

**YORK MILLS/HOGGS HOLLOW (JANE JACOBS' WALK - 2011)
(Notes from the comments made by Glenn Bonnetta)**



The Miller Tavern is one of the few remaining commercial buildings on its original site on Yonge Street. It has been here for over 150 years. For many years it was known as the York Mills Hotel. It was not the first hotel in the valley. Madam Valliere's Inn was mentioned during the War of 1812 and was probably on Old Yonge Street, north of the bridge over the Don River. Other proprietors probably later took over this inn.

When Yonge Street was constructed in the 1790s, the sides of the valley were deemed too steep, so it skirted around the edge of the east side of the valley. Yonge Street was straightened between 1833 and 1835, and the old inn was no longer conveniently located. The first hotel on "new" Yonge Street was built in 1836 by James Hogg, a local miller, on his property. He established a post office at the hotel, and named the area York Mills. It had previously been known as Heron's Bridge and Milford. A store was built to the north of the inn. The new inn became a good stopping place for farmers going to and from Toronto. After Hogg's death in 1839 it was known as Anderson's Tavern.

The inn and store burned down in 1856. Locals saved the stables, which were on the west side of Yonge Street. A new inn and store were built by John and William Hogg, sons of James Hogg. This time the inn was built on the foundation of the previous store so that it could expand to the north, which it subsequently did.



From Toronto Archives: The inn and store circa 1885

There were various owners over the following decades. From 1889 to his death in 1925, it was owned by David Birrell, and was known as Birrell's Hotel. Birrell added a stable to the north of the hotel and the old one across the street was demolished. During the 1920s the hotel developed an increasingly sleazy reputation.

In 1930, it was taken over by Bill Cox, who turned it into an upscale dining and dancing club with a live orchestra. He refurbished the building, added expensive furnishings, and renamed it the Jolly Miller. The noted Canadian artist, C.W. Jefferys, painted the sign. However it wasn't a good time to start such a venture. The orchestra leader later remembered that often there were more people in the orchestra than in the dining room. Cox added gambling, which was illegal, in desperation but it was to no avail and the establishment was out of business within a year. The hotel reverted back to its previous shady reputation, but now it was a gambling den as well. A guard, with a sawed-off shotgun, sat on a stool fixed to the top of a stepladder watching patrons in the barroom. There is a replica of this stool in the entrance to the Miller Tavern. When the police raided in 1934, they found the patrons playing billiards and checkers. They suspected a tip-off. Another raid on May 23, 1935 resulted in 106 arrests and the place was closed.

The building changed hands over the next few decades. During the war, because of rationing, neighbours came, but after the war ended they stopped. It was never the local drinking establishment.

In the 1950s, there was a skating rink in the present parking lot. Skaters changed in the former Hogg store. Many kids were forbidden by their parents from entering the Jolly Miller while at the rink.

In 1964, it ceased to be a hotel and continued as a tavern only. From 1960s onwards the owners attempted to redevelop the property, but all the proposals came to nothing because of the restricted space between Yonge Street and the river. All ideas of redevelopment ended after the subway was extended to Finch Avenue. The subway tunnel is under the parking lot. This is the only reason that the building survived.

In 1973, a fire gutted the Hogg store and it was then demolished. The Miller Tavern patio is now where the store used to stand.

In 1997, the City of North York bought the property and the Jolly Miller was closed. The building was renovated under supervision of heritage architect, Philip Goldsmith. The original brickwork was exposed under the ugly façade and the fireplace was uncovered. The interior of building had changed much over the years and few of the original elements remained. It was leased by the Pegasus Group and re-opened as the Miller Tavern in 2004.

DEVELOPMENT

The millstone on the pedestal on Donino Avenue is from the last mill in the valley, the Pratt mill, which had earlier been the Hogg mill. James Hogg (1797-1839) emigrated from Scotland in 1824 and moved to valley in 1832. In 1856, Hogg's sons decided to subdivide the property offering lots for sale. The subdivision was called Hogg's Hollow. Only a few houses were sold at the time. The current development did not begin until 1920s.

In 1990, a time capsule celebrating the York Mills Valley Association's 50th anniversary was buried by the millstone. It will be opened in 2040.

Streetcars used to run up Yonge Street until 1948. The drivers used to speed up going down the hill at Hogg's Hollow so they could get up the other side much to the consternation of passengers who had to hold on for dear life.

MILLS

The area was called York Mills because of the mills in the valley. Mills were recorded here as early as 1803. They were owned by Samuel Heron who built grist and sawmills

on the east side of Yonge Street. The area was known as Heron's Bridge during these early days.



Mill Pond in Hogg's Hollow

A flour mill was built by Thomas Arnold to the north of Heron's mills in 1817. In 1832, James Hogg bought Arnold's mill and farm, known as Millford. He acquired more land and built a distillery on west side of Yonge north of the Don. Any poor quality grain was used by the distilleries. Hogg was a reformer and a friend of William Lyon McKenzie. In 1837, McKenzie, while on his way north, confided his plans for a rebellion to Hogg. He thought this was going too far and went to Toronto to inform the government, but was not believed. They were taken by surprise when rebellion broke out a few weeks later.

After Hogg's death in 1839, the mills were taken over by Thomas Somerville, as Hogg's sons were very young.

Cornelius Van Nostrand had a grist and sawmill on the west side of Yonge Street, near the present 401 bridge, by 1837. Later he built another flour mill south of Hogg's.

The repeal of the British Corn Laws in 1846 brought an end to the Canadian flour milling boom. Corn Laws had protected wheat production in the British Empire by placing heavy duties on wheat and flour from non-British sources. As a result, Somerville was bankrupt in 1848 and Van Nostrand was forced to auction his assets in 1849.

In 1851, Hogg's now adult sons took over his former mill and son James became the miller. In 1856 a steam sawmill was added. The Mill pond was on east side of Yonge Street near York Mills Road. There were various owners until 1886 when Joseph Pratt purchased the mills for his son George. The Pratt house was built sometime between 1886 and 1890 to the west of the mill. This was the first poured concrete house in Ontario. The concrete was mixed on site because gravel was abundant locally. The Pratt family lived there until 1952. The property is now owned by the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority.

The Pratt Mill was destroyed by fire in 1895 and rebuilt. There was a sawmill on the first floor, a grist mill on the second and a cider press in the basement. The flour business ceased a few years later because customers demanded finer ground flour and installing new equipment was prohibitively expensive. The sawmill and cider press were in operation until 1926 when they too closed. The iron mill wheel was too heavy for the scrap dealer to haul away so it was buried under the floor where it remains to this day. The building later became a riding stable and was finally torn down in 1959.



The valley may look bucolic in pictures, but that is deceiving. With so many mills, a distillery, and the McGlashan tannery, which was on the west side of Yonge Street, near Wilson Road, in the area, the river was polluted, and it was also quite noisy in the area.

CHURCHES

St. John's Anglican Church opened in 1844 at the north end of the hollow, to the east of Yonge Street. The Van Nostrands, Hoggs, Vallieres, Pratts and Herons are buried in the cemetery, which pre-dates the current church.

York Mills Baptist Church was built in 1833 on York Mills Road, east of Old Yonge Street. The Parsonage was erected in 1840. It never had a large congregation and was closed in 1944 and dismantled in 1948. Much of the material from the church was used in other church buildings. The cemetery and parsonage remain. The parsonage is on east side of the cemetery and the church was on west side.



St John's Anglican Church before 1939



York Mills Baptist Church

In the 1830s, York Mills Presbyterian Church was built on the east side of Yonge Street, near Ivor Road, on land provided by James Hogg. It was reported, by a contemporary, to be quite a handsome church building. In 1859, the Hogg sons, their subdivision having failed, wanted to sell the property. Hogg had not deeded the land to the church, so the congregation dismantled the building and rebuilt it on the west side of Yonge Street on 2 acres of land half way up the hill. Andrew McGlashan donated the land. The church was directly opposite the hotel. The parishioners would leave their horses and buggies in the stable of the hotel, which was on the west side of Yonge Street, and walk up the hill since the lane was very steep. In 1889, the church was closed and demolished and the cemetery remained but became overgrown. Some of the tombstones were rumoured to have ended up in the walkways of the neighbouring yards. The cemetery was forgotten. In 1955, Yonge Street was being widened and development on Eastview Crescent at the top of the hollow was in progress. A bulldozer unexpectedly unearthed skeletons. Work stopped, and the North York Board of Health was called in, but it was over a year before work could resume. Eventually 32 burials were identified. Relatives claimed most of them; eight, including two members of the Hogg family, were reburied in York Cemetery.

It also came to light that, apparently, the two acres still belonged to the Presbyterian Church. Also, the cemetery had never been officially closed. Sorting this out caused further delay. A plaque commemorating the church can be found on the west side of Yonge Street just north of the Mill Street stoplight.

SCHOOLS

The first school in the area was built in 1807, somewhere behind the Miller Tavern. The second school was built in 1847 on the west side of Yonge at John Street north of Wilson Road. The third school was built in 1893 on the south side of York Mills Road to the east of Yonge Street and it was two storeys with a bell tower. The fourth school was built in 1924, near the third school, and was demolished in 2004. All that remains is the wall in the park built of bricks from the school as a memorial.



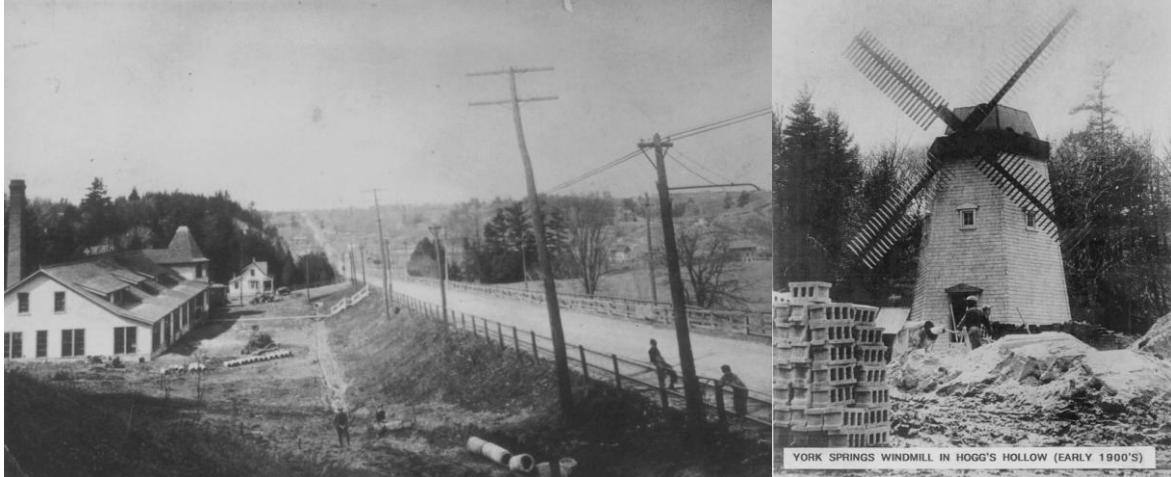
York Mills School class circa 1904

ARTISTS

The C.W. Jefferys monument was a project of the North York Historical Society. C.W. Jefferys (1896-1951) was a prominent Canadian artist. Many will remember his illustrations in Canadian history textbooks, but he was also a noted painter. In 1910, he moved to York Mills, after summering for several years in the valley. He had stayed at Birrell's Hotel and asked Mrs. Birrell if there was a house available to rent in the area. She found that the former Presbyterian manse, which is located east of Yonge Street, north of York Mills Road, was available. Jefferys and his family moved in and he later bought it. The house was built in the 1820s and is still occupied by the Jefferys' family.

Also living in York Mills at same time was Walter Allward, who designed the Vimy Memorial in France, and also sculpted many of the statues in Queen's Park. In 1936, after the unveiling of the memorial, he moved to 33 Old Yonge Street, where he lived until his death in 1955.

Emanuel Hahn, another sculptor, who created the Adam Beck monument on University Avenue and designed the Canadian dime, lived at 51 Plymbridge Rd. until his death in 1957. His home was a fine example of Bauhaus architecture, but has been demolished. Hahn's wife, Elizabeth Wyn Wood, designed the Centennial Commemorative Sculpture on the south side of Mill Street near the Pratt house. She died in 1966 and did not live to see the unveiling in 1967. All of these artists were good friends. Jefferys and Allward are also buried at St. John's Church.



The York Springs Bottling Company was located on the west side of Yonge



Participants in the Jane's Walk in Hogg's Hollow

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