

# Historical society president fourth generation Mississaugan

The new Mississaugans, by and large, are a transplanted people. Of the 30,000-odd families making up the town, it is doubtful whether 3,000 have their roots here. The rest of us are Charley-come-latelys — immigrants from less favored parts of Canada.

Being newcomers we are inclined to judge the town as we would judge any other municipality in which we elected to settle — Oakville say, or Hamilton, or Toronto. Mississauga to us — and I am speaking of course as an immigrant — is just another town.

But Mississauga isn't regarded in that way by the citizens who were born and raised here. To them it is special, and not be classed with just ordinary towns. To them it is history.

Harold Hare, whom I interviewed recently, is one of those with a special feeling for the town and its history, for he is a fourth generation Mississaugan — although only recently able to claim the title. His great grandfather, Charles Hare, was a sailor who came ashore at the mouth of the Credit some time during the first half of the last century. He liked what he saw and stayed operating trading schooners between the lake ports.

Harold Hare himself has a large collection of pictures and photographs illustrating early days in the Mississauga area. He showed me pictures of

two schooners owned by his great grandfather, the 'Mary Ellis' and 'The Hunter'. The picture was taken in 1892 and shows the vessels at anchor amid smaller craft near the mouth of the river. Just visible to the left of them is the first iron bridge to be built over the Credit river at this point.

## A FIRST HOME

In addition to being a shipowner Charles Hare had another distinction. He built one of the first homes in Port Credit in 1852 — an imposing frame residence which I judged from the picture I was shown to contain at least a dozen rooms. The house stood on Park street and the site is now occupied by a large apartment building.

Harold Hare and his family occupy a house on Mississauga road, built by grandfather William, son of Charles. Like the original Hare home it is spacious and furnished in a style befitting its period. The present occupant has a family of two, a son William, and a married daughter, Margaret. His hobby is history — the history of Mississauga — and not surprisingly he is president of the Mississauga Historical Society.

Mr. Hare was reluctant to talk about himself. He is an optometrist and works in Toronto — that much I learned. For the rest we discussed history.

His enthusiasm for history began early. As a youngster he was fond of

exploring along the river and frequently upon his walks he came upon arrowheads and rough tools which the Mississauga Indians had carved from chert, a hard, flint-like stone. He showed me

some of his collection — cunningly fashioned spear heads, presumably for fish, wood drills, scrapers for hides and so on.

"The youngsters nowadays don't seem to realize that this was famous

Hare, Harold

By ARTHUR LOWE



HAROLD HARE

Indian country," he said. "It may have been because there were fewer diversions in my day, but as kids we spent a great deal of time collecting relics of Indian occupation, and this gave us a feeling for the history of the area.

"What we are trying to do in the historical society is to revive this interest, particularly among the young people. We are also building an archives comprising copies of documents and pictures bearing upon the Mississauga country. It should prove invaluable in days to come."

#### IMAGINATION NEEDED

One needed imagination and an understanding of the times to get a grasp of local history Mr. Hare said. It was easier for those descended from local families because in most cases there were family records to fall back upon.

"Even so it is hard for us to realize the sort of lives our forbears lived," he said, "because everything was based on the needs and circumstances of the moment. There was no planning. At first came the fur traders and since they carried a stock of goods to trade with the Indians and the white trappers, they emerged as the merchants when the land began to be settled.

"Afterwards everything depended upon the land. The trails followed the lot lines, and hamlets — usually consisting of a general store, a church and a hotel — grew up at points convenient to local settlers. Whether a village grew and prospered depended mainly on whether or not the settlers round about prospered. Some of the villages which seemed destined to become important trading centres faded out almost completely."

Harold Hare's grandfather purchased a farm on the Credit river in the vicinity of what is now Erindale, and in consequence Harold has made a particular study of this locality.

"Today Erindale is regarded as one of the most picturesque spots in Mississauga," he said, "but it is hard to realize that as late as 1919 it ranked as an important business centre, although it had declined considerably since the turn of the century. In 1919 a fire razed the hotel and the core of the village, and it has never recovered as the hub of the farming community."

#### FIRST ENTREPRENEUR

He told me something

of the early history of Erindale. The land originally formed part of the grant given to the Mississauga Indians of one mile on each side of the Credit river. It was repurchased by the Crown in 1820 and a large block was sold to Thomas Racey, an entrepreneur in the lumber business.

Thomas Racey gave the village its start. He employed men to cut the fine stand of lumber in the area and he built not only a saw-mill but a grist mill as well. Unfortunately he was unable to keep up his payments and the several square miles he had acquired reverted to the Crown. The tract was subsequently put up for sale again in 100 and 200-acre lots. James McGill bought the mills and an adjacent lot, and the Crown donated 37½ acres for a townsite.

The settlement was originally called Toronto — for today's Toronto was then Muddy York — and later it was known as Credit Village. Some time between 1830 and 1840 the name was changed to Springfield-on-the-Credit.

"The place really went ahead under its new name," said Mr. Hare. "By 1830 the town had been laid out; it had a church, built in 1827; several streets, a general store and post office, two grist mills, a lumber mill and a hotel. Within a few years several other factories were established including a woolen mill and a shop for making chairs. The Credit river was the big drawing card of course. It produced the power for these various enterprises."

At the turn of the century the name of Springfield-on-the-Credit was changed to Erindale, named after the home of the Rev. James Magrath who had become rector of the first church in 1828.

—LURID STORY

In 1940 there were a number of unsolved murders in Toronto, presumably the work of a gang, and according to rumor the bodies had been dumped in the Erindale pond above the dam.

Although the pond was drained and the dam dynamited no bodies were ever found.

Mr. Hare concluded the interview by showing me his collection of pictures — many of them taken in Erindale. There was one that interested me particularly; it was a picture of the Hammond farmhouse on the hill overlooking the village.

It interested me because I used to live there.