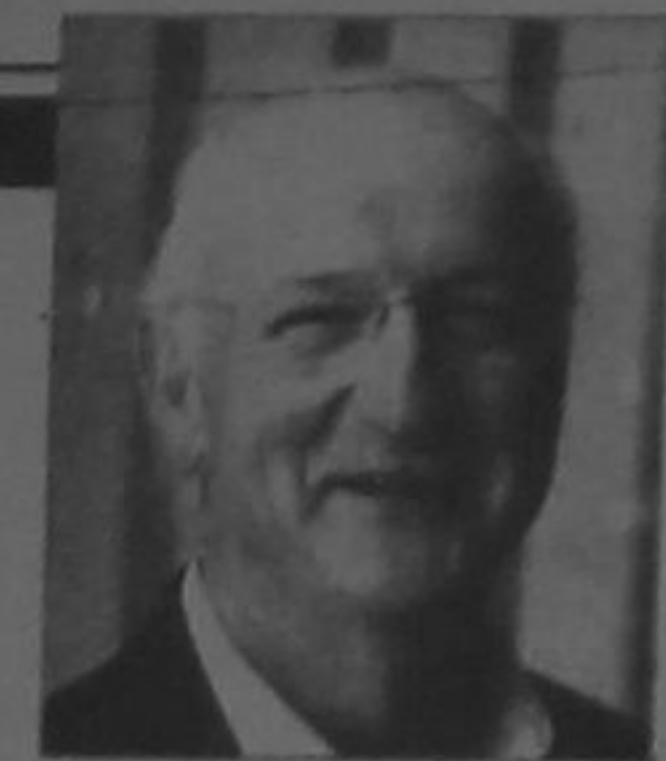


Rear-view Mirror



From Farm To Fairway

By Maurice Smith

About sixty years ago, if you drove on Highway 48 three quarters of a kilometre north of Aurora Road and made a right-hand turn, you would have found yourself on a long driveway leading into a very large potato farm.

The 200 plus hectare site, which became Ballantrae Golf & Country Club, was then the domain of John Bosford and his "Big B Brand" potato farm. The real story, however, starts many years prior to Mr. Bosford's purchase of the property.

Back in the mid 1800s, the land was cleared by a succession of families to grow wheat, corn, oats and peas, and to graze their cattle.

Eventually this property comprised three distinct farms. The northernmost 80 hectares were owned by the Cliff Walwork family. The middle, and largest, portion was owned by the family of Tom Clarke, while the southern section belonged to Ross Hood. Each section was known as "a string-two hundred", because they were more or less two km long stretching from one concession to the next; in this instance from Highway 48 to Ninth Line.

The Walwork and Hood families have passed away or moved from the area. Many descendants of the Clarke family are still a part of the Stouffville community, with some

branches farming property along Ninth Line in Ballantrae.

The structures of the Walwork and Hood family homes have also long since disappeared. However the home once occupied by many generations of Clarkes is still on Highway 48. It is a two-storey gingerbread, gable-roofed, Victorian-style farm house at the entrance to what was once that long driveway. Built by Tom Clarke, it was not sold as part of

the farm, but simply passed down from generation to generation. The last Clarke to live in the house, who was named Tom after his grandfather, brought his bride Margaret, a local Sunday school teacher, to the house in 1946.

Over a period of time in the 1950s, John Bosford consolidated his potato operation by purchasing all

three farms, because he believed the sandy loam soil was suitable for growing his famous Idaho potato. He proved to be right, and for a time became the largest Idaho grower in Canada.

By the late 1960s, wanting to devote his energies to a different project, Mr. Bosford closed down his operation and sold the land to Gus Schickedanz. Mr. Schickedanz transferred the fields from growing potatoes to producing

hay and oats for his growing stable of race horses.

The opportunity for development and the complete change of the landscape in the Ballantrae area really started when York Region, in its desire to provide pure drinking water to the residents of the Musselman's Lake area, agreed to drill wells to supply that community. They successfully located an aquifer and in 1996 drilled two wells on the property at the northeast corner of Aurora and McCowan roads. Today, at this intersection, there is a small blue and beige building which houses the equipment required for drawing and pumping the water extracted from these "deep aquifer" wells.

The Town and Region jointly installed the piping which delivers the water from there to the tower on Ninth Line south of Musselman's Lake: it is then pumped north to service Musselman's Lake and Ballantrae. With the availability of this precious resource, the Town of Whitchurch-

Stouffville gave Mr. Schickedanz and his company approval to design and develop a community in the spring of 1998.

They first built the golf course and then added all the streets and homes.

Today, instead of taking visitors to a potato farm, the long driveway now leads to a golf shop and recreation centre.

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