

## THE VILLAGES OF HALTON HILLS

# Flour, personalities highlight Norval's story

The following is the fourth article in a series on the history of villages and hamlets which make up the Town of Halton Hills and is published irregularly in the New Tanner during the summer months. Much of the material comes from the Halton Atlas which was first published in 1877 and from a number of other sources including family histories and local historians such as Mark Rowe. This week's article is on the village of Norval which was a favourite of A.J. Casson, a Group of Seven's artist, who recorded many of Norval's streets in his painting. Norval nestles in a valley watered by the main Credit River where it is joined by the West Branch of the river which has its main source around Acton.

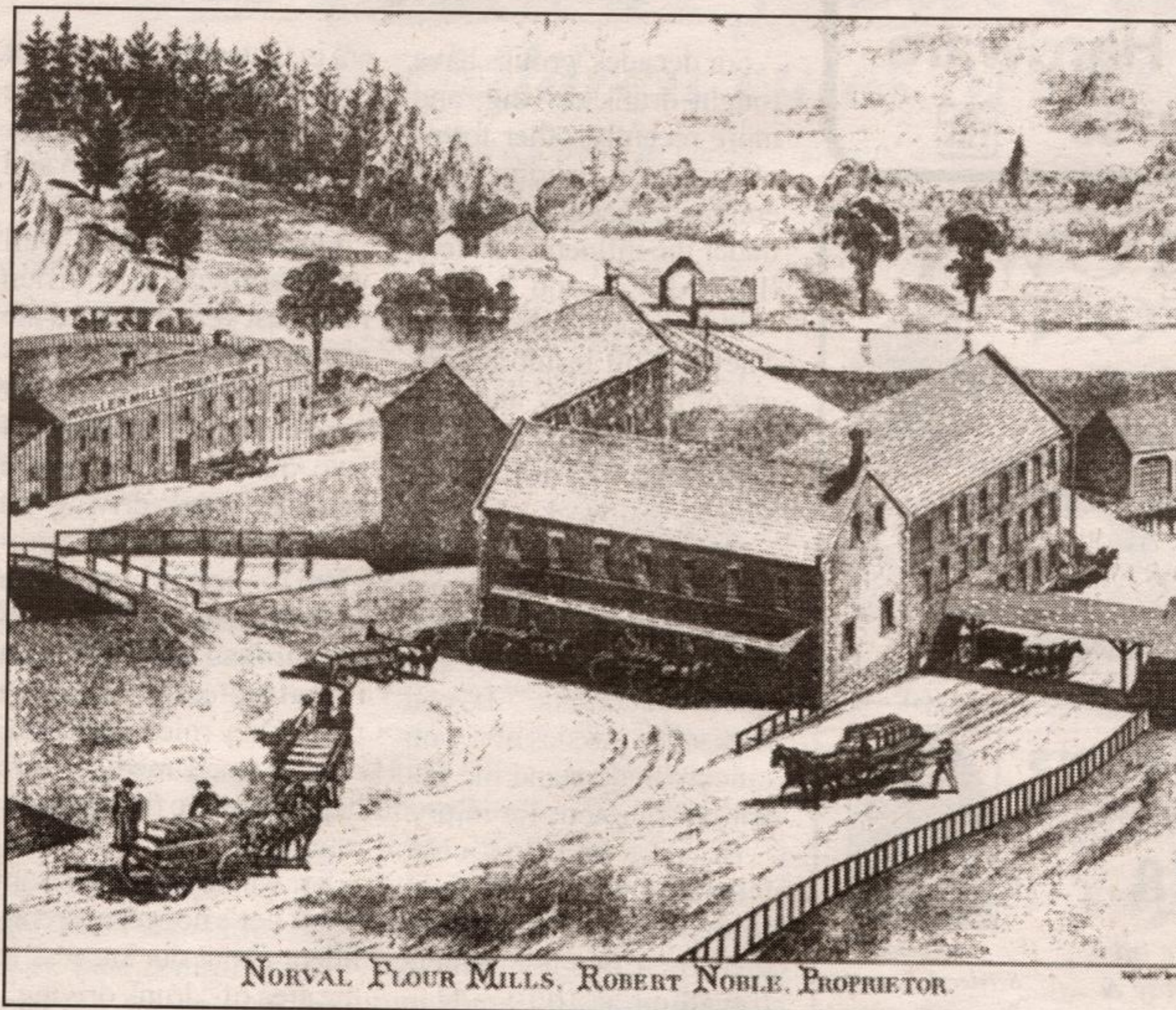
Such luminaries as Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of Anne of Green Gables, 19th Century portrait painter J.W.L. Foster; Jack Russell, former Canadian ambassador to the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) have all called the village of Norval home at one time or another as well as William Gooderham and George Worts, two well known 19th century merchants (Gooderham and Worts, of course.)

Norval is also the home of

local politicians such as former Liberal MP Julian Reed, former Halton Hills Mayor Kathy Gastle and former Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy.

Norval was founded in 1820 on the arrival of James McNab, a lieutenant who fought at the Battle of Queenston Heights in the War of 1812. McNab, attracted by the Credit River which flows through the valley on which he settled, built a water-powered sawmill, adding a grist mill and cotton mill in 1828 and did a thriving business until 1830 when he leased the flour and grist mill to John Barnhart.

Barnhart carried the business for some years until McNab again took charge. In 1838 it was purchased by General Sir Peter Adamson who operated it until 1845 when he leased it to Gooderham and Worts who ran it for 14 years before it fell into the hands of Robert Noble who demolished the old mills and built a three-storey brick building 35' x 100' and a storehouse 70' x 30' forming a capital L in shape. The mill could grind out 200 barrels of flour a day or 60,000 a year which would take an estimated 200,000 bushels of wheat. Needless to say the mill made the village now



NORVAL FLOUR MILLS. ROBERT NOBLE, PROPRIETOR.

### FROM THE 1877 HALTON ATLAS

called Norval from the original McNabville, a centre of pioneer life. The name change came in 1840 when a post office was established with Colonel Clay the postmaster.

Halton's 1877 Atlas says:

"A large gristing business is also done in connection with the mill. He (Noble) has a cooper shop which manu-

factures from 200 to 250 barrels per day. The saw mill, which also belongs to him, last year manufactured 200,000 feet of lumber. He is also owner of the large mill known as the "Norval Woolen and Cotton Batting Mills," at present leased by Messrs. Smith, Wilby & Co., of Toronto, and formerly run on an extensive scale by Mr. John Ross. It is run by water having eleven feet head. The present residence of Mr. Noble was rebuilt by General Adamson 15 years ago, and was purchased by Mr. Noble, together with the whole property, amounting to 428 acres,

in 1868. He keeps constantly employed 30 hands."

The Atlas said "the prosperity of the village is largely due to the energy and perseverance of Mr. Noble" and his mill produced flour which had no equal in the Dominion of Canada.

A landmark on the Credit for almost a century the flour mills were destroyed by fire in the winter of 1930 but the grist mill continued to operate until Hurricane Hazel struck in 1954. The grist mill's foundation was beyond repair in the wild water rampage caused by the hurricane. No trace of the mills remains today. The re-

maining buildings were demolished for the widening of Highway 7 in 1961.

Only the homes of the prosperous merchants remain to remind us of the days when Norval was a centre of activity, the Gooderham homestead, (circa 1850) on Guelph St. an example.

The Atlas says the village was home to a good brick school with two teachers, three churches, an Orange Lodge and hall, a band, a Volunteer Company and a drill shed. The Grand Trunk Railway followed a line a few miles north of Norval. Nevertheless it had a station built but Georgetown became the main railway centre and its station was almost as close as the wooden village stop.

Nowadays it is difficult to tell where the community of Georgetown stops and Norval begins but the village still retains many of the unique characteristics which made it a favourite of A.J. Casson's brush.

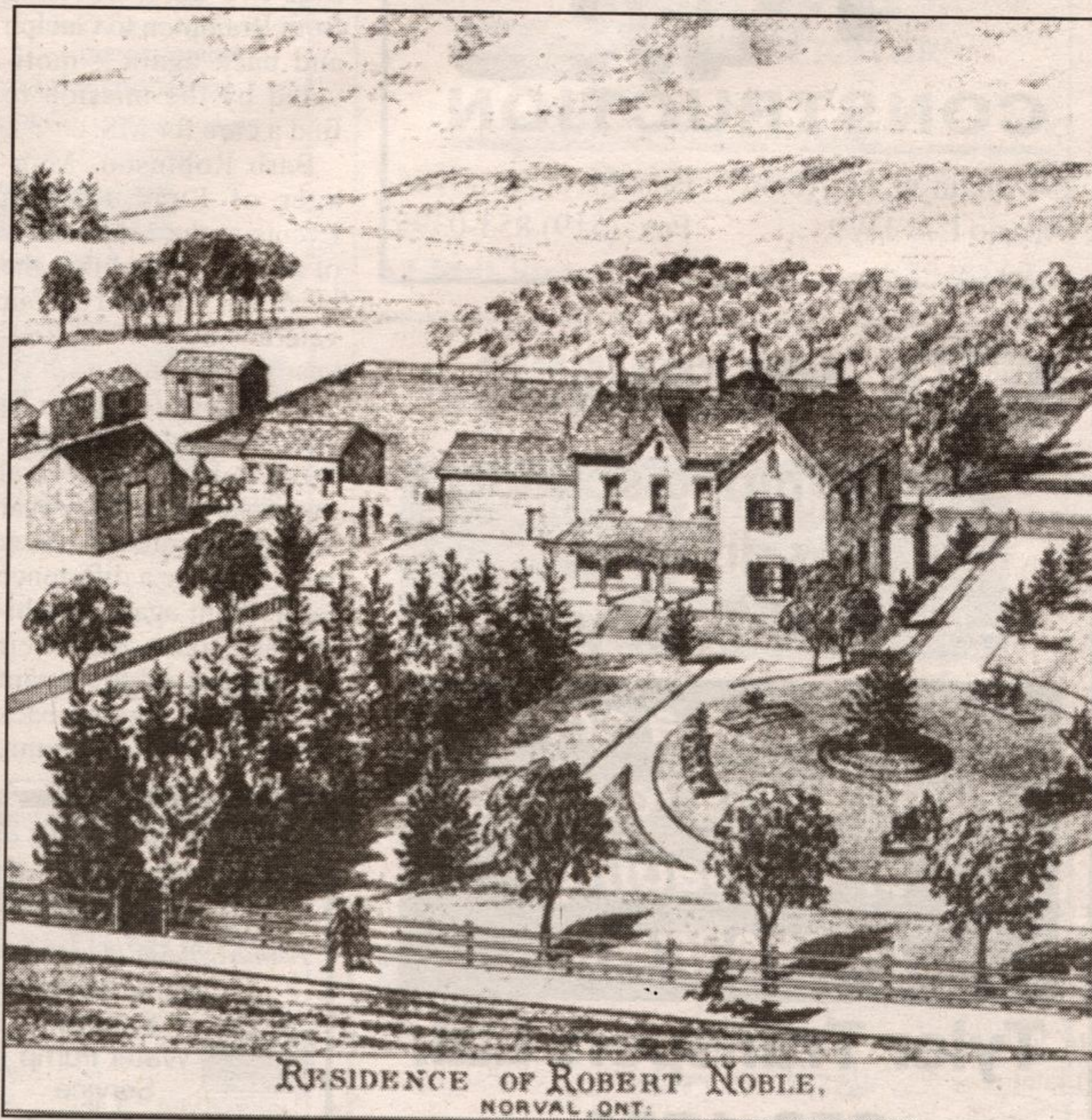
Like several other Halton Hills villages Norval is on a border. The Credit River passes under Highway 7 and marks the beginning of Peel Region and Brampton. The magnitude of the housing development in Brampton suggest that both Norval and Georgetown will one day be swallowed by the larger centre. It's a far cry from the 1940s when revellers from a "dry" Brampton journeyed across the "border" to the "Hollywood House" hotel in Norval to slake their thirst. But that's another story.

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RESIDENCE OF ROBERT NOBLE,  
NORVAL, ONT.

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