

Hold Crown Deed To Markham Farm



The Reesor family farm in Markham Village has been sold. The property has passed through five generations during the past 160 years. Mr. Max Reesor (shown here) holds the crown deed, dated in 1805. —Staff Photo.

Reesors Leave Markham Farm After 160 Years of Ownership

160 years, to the day, after Peter Reesor purchased 200 acres of land in Markham Twp., P. Max Reesor closed it up. Peter Reesor bought the land on March 25th, 1805 and Peter Max Reesor left the land on March 25th, 1965. The difference: 160 years. The owners, five — all Reesors.

Following is a story made possible through the co-operation of Markham historian, John Lunau, of the complete Reesor ownership on a 200-acre tract of land, some of which now forms part of Markham Village.

At the age of 30, Peter Reesor purchased 100 acres of land from William Johnson in 1805. Johnson owned a total of 200 acres known as lot 13, conc. 7, Markham Township. He sold to Mr. Reesor the east half of the lot, which today fronts on Main St. in downtown Markham, for a total cost of \$330.00 or \$3.30 an acre.

Prior to Johnson's ownership, the land belonged to England, and was termed Crown Land. Johnson purchased it on September 9th, 1801.

The deed, still in possession of the historian after 160 years of preservation, explained the terms of the sale. It involved Johnson and Peter Resard. ('Reesor' was spelled on the deed as it was sounded phonetically). In 1805, the township was known as Markham, the county was called York, but the province was known as the 'Province of Upper Canada.'

The deed was witnessed by Joseph and Hiram Morrison, was signed by Harriet and William Johnson and was registered by Thomas Ridout in the town of York, today Toronto. William Dummer Powell, one of Upper Canada's first Attorney-Generals, also signed the deed.

On the back of the deed was a release of the piece of land from Johnson's wife Harriet. According to law, the wife of the owner automatically becomes half owner and her release or okay is necessary for the transaction to become valid.

This was the beginning. Johnson, although he still owned 100 acres, apparently moved off the land and into the township of Vespra. Reesor cleared the land and likely erected a small cabin or cottage to house his family.

Bought West Half

Mr. Reesor was satisfied with his 100 acre tract until March 28th, 1837 when he purchased from Johnson the west half of the land. However, according to the book 'The Life of the Reesors', Peter made several other land purchases in different parts of the Township, before he bought this second 100 acre plot of land.

This deed, which has his name spelled 'Reser', shows the purchase for a price of 200 pounds. This is difficult to understand as the first deed quoted the price in American dollars and cents. 32 years later, the deed is quoted in the English monetary system. It is believed that Johnson was an American before coming to Canada, and requested the deed show American money.

However, this sum of £200 was much more expensive than the first price. Although not definitely accurate, the pound was believed worth about \$5.00 in American currency. This would make the price close to \$1,000, an increase of \$800, over his first purchase.

This second deed was minus the signature of Mrs. Harriet Johnson, and it could have been thought that she had died. But, in March of 1843, six years after Mr. Reesor had obtained the original deed, Mrs. Johnson appeared in the picture again, and signed a release giving Reesor full ownership to the land.

This was a peculiar happening with the wife of the former owner waiting for six years before releasing her part in the land. The only explanation that could fit would be to assume that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson separated or became divorced in some manner and with her not signing the deed, blocked full ownership of the land to the Reesors. This is only an assumption as there are no records to show why she waited such a length of time.

Nevertheless, on the 22nd of March, 1843, Mrs. Johnson was called before two Justices of the Peace and the documents were signed.

It is also stated in her deed that she received 200 pounds from Mr. Reesor for her part. This bolsters the aforementioned assumption of her either opposing her husband for more

money, or not being with him, and doing it on her own. Therefore, in full, the land cost Mr. Reesor a grand total of approximately \$2,330.00 for the 200 acres.

Also payment of the document registration had to be added on. The deed signed by Mr. Johnson alone cost 9s 7d, or \$2.34. The release for Mrs. Johnson was slightly higher at 10s 3d, or \$2.54.

Sold to First Son Strangely enough, less than three months after Mr. Reesor's second purchase from Mr. Johnson, the new landowner sold 197 acres to his son, also named Peter. The deed was signed by both men on June 14, 1837.

It is believed that the elder Reesor kept three acres for himself to live on, although there's no mention of it in the records.

However, his son made the purchase at a cost of 525 pounds or approximately \$2,625. This seems as though the father sold to the son to make a profit, but, the value of the pound may have deteriorated somewhat.

Mr. Reesor was 62 when he sold the 197 acres to his son, and he died at the age of 79 in 1854.

Twenty years elapsed from the elder's death until the son sold part of his plot. Peter Reesor, Jr. sold 100 acres to his son Jacob for the paltry sum of \$100. This transaction took place on June 12th, 1874 and the deed specified the cost in Canadian money. After the Confederation Act in 1867, new-born Canada received its own monetary system.

Of the 100 acres sold, approximately three acres were bought up by the railroad. The railway cut through Jacob's land and the price for it was not disclosed. Known as the Toronto-Nipissing Railway, the tracks were laid in the late 1870's or early 1880's. The name of the railway was a riddle as its terminal was in the Peterborough area, missing Nipissing County and lake by some 150 miles.

Jacob's son was named Peter and he was born July 3rd, 1867, only two days after Canada was born. Jacob sold a part of the land to his son on November 6, 1919.

When Jacob purchased his 100 acres from Peter Reesor, Jr. in 1874, there was no mention of the fate of the other

100 acres from Peter Reesor, there was no proof to back up the statement, it is believed that when Peter died, he left the land in his will.

Taxes Low There are tax records showing the cost of the land and its dwellings while Jacob was in possession.

The first tax bill dated October 1st, 1895, showed that Mr. Joseph Wales collected a total of \$40.20 from the Reesor family. Their assessment was \$1,400, and of the taxes they paid, \$8.68 were for schools and \$6.58 for the Village Rate. The remainder of the bill was divided among several smaller accounts.

However, four years later, the Reesor assessment jumped to \$3,000, but their taxes decreased to \$30.54. The school rate, though, went up from \$8.68 in 1895 to \$16.16 in 1899.

Yet, in 1900 the assessment was only \$1,250 and the taxes were \$35.13. The school rate dropped again to \$6.88 and a new account, General Fund, was added. It also cost the Reesors \$6.88.

Even the tax collector in 1900 was named Reesor. He was F. A. Reesor and he became manager of the Bank of St. Lawrence, Markham's first bank.

Final Reesor Transfer The final transfer in the Reesor family came on March 3rd, 1923. Peter H. Reesor released the land to his son Peter (Max) Reesor. Max had been in the 1st World War and won the Military Medal. Upon his return to Canada, he obtained the land from his father and held onto it until March 25th, 1965.

Max apparently sold part of the land to another family in the area some years ago, but only recently let the remainder go. There were two houses on the land, and Max lived in one of them until he obtained an apartment in the Village Square in Markham.

Today, the Reesor name is still connected with the property, as a distant cousin, C. W. Reesor operates Reesor's Mill near the main street.

But, the family tradition that started 160 years ago by Peter Reesor, has been terminated by his great-great grandson, Peter.

"When you married me you promised to love, honour and obey."

"Well, I didn't want to start an argument in front of all those people."

OTTAWA REPORT



by JOHN ADDISON M.P.

I would like to speak about a native of Aurora and a man whose heart is therefore closely allied with the constituency and interest of York North—this man is our own Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson. Mr. Pearson, since he has assumed the office of the prime ministership, has been subject recently to a great deal of criticism, some of it justified, much of it unjustified. There have been troubles, none of us would deny that, and yet throughout these troubles Mr. Pearson has retained his strong character and leadership, when lesser men might have crumbled under the strain.

To many people, it seems peculiar that the Prime Minister has not lost the support of some members of his party, or at least been criticized by them. I would like to forward my opinion as to why this has not occurred and why this I do not believe it will occur. The members of the Liberal Party, without exception, have the greatest respect for Mr. Pearson, for his policies, for his leadership. Mr. Pearson is a quiet, efficient leader, one who does not make great show of the fact that he is the man in charge, one who is constantly willing to accept new ideas, and trust the opinions of Party members.

The Prime Minister is an extremely fair man and his fairness has shown itself on many occasions. He is never one to prejudice people, regardless of their position. One recent example of Mr. Pearson's fairness and honesty was his decision to allow the controversy over the off-shore fishing limits to be decided by the courts, rather than Parliament. The Prime Minister is never one to assume power where he feels it is not his right to do so.

Mr. Pearson is a man of the very highest character, and of far-ranging intellectual scope. All his life his mind has played about broad issues of human progress, and, whether at home or abroad, he animates an ardent philanthropy, with the keenest and brightest intellectual powers. In the United Nations these qualities brought him unequalled success as a peacemaker and bulwark of freedom. During the tumultuous troubles of Cyprus, Egypt and Korea, Mr. Pearson showed a sense of purpose and fair play, added to sound judgment, that won for him the Nobel

Peace Prize. In international affairs, a few men are as eminently respected as our Prime Minister. Mr. Pearson is a statesman and one of his favorite stories is to relate how, when some American youngsters were asked if they wished to be President, 99% replied 'yes'; but when the same number were asked if they wished to be politicians, only 12% were willing to say 'yes.'

Men of the calibre of Mr. Pearson are rare; they rise above mere Party politics. It is no wonder then, that he has the unqualified support of the Liberal Party. While all admit to the fact of his great statesmanship, he is quickly learning the harsh realities of politics. Politics, however, to the Prime Minister, is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. The end to which Mr. Pearson devotes his efforts is the good of Canada. From this end, nothing will avert him, be it Party politics or criticism of any kind.

What I am suggesting is that as Canadians we can be proud of the fact that we have as a leader of this nation a man worthy of the greatest respect and admiration. Sensational issues and scandalous charges should not shake our trust in the Prime Minister, for he has accomplished a great deal in his two years as Prime Minister.

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