

## Window On The Past



The Yonge St. bus about 1895

By DORIS M. FITZGERALD

### Two Old Family Homes

For many years the surname Welsh has been an honored one on his farm. The contractor in the Thornhill district and for this commodious red brick oldtimers still associate two at-home was his cousin Leslie tractive houses with that family. Innes and it is said that young Both qualify for historical Mrs. Welsh provided meals for plaques but have not been a bevy of bricklayers and car-marked, possibly because they penters while the work was in were a little outside the old progress.



This well-maintained two-storey brick farmhouse, built by John Welsh, for many years was the summer residence of C. L. Burton, president of the Robert Simpson Co. It is located on Bayview Avenue at John Street.

The first house stands at the Canada at the same time as his northeast corner of John Street relative. He lived in Thornhill and Bayview Avenue (Lot 5, until 1885, then moved to Rich-Concession 2, Markham) on a hill and established the 125 acre farm bought from the well known firm of L. Innes and estate of Benjamin Thorne in Sons.

1848, for \$820. The buyer was Mr. and Mrs. John Welsh had John Welsh, a youthful widower four sons and one daughter who had arrived in the village who, as they grew up, struck from Dundee, Scotland, during out for themselves with some the previous year and soon be- parental assistance. James came active in the community went to Stockton, California and became a prosperous miller and exporter of flour to China; Hill Presbyterian Church. He married for a second time John settled on a farm in Lis-



Above is seen "Cedar Cottage", also a Welsh home, which still stands on the west side of Yonge Street. The original front porch is missing and the dormers have been modernized.

towel, Ontario and George went to Illinois. Only Eliza, who married Andrew Miller, and William, who took over his father's farm, remained in this area. But it was touch and go with William for a while when James asked him to come to California to help with the mill. He rented the Bayview farm and went to the States for a few years but the climate did not agree with his bride, Susan Clarke, and they returned to Canada.

In 1889 William Welsh bought a 70-acre farm on the west side of Yonge Street just north of the CNR Overpass, from James Chapman. The land represented one-third of the 210-acre Crown Grant deeded to Nathan Chapman the father of James, in 1796. Mr. Welsh reserved the cosy red brick cottage, built by James Chapman in the 1840's, and a few acres of garden land for his family, and rented the remaining 60-odd acres, and also the farm on Bayview.

William and Susan Welsh had three daughters, and a son who died in infancy. The girls, Ella Mabel and Hazel grew up in beautiful country surroundings, yet within easy reach of village doings. Sometimes they walked to the Thornhill Public School at Jane and Elizabeth Streets, but often their father drove them back and forth. Especially enjoyable were the trips in winter when warmly bundled up in the cutter they glided over the glittering white snow to the cheerful jingle of sleigh bells.

After their sister Mabel and Charles Harper were married and their parents had died Ella and Hazel Welsh were alone in their surprisingly spacious eight room "Cedar Cottage" and as time went on they began to consider the advantages of a smaller property in the village. Finally, some years ago they sold the farm to Wesley Gamble, and moved to Centre Street where Miss Ella died after enjoying some happy years in her new home.

The garden of Cedar Cottage is now used for display advertising but the old house still has an appealing charm for lovers of Victoriana who travel up and down Yonge Street.

Since William Welsh's death the farm on Bayview has been owned by three families, the Charles Robinsons, the Elliots, and the Burtons and the acreage has been reduced by the sale of lots on John Street and Green Lane. The late C. L. Burton, when president of the Robert Simpson Co., used the large brick house as a country residence and kept some saddle horses in the stable. Country however is no longer a suitable word to use for this one quiet crossroad.

# Company Retires Along With Employees

## TENDERS INVITED

By JIM IRVING

The impending retirement of four long-time employees of Sheppard and Gill Lumber Co. Ltd. in Richmond Hill will also bring about the retirement of that company, which has been here since 1929.

Tentative date for the closing out of the operation, which has been at its location at 71 Centre Street East since the beginning, is the end of July. However, Walter DeGeer, manager of the company, and one of the four who will be retiring, said it may take a little longer, depending on how fast they dispose of the \$100,000 worth of inventory. At present, some 10 percent, which is selling at one third of its original price, has been sold.

Mr. DeGeer said that liquidation of the company is coming about for one reason only, the retirement of him and three other employees, Lily Dal-

rymple, chief accountant and secretary-treasurer, who has been with the company 52 years; Steve Young, yard superintendent, 42 years; Alex McConkey, head mill man, 45 years.

Another long-time employee, now with Attridge Lumber Company, Aurora, was former assistant manager, Miss Violet McPeeters, who spent 18 years in the Bowmanville office and 10 in Richmond Hill.

Mr. DeGeer, who succeeded Frank Schissler, the original manager, in 1961, has been with the company 36 years.

Neither Sheppard nor Gill, the founders, have been with the company for 15 years, and it has since been operated by a group of investors.

"When they found out we'd all be leaving this year, they said it would be easier to liquidate the company than to try to find replacements," Mr. DeGeer said.

The company was founded in Toronto in 1919, and 10 years later, after first opening a branch in Bowmanville, it opened another one in Richmond Hill on the site of the old Jones Lumber Yard.

In 1961 the company disposed of both its Toronto and Bowmanville offices and Richmond Hill became head office, with Mr. DeGeer moving in from the Bowmanville yard.

At its peak, the Hill office employed 14 people, but is now down to five as the company gradually disbands.

Mr. DeGeer said that most of the employees had been absorbed into similar operations, but some such as Store Manager Bill Sheardown, were still undecided as to their next move.

As for the 1.9 acres occupied by the company, which has been acquired by developers, it is not known just yet what the latter have in mind so far as building is concerned.

At present, the property is zoned R-2 for single-family dwellings on 50-foot lots, with the lumber yard a non-conforming use.

Mr. DeGeer said that he thought probably townhouses, or a high-rise would go in, but that it was up to the developers and town council.

"Right now, all they could put in would be two houses, and they would have pretty big back yards," Mr. DeGeer said.

Mr. DeGeer's own plans are more definite. He and his wife expect to spend about six months of the year at their cottage at Rice Lake and the rest of the time at their Richmond Hill home, "living with all those nice neighbors."

"Except now, I don't have to get up anymore."

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## Could Need BAIF Separate School By 1974 - 466 Pupils By 1976

By 1976, the York County Roman Catholic School Board will have to provide accommodation for 466 pupils from the BAIF development in southwest Richmond Hill, Trustee Alan Quesnelle told trustees at their July 4 meeting.

"Indications are that a school could be justified in 1974, which means we should start working on plans in 1973," he reported.

Mr. Quesnelle reported that BAIF plans 100 homes for 1972, 300 in 1973, another 300 in 1974, 500 in 1975 and 577 in 1976. Using the standard yardstick for separate school pupils from these homes, he arrived at the figure of 466.

But Father Francis Robinson, Richmond Hill Trustee, reminded him that there are at present 126 pupils from that general area being accommodated in St. Mary Immaculate School on Trayborn Drive, Richmond Hill.

Application for construction of a public elementary school in the BAIF area made by York County Board of Education has not been approved, because the Department of Education feels it premature, therefore a Roman Catholic School might well be the first to be built.

"The statistics you have used are based on a public school already existing. Many Catholic children signed up in public schools do not transfer to the separate school when it is built," commented Dr. William LaCroix, Markham trustee. "It will be interesting to note what happens if the Catholic school is there first. I think you will find your figures too low."

Trustee Quesnelle reported that his committee will carry out a comparison examination of the Huron Heights area to see whether it or BAIF should be given priority in building plans.

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