitation program from one Queen Street site to another in 1982.<sup>131</sup> When St. Mark's Church attempted to buy six houses (including one legal rooming house, and one bachelorette building) for conversion to rooming houses in 1983, it was blasted by both the senior alderman and the member of provincial parliament for Parkdale, the latter opining that "the more [rooming houses] you build, the more you need".<sup>132</sup> The following year, Alderman Korwin-Kuczynski tacked an amendment onto the end of a report from the Mayor's Task Force on Discharged Psychiatric Patients, reiterating a ban on future legal rooming houses in Parkdale, despite the report's findings that 10% of the remaining rooming house stock in Toronto was being lost every year.<sup>133</sup>

The Wynns, Phil and his sons, continued to provide conditions as bad as any bachelorette or rooming house in their apartment buildings. In January 1994, a woman burned to death at 103

West Lodge when her space heater caught fire after the City's inspections unit reported that heat and electricity had been turned off in the buildings, and indoor temperatures had fallen to ten degrees Celsius.<sup>134</sup> After rent controls were lifted by the province in 1998, Wynn sent notices increasing rents an average of 38%. Parveen Moussa, a single mother with two children, claimed she caught ten mice one sleepless night in her one bedroom West Lodge apartment.<sup>135</sup> Some apartment managers vied with Phil Wynn for the title of worst landlord. The Toronto Apartment Building Company, owners of four buildings on Jameson Avenue, called itself a hotel provider in 1983, and began to charge tenants an average of \$180 a week instead of \$338 a month.<sup>136</sup> After being convicted of defrauding \$240,000 from over 200 tenants in 1986, it evicted many of the tenants for 'overcrowding' one bedroom and bachelor apartments with families (without these units being inspected by the City), before opening these units up to the federal government for 'short-term' refugee family accommodation at \$24 per day, or \$720 a month.<sup>137</sup>

There were occasional oases of hope within this landscape of despair. A number of social agencies, notably Houselink and First Step Homes, were funded in the late 1980s and early 1990s to provide housing with supportive services for ex-psychiatric patients,<sup>138</sup> although funding dried up after the 1995 election of a neo-conservative provincial government. From 1985 onwards, an organization called Sistering offered a drop-in centre to homeless and socially isolated women at Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre, joining Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre, a drop-in that served homeless men and women, and Creating Together, a drop-in for low-income mothers with young children. The latter two agencies moved to Queen Street store fronts in the late 1990s. St. Francis Table and Shalom House, two organizations affiliated with Catholic ministries, continue to provide low-cost meals in the neighbourhoods. There are several food

banks and community economic development initiatives.

Successive exposes of “19<sup>th</sup> century European slum conditions” in licensed group homes and rooming houses followed repeated deaths and suspicious fires, without causing any meaningful changes to maintenance, ownership, or legislation related to these forms of housing.<sup>139</sup> A City Hall study on single room housing for low-income singles was sparked by the 1989 Rupert Hotel fire in east central, where 10 roomers lost their lives. A task force on homelessness was created after the successful candidate for Toronto’s mayoralty race in 1997 stated that “there are no homeless people in North York”, the same night a dead woman was found behind the North York gas station where she had been sleeping.<sup>140</sup>

Parkdale homeowner and business associations continued to insist they had more than their ‘fair share’ of small, low-cost, housing units. The Planning Department continued to listen. The most recent neighbourhood plan, in 1998, said that zoning must permit no more than three units per lot in Parkdale, since otherwise the neighbourhood’s “vital diversity” would be lost. The challenge was to restore Parkdale’s “stability”, to recreate an “environment where children can be raised and where home life can be enjoyed in relative peace and quiet, where neighbour can get to know neighbour over time, where pride in the place you live leads to good property maintenance, where change over time is incremental rather than abrupt”.<sup>141</sup>

With this planning report, we return to 1879 and the first image of Parkdale: the scent of flowers, the sound of trees rustling in the lake breeze, the reassuring sight of children playing together in their stable neighbourhood, the sense of pride in being a good place to live. Thirty five years of neighbourhood conflict, of political choices and failure of political will, of retrieved and recycled history, had gone into that hard-won image. Parkdale, the nascent urban village, was

no longer “becoming a serious slum”. If Carole Corbeil were still alive, would she call it an arrogant suburb or a neglected dumping ground? Perhaps it had become both.

### Notes to Chapter Six

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1. Toronto Star, March 28, 1974.
  2. Toronto Star, December 18, 1971.
  3. Toronto Star, August 8, 1970.
  4. Globe and Mail, November 17, 1970.
  5. Parkdale Citizen, September 1971 (first issue).
  6. Globe and Mail, November 17, 1970.
  7. Globe and Mail, December 2, 1969.
  8. Dear and Wolch 1987: 97-108.
  - <sup>9</sup> Capponi 1992.
  - <sup>10</sup> Dear and Wolch 1987.
  11. Globe and Mail, April 7, 1972.
  12. Parkdale Pictorial, April 11, 1962.
  13. CTPB 1961.
  14. Census figures for 1951, 1961 and 1971.
  15. City of Toronto Public Health Department Annual Report 1970.
  16. Kelly 1982.
  17. Telegram, June 6, 1971.
  18. Interviewed in Parkdale Collegiate Institute 1996: 30.
  19. CTPB 1960.
  20. CTPB 1959b; Lemon 1986: 26-27.
  21. Kaplan 1982: 618-619; 656.
  22. Kaplan 1982: 647-656.
  23. CTPB 1966, CTPB 1967a: 8; CTPB 1967b: 87.
  24. CTPB 1967b: 33.
  25. Globe and Mail, November 29, 1967.
  26. CTPB 1976a.
  27. Kaplan 1982: 677.
  28. Kaplan 1982: 677.
  29. Globe and Mail, November 17, 1970; Real Estate News, November 1973.
  30. Champion 1899: 246.
  31. Toronto Star, May 18, 1967.
  32. Globe and Mail, October 22, 1964; Toronto Star, April 27, 1965.
  33. Cotter 1979.
  34. Real Estate News, November 1973.
  35. Cotter 1979.
  36. Toronto Star, October 9, 1970.
  37. For more information on the Ajob trailer', see Telegram, March 23, 1971; for more on the Atlantic Centre, see Globe and Mail, April 15, 1971.
  38. Parkdale Citizen, October 1971; Toronto Star, November 22, 1971.
  39. Kaplan 1982: 623.
  40. Toronto Sun, February 9, 1972.
  41. Community Schools, March 1972; see also Toronto Star, February 21, 1972.

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42. Toronto Star, June 9, 1972.
  43. Toronto Star, February 6, 1976.
  44. Statistics from Caulfield 1994: 76-82; the Gutta Percha whistle is mentioned in many oral histories, such as Albert Crosswell's contribution to the Oral History Project.
  - <sup>45</sup> Caulfield 1994.
  46. Caulfield 1994: 61-75.
  47. City of Toronto Housing Working Group 1973: ii, 3, 8, 18, 33.
  - <sup>48</sup> Bacher 1993: 208.
  49. Evening Telegram, December 5, 1970; Toronto Star, October 27, 1973.
  50. CTPB 1976a: 60-61.
  51. CTPB 1974: 5.
  - <sup>52</sup> CTPB 1954: 14.
  53. Toronto Star, August 5, 1975; Lemon 1986: 29.
  54. City Planning magazine, Winter 1979.
  55. City of Toronto Planning Department 1980.
  56. City of Toronto Housing Department 1986.
  57. Globe and Mail, March 13, 1981, citing research for the Mayor's Task Force on Discharged Psychiatric Patients.
  58. Caulfield 1994: 86.
  59. Globe and Mail, April 7, 1972.
  60. Globe and Mail, September 27, 1973; Globe and Mail, May 8, 1975.
  61. Land registry records.
  62. Peat Marwick 1974.
  63. Starr Group 1998.
  64. Correspondence in Social Housing folder, Parkdale Public Library Local History Collection.
  65. Submission to Toronto City Council from PCLS on proposed amendments to zoning by-laws August 30, 1976 (PPL Local History Collection, bachelorette File).
  - <sup>66</sup> CTPB 1973a.
  67. CTPB 1974.
  68. CTPB 1976b.
  69. Toronto Star, November 16, 1973; The Canadian December 1975.
  70. Toronto Star, January 21, 1974; March 28, 1974.
  71. The Canadian December 1975.
  72. Parkdale Tenants Association newsletter, February 10, 1975 (Parkdale Public Library Local History collection, Tenants folder).
  73. PTA had pleaded for the city to take over, as reported in Toronto Star, January 21, 1974, and Toronto Sun, October 10, 1974; Toronto Star February 4, 1977.
  74. Toronto Star, May 8, 1979.
  75. Toronto Star, November 1, 1978.
  76. Toronto Star, November 1 and November 8, 1978; Toronto Star, December 19, 1979.
  77. Toronto Sun, February 27, 1977.
  78. Toronto Star, April 5, 1979.
  79. Globe and Mail, June 1, 1977.
  80. Letter from WM Piper to Globe and Mail, June 10, 1977.
  81. CTPB 1975.
  82. PWGB, cited in Globe and Mail, June 25, 1979.
  83. Toronto Guest Home Association deputation to the Committee on Buildings and Development, April 18, 1978.
  84. CTPB Report on AConversion of Boarding or Lodging Houses to Bachelorettes', May 18, 1977; PWGB response on AThe Basis of the Solution to Bachelorette Conversion' dated May 31, 1977, both PPL Bachelorette folder.
  85. Toronto Star, April 28, 1977.
  86. Toronto Sun, November 18, 1977.

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87. Bylaw 67-78, passed by City Council January 30, 1978.
  88. Letter to City Council from Barbara Adams, Alderman, July 11, 1979 re: 156 Dowling.
  89. AA Case for Bachelorettes', Bureau of Municipal Research, March 1982.
  90. Globe and Mail, April 27, 1979.
  91. Globe and Mail, September 14, 1979.
  92. Toronto Star, September 14, 1980; Globe and Mail, December 2, 1980.
  93. Toronto Star, May 31, 1980.
  94. Toronto Star, May 24, 1980.
  95. Bureau of Municipal Research, AA Case for Bachelorettes', March 1982.
  96. See, for instance, Toronto Star, May 28, 1980.
  97. Globe and Mail, May 28, 1980.
  98. Toronto Star, April 19, 1980.
  99. Toronto Star, May 28, 1980.
  100. Toronto Star, May 19, 1983; Globe and Mail, September 9, 1986.
  101. Globe and Mail, June 25, 1979.
  102. Globe and Mail, April 24, 1986.
  103. Globe and Mail, January 12, 1983.
  104. Eye Magazine, October 29, 1998.
  105. Toronto Star, November 16, 1998.
  106. Eye Magazine, October 29, 1998.
  107. Parkdale Citizen April 1973, May 1974.
  108. Toronto Star, June 17, 1979.
  109. City of Toronto Planning Department 1976b: 3.
  110. City of Toronto Planning Board, April 1976.
  111. Toronto Real Estate News, November 1973; Parkdale Citizen July 1974; Toronto Real Estate News August 4-10, 1978; Toronto Sun, February 27, 1977.
  112. Toronto Star, June 16, 1982.
  113. Toronto Star, April 5, 1979.
  114. Globe and Mail, September 13, 1980.
  115. Toronto Star, September 14, 1980.
  116. Toronto Sun, December 2, 1977.
  117. Toronto Star, July 1, 1981.
  118. Globe and Mail, March 10, 1982.
  119. Globe and Mail, September 13, 1980.
  120. Toronto Life, November 1984.
  - <sup>121</sup> 1981 and 1991 census.
  122. Toronto Star, June 19, 1975.
  123. Toronto Star, April 10 and June 5, 1980; also see Toronto Life June 2002.
  124. Toronto Sun, August 2, 1984.
  - <sup>125</sup> Sher 1983: 143.
  126. Toronto Star, February 5, 1991.
  127. Globe and Mail, January 12, 1987.
  128. Parkdale Collegiate Institute 1996: 68.
  129. Toronto Star, January 16, 1997.
  130. Toronto Star, July 4, 2000.
  131. Toronto Star, June 6, 1980.
  132. Toronto Star, September 9, 1983.
  133. Toronto Star, March 27, 1984; 10% figure from Globe and Mail, November 12, 1981.
  134. Globe and Mail, January 13, 1994.
  135. Toronto Star, October 22, 1999.
  136. Toronto Star, May 2 and May 27, 1983.

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137. Toronto Star, July 20, 1986.
138. Eg., Toronto Star, August 5, 1986 on sale of Channon Court, Pat Capponi's former home, to Houselink.
139. Egs., a five part Toronto Star expose on rooming house conditions by a reporter who went 'uncover' as an ex-psychiatric patient August 24-28, 1981; inquests of tenant deaths covered in Star, November 30, 1985, Globe and Mail August 5, 1986; reports on fatal fires in Globe and Mail June 25, 1981, March 27, 1986, Toronto Star September 17, 1998.
140. City of Toronto Alternative Housing Subcommittee 1992; Golden et al 1998.
141. City of Toronto Urban Development Services 1998.



## Chapter Seven

### Why Does Parkdale Matter?

“There is a quality even meaner than outright ugliness or disorder, and this meaner quality is the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the real order that is struggling to exist and be served” – Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*<sup>1</sup>

“Every new time finds its legitimation in what it excludes” – Michel Certeau<sup>2</sup>

#### The Tyranny of the ‘Descript Community’

In September 2002, during the Toronto International Film Festival, *The New York Times* went “on the party whirl in Tinseltown North”. As the reporter pointed out, the real business of the festival was taking place in the “chic stores, ... over-designed restaurants, ... and louche hangouts for serious drinkers” found in this “bustling city”. In a Queen Street West bar, alongside “new galleries and clubs” which “seem to pop up overnight”, the reporter met up with a “filmmaker, musician and budding game-show host” named Nobu Adilman. Adilman had recently moved to the “old Polish” neighbourhood at the end of Queen Street West, “where – as fast as you can say Greenpoint, Brooklyn – young artists are buying up two-storey houses on Roncesvalles Avenue for \$200,000 [\$300,000 in Canadian dollars]”. ““You have to wash the smell of kielbasas off yourself every morning”, Adilman was quoted as saying, ““but it’s worth it. You even get a basement and a backyard.””<sup>3</sup>

In the international cocktail circuit of cultural capital, Parkdale had come of age, rating an indirect mention in *The New York Times* as a hip place to live and work. Once again, reporters had come to the Flowery Suburb to sing its praises. The neighbourhood was commended for combining the virtues of an older suburb, space (basement and a backyard) and affordability, with proximate access to galleries and clubs, places of business in the new economy. The reminders of a 'slum' past, the louche bars and smell of kielbasa, were signifiers of pleasurable, since contained, heterogeneity and authenticity, much sought after by those who despise the homogenous outer suburbs. The urban village of Parkdale was now part of the global village of mass cultural consumption.

In 1929, Harvey Zorbaugh, a member of the Chicago School of Sociology, introduced one of the first studies of neighbourhood transition by saying that "a descript community is 'a place of unity and charm'". By these standards, Parkdale is what Zorbaugh would call a "nondescript community", one that "has physical proximity rather than unity".<sup>4</sup> Throughout its 125 year history, Parkdale has been a place of diversity and conflict, in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, and physical and mental health. My study of how, when and why labels were attached to this place demonstrates how successive descriptors papered over diversity and conflict. The image of Parkdale as a Flowery Suburb, a place for families, innocent amusements, and retreat from the city, ignored the fact that the majority of residents walked to work in nearby industrial jobs. When Parkdale was condemned as "becoming a serious slum", it was also providing good quality affordable housing alternatives for a range of moderate income households. The most recent imagery of Parkdale as a revitalizing village seems, at first glance, to

celebrate diversity. But it is based on a grossly simplified image of the past which informs discriminatory planning practices and accepts diversity only within narrow limits. The desire to create 'descript' communities of unity and charm out of the complexity of urban life continues to have exclusionary consequences.<sup>5</sup>

For a long time, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the perceptual map of urban residential structure and growth was remarkably simple. Central city living was unhealthy, immoral, and bad. The central city was the home of the poor and the 'different'. They lived in obsolete housing and squalid surroundings. Suburbs were healthy, moral and good. They were the home of nativized middle class home owners who lived in 'normal' families. Suburbs, though, held within them the seeds of their destruction. As cities grew in population, more people moved to the periphery. Density, and attendant social and ethnic mix, would reduce the desirability of a suburb to home buyers with most choice. They would move outwards to populate a new generation of suburbs, leaving behind a declining area. The majority of historical and contemporary studies of neighbourhoods and cities between 1870 and 1970 reflected this perceptual map.<sup>6</sup>

From the 1970s onward, it became increasingly difficult to ignore a counter-trend. Many people with choices as to where they lived were choosing central city neighbourhoods, the suburbs of earlier generations. Now neighbourhood trajectory was assumed to follow a pattern of initial investment followed by disinvestment, which in turn was followed by reinvestment.<sup>7</sup> Whether this trajectory was driven by changes of consumer taste or supply-side investment capital supported by government policy, was a major source of debate, as were the positive and negative impacts of this disinvestment.<sup>8</sup>

In the eyes of some celebrants of gentrification, it was now the central cities that were healthy, moral, and good, and the outer suburbs that were immoral, unhealthy and bad.<sup>9</sup>

As explained in the first chapter, there is a renewed interest in longitudinal studies of neighbourhood transition. This renewed interest is sparked by two factors: the gentrification of many neighbourhoods in Anglo-American central cities, which confounds earlier theories of inevitable decline, and a 'post-modern' concern with changing discourses or images of place.<sup>10</sup> Christopher Mele says that in the last decade, "urbanists have begun to address the processes in which rhetoric, images, symbols, and representations that cohere as conventions simultaneously reflect and shape social practices within specific spaces and time frames".<sup>11</sup> I would argue there is a long minority tradition of examining complexity within communities, and investigating the relationship between perceptions and social conditions over time.<sup>12</sup> However, it is true that the post-modern turn within the social sciences has greatly expanded the number of neighbourhood and comparative studies that take a critical look at 'images of place'.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of this neighbourhood case study, as described in the first chapter, is to critically examine when, why and how one neighbourhood became labeled as a 'suburb', a 'slum' and a 'gentrifying neighbourhood' over time. Parkdale was called 'The Flowery Suburb' by developers, politicians, and journalists from the 1880s until the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The nickname would seem to have been invented by Parkdale's Reeve in May 1879, just as the name 'Parkdale' had been invented by the Toronto House Building Association when it registered its initial subdivision in 1875. Parkdale's image as a morally and physically separate place, a haven for the wives and daughters of middle-class commuters, was an example of successful marketing by some

of its resident developers. At the same time, other developers promoted a minority image of Parkdale as a place of working class homeownership, a haven for the prudent mechanic and his family. The existence of this 'other Parkdale', with 'lunch bucket' industrial walk to workers and other moderate-income residents, was forgotten over time.

By the early 1910s, Parkdale began to attract negative attention in newspapers and government reports, first because of its apartment buildings (both purpose-built and villa conversions), then because of conversions to rooming houses in the early 1930s. By 1934, it had been labeled in an influential local government report as "becoming a serious slum". There were few resident voices raised in opposition to this label, although after World War Two, the Polish community quietly embraced North Parkdale as a haven for working-class homeownership. The institutional lenders associated with this ethnic community did not agree with the consensus that the neighbourhood was inevitably declining. But local and senior government policies assumed that urban renewal was the only answer to the neighbourhood's decline, and supported wholesale redevelopment into high-rise apartment buildings through zoning, institutional loan guarantees and the destruction of older houses along the lakeshore for an expressway.

In the late 1960s, there was a resurgence of neighbourhood activism, with a theme of Parkdale returning to its past suburban glory. Politicians and some journalists listened to the voices of one group of developers, those who were renovating Parkdale's older houses into expensive single-family homes for their own use or resale. They ignored other voices, those of the tenants who were living in increasingly poor housing conditions and their social service advocates, government reports that warned of the loss of affordable housing throughout the central city, and some developers who were seeking to

increase the stock of small units in the neighbourhood for their own profit. By the 1970s, institutional lenders were happy to support all manner of redevelopment within Parkdale. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the latest stage of conflict over image was avidly reported in newspapers. The conflict resulted in a victory for ‘the resurgent urban village’, a shift in government policy that prioritized the needs of higher-income single-family homeowners for ‘stability’, and ignored the needs of lower-income families and singles living in rented accommodation.

My examination of Parkdale closely resembles Zane Miller’s recent history of the Cincinnati suburb of Clifton. Like Parkdale, Clifton was developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a mixed socio-economic “outer city neighbourhood”, although its image was of a wealthy community with “parklike grounds, splendid residences, magnificent prospects”.<sup>14</sup> From the 1910s onward, the rise of comprehensive planning in both cities was informed by the notion that, in the words of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century report, “older developments will gradually give place to more intensive development and the best type of housing will move further out”.<sup>15</sup> By the late 1940s, widespread apartment redevelopment was being promoted by metropolitan planners in the “middle aged” neighbourhood.<sup>16</sup> In 1961, a new community coalition called the Clifton Town Meeting began to advocate for the preservation of this “in-town suburb”.<sup>17</sup> Over the past 40 years, there have been continuing tensions over demographic “balance” in the community, with planning initiatives aimed at limiting the number of low-income households within the neighbourhood.<sup>18</sup>

I do not think it co-incidence that Miller and I use similar decades as turning points. Lemon gives 1912 as the date when the Toronto neighbourhood of the Annex

ceased to “develop” and began to “decline”.<sup>19</sup> Like Parkdale, the Annex’s larger houses were beginning to be converted to rooming and boarding houses, despite the interventions of newly formed ratepayer’s associations. Cleveland Heights was at the height of its affluence as a model community in the 1910s, yet clusters of inexpensive housing developments, including apartments along streetcar lines, were attracting foreign born members of the working class and leading to ethnic and class conflict.<sup>20</sup> Lemon says that Annex residents were pursuing the “politics of protection” from the early 1950s, with both tenants and a new generation of “whitepainters” promoting a “renaissance” in their neighbourhood.<sup>21</sup> As in the Annex, Cleveland Heights community associations were successful in fighting off proposed freeways in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

I would argue that the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the 1950s and 1960s were a time when the contradictions of urban social change were at their most unmanageable. The rhetoric of Hastings’ 1911 slum report and the subsequent discourse on apartment buildings in Toronto can only be understood within a context where rapid change in the number of women in the paid workforce, and growing concerns about ‘foreign’ immigration, led to a condemnation of housing forms that might accommodate these ‘different households’. I agree with both Christine Boyer and Robert Beauregard that the growth of planning instruments in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were an attempt to place greater ‘disciplinary order’ on an increasingly complex set of citizens and households.<sup>23</sup> Parkdale had been ‘sold’ as a morally different community during its development in the 1880s, but its diverse housing forms defied an increasingly stringent concept of what ‘a good place to live’ might look like. Similarly, the 1950s and 1960s were a time when households and individuals were changing rapidly. The urban social movements of the

time, which seemed at first to be broad-based and inclusionary, gradually turned into exclusionary battles that hid an agenda of homogenization under the rhetoric of social balance.<sup>24</sup> The fight to make Parkdale ‘a good place to live’ again required that “contradictory strategies and information [be] contained within a veneer of rationality and compatibility”.<sup>25</sup>

### Rediscovering a Nondescript Community

At one level, this study of Parkdale is about how, when, and why neighbourhoods get labeled over time. At another level, it is an attempt to rediscover the past in the light of the present. If one of the great challenges that face cities today is the accommodation of difference,<sup>26</sup> then it might help to look back at the past, not only to understand why it is that we have the exclusionary policies that we do, but also to uncover alternatives, sites of resistance, places that did not fit in the dominant models. I do not know of any other longitudinal neighbourhood studies that have been backed up by roughly comparable empirical data over a 125 year period. The use of assessment samples, street directories, land registry records, and (after 1951) census information has allowed me to go beyond the question of how images changed over time, and compare these images with social conditions. As I discuss in Chapters Three and Four, empirical records can be inaccurate. For instance, assessment records and street directories in Toronto tended to underestimate the number of lodgers. But even accounting for some inaccuracy, the following social and housing trajectory can be described:



- When Parkdale was first described as a residential suburb for middle-class commuters in the 1880s, the majority of household heads worked within walking distance, and there were more skilled labourers than businesspeople or professionals. The Parkdale homeownership rate was extremely high (75% in the 1881 sample, 60% in the 1891 sample), over double the Toronto rate. Property prices rose rapidly.
- Parkdale had its highest proportion of business people and professionals from the 1890s to the 1910s, after it was annexed by the City of Toronto and after its initial description as a 'flowery suburb'. Almost one in four mortgages was held by institutional lenders at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- By 1913, the proportion of mortgages held by institutions had declined, as had the proportion of professional and managerial households. This coincided with the first concerns about 'decline' in the community.
- Throughout the 1921 to 1961 period, Parkdale was a mixed community in terms of the socio-economic class of household heads. It continued to have a lower proportion of unskilled labourers than the City of Toronto, and in 1951, average income was not substantially lower than the average for greater Toronto. Parkdale was not a 'classic' slum of poor people and substandard housing conditions, although it was described as "becoming a serious slum". It was, however, a place where subdivision activity soared and homeownership plummeted in the 1930s. Even after the housing crisis of World War Two, it remained a community of tenants in a city of homes. Property prices were, by and large, stagnant after the late 1920s. There was a slight decrease in property prices in the late 1940s, followed by the beginning of a steady increase in property values.

- From the 1960s onwards, institutional mortgage lending increased, and house prices continued to climb above the greater Toronto average. At the same time, median household income was beginning to decline in Parkdale, and the occupational classification of workers was beginning to diverge, in relation to greater Toronto. A small proportion of homeowners were making good profits on their investments. However, most people in the neighbourhood were becoming poorer during the time that the neighbourhood was called an urban village.

To some extent, images were a faithful reflection of social conditions. Parkdale was a haven of homeownership at the time that it was a suburb, although its homes were occupied by industrial walk-to-workers as much as middle-class commuters. Parkdale did experience some social and investment decline at the time it began to be described as declining. Descriptions of Parkdale as an increasingly divergent community over the past 35 years, simultaneously a gentrifying area and a social service 'ghetto', can be supported by empirical data.

But images also predated, and to some extent determined social conditions. Parkdale's image as a flowery suburb predated the construction of most of its villas. Its image as a declining community justified disinvestment in its houses, and planning policies that encouraged wholesale destruction of affordable housing. A simplified image of Parkdale's past fuelled homeowner activism and planning responses that made the lives of poor residents that much more difficult, while supporting the gentrification of older houses in the community.

Throughout its history, Parkdale has provided affordable housing alternatives to people who need them. It continues to perform that function today. This study has

uncovered some of the ‘hidden history’ of tenants and landlords, women heads of households and others who were perceived as ‘different’ from the family homeownership norm. There is still very little known about the role of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban development, as landowners and as lenders.<sup>27</sup> Nell Gwynne, Pamela Noble, and Mrs. Virtue and her tenements are not unique. The importance of women as rooming house owners and as tenants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has also not been studied adequately.<sup>28</sup> The stories of Clara Ford in her shack in the 1890s, and Martha Crooks in her rooming house in the 1920s, are known to posterity only because they were involved in murders.

A great deal more remains to be known about ‘nativist’ movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and conflicts over difference. For instance, there are no published works on the brief life of the Toronto Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> There is little known about the lives of people institutionalized in the Magdalen Asylum for Fallen Women, Central Prison, Lunatic Asylum, or the Mercer Reformatory for Women and Girls.<sup>30</sup>

In general, we know very little about the basic struggles to obtain adequate and affordable housing over time.<sup>31</sup> Empirical studies of mortgage financing and property prices in Canadian cities before the Second World War are scarce.<sup>32</sup> The stories of Alan Skeotch’s father running barefoot in the snow to the nearest cheap hotel in the 1930s, Joseph Brunelle and his housing affordability strategies (home repair, taking in boarders, walking to work) from the 1910s to the 1960s, Pat Capponi trying to survive in her rooming house in the 1970s, Parveen Moussa catching mice in her apartment in the 1990s, all come from relatively unknown memoirs or brief mentions in newspaper articles. Their stories are important, not only because they illuminate housing conditions

in a way that reports or statistics never do, but because they speak to us of the importance of home and the lengths to which people go to find one.

Parkdale is not a special place, except in the sense that all places that people call home are special. It is a nondescript community in the best sense of the term. It is a complex place, where diversity has thrived despite repeated attempts to impose a false unity through a simple label. The question remains how to nurture that diversity, within neighbourhoods and within cities. The challenge remains to find a set of theories and policies that do not legitimize themselves by excluding the 'other'.

### Notes to Chapter Seven

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<sup>1</sup> Jacobs 1992 [1961]: 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Boyer 1994: 6.

<sup>3</sup> New York Times, September 15, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Zorbaugh 1976: xvii.

<sup>5</sup> See Young 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Some examples: Park et al 1974 [1925], Zorbaugh 1976[1929], Hoyt 1970 [1933] and 1939, Cressey 1938, Hoover and Vernon 1959, Warner 1974[1962], Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975, Little et al 1975.

<sup>7</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975, Smith 1979.

<sup>8</sup> Caulfield 1994, Ley 1996, Smith 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Allen 1984, Caulfield 1994, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Mele 2001a and b, Miller 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Mele 2000b: 628.

<sup>12</sup> Some examples: Firey 1948, Jacobs 1992 [1961], Dyos 1961, Clark 1966, Sennett 1974.

<sup>13</sup> Some examples: Mayne 1993, Zukin 1989, Howe 1994, Smith 1996, Mele 2000a and 200b, Miller 2001, McFarland 2001, Beauregard 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Miller 2001: 5,10.

<sup>15</sup> Miller 2001: 45.

<sup>16</sup> Miller 2001: 54.

<sup>17</sup> Miller 2001: 68.

<sup>18</sup> Miller 2001: 131.

<sup>19</sup> Lemon 1986.

<sup>20</sup> Morton 2002: 678-682.

<sup>21</sup> Lemon 1986: 23-24.

<sup>22</sup> Morton 2002: 689.

<sup>23</sup> Boyer 1983, Beauregard 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Smith 1996 and 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Boyer 1983: 68.

<sup>26</sup> Hayden 1984, Young 1990, Wilson 1991, Sibley 1995, Fincher and Jacobs 1998.

<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, with the exception of Rodger 2001 on Edinburgh and Green 2000 on London, I know of no studies on the question.

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<sup>28</sup> Although see Dennis 1987, especially his 'typology' of landlords in Toronto, and Strange 1995 on moral panic over female tenants in Toronto.

<sup>29</sup> But see Robin 1992 and Sher 1983, whose focus is on nativist and fascist movements in Canada.

<sup>30</sup> Splane 1971 is a classic work on the establishment of these institutions, but there is little detail on the lives of those who were institutionalized.

<sup>31</sup> Harris 1996 is an excellent work on affordability struggles in Toronto in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>32</sup> But see Doucet and Weaver 1991, and Harris and Ragonetti 1998.

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All reports are to be found in the City of Toronto Archives (CTA), the Urban Affairs Library (UAL), Toronto Reference Library (TRL), or the Local History Collections of Parkdale (PDL) and High Park (HPL) branches of Toronto Public Library, unless otherwise noted.

*A note on Toronto Planning Bodies: There were no long-term planning bodies in the City of Toronto until the early 1940s. In 1942, an independent committee on zoning created Toronto's first city-wide zoning by-law, which was accepted after considerable modification in 1943. From 1943 to 1946, the City Planning Board, an appointed committee reporting to Council, created Toronto's first master plan, which was never formally adopted by Council. In 1949, the re-organized Toronto City Planning Board presented a modified master plan (Official Plan), which was adopted by City Council. Other master plans followed in 1959, 1974, and 1992. From 1953 to 1997, a regional level of government, Metropolitan Toronto, encompassing the City of Toronto and the inner ring of suburban municipalities, also developed master plans which increasingly diverged from the City of Toronto's 'central city neighbourhood preservation' perspective. The Toronto City Planning Board, an independent body, became the City of Toronto Planning Department in 1980, and the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department soon after. In 1997, the Province of Ontario amalgamated all six municipalities within Metro Toronto into a new 'City of Toronto', and planning was subsumed within Urban Development Services. An Official Plan for the new City of Toronto was adopted in 2003.*

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*Toronto has three daily newspapers that have existed throughout the study period. The Toronto Globe and Mail is the result of a merger between the Globe, a Liberal party newspaper, and the Mail and the Empire, two Conservative party newspapers that had previously merged, in 1936. It is generally considered the 'pro-business' newspaper. The Toronto Star, with small-l liberal tendencies, has been publishing since 1894. The Evening Telegram, a populist tabloid since 1878, became the Toronto Sun in 1971.*

*The Parkdale Branch, Toronto Public Library (PDL) has hundreds of Toronto local and neighbourhood news clippings from 1970 onwards, and a scrapbook of newspaper clippings, lovingly hand-transcribed, from 1878 to 1910. A scrapbook of Toronto local news clippings from 1910-1930 can be found in the Baldwin Room, Toronto Reference Library (TRL). The Urban Affairs Library (UAL) has hundreds of news clippings about 'Parkdale Planning Area' from 1965 onwards. The Toronto Star has a searchable database, called Pages of the Past, covering the period 1894 to 1999. This database can be accessed free of charge at TRL and UAL. Because of the number of newspaper articles cited, I merely list the newspaper and publication date. All newspapers can be found on microfiche at Mills Library, McMaster University, with the exceptions of those so noted.*

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