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Heritage a slice of Mississauga

By CAMERON RENTON

For the past 125 years, the Pallett family of Mississauga has made countless contributions to the community. They have built community centres and arenas, churches and fruit-stands. They've been majors in armies, reeves and councillors in politics and choir directors in churches.

And if they don't soon come to an agreement with the Toronto Dominion Bank, a sheriff will, at the month's end, remove them from the land they have struggled to make a living on since 1859.

Don Pallett, the fourth generation of Palletts living on a 40-acre plot of land (sold recently by the TD bank) in east Mississauga, is heartbroken.

"This will kill me," he says, looking across the land in sadness. "It is my life. There is nothing else."

SETTLERS

Don's great-great-grandfather William from Hertfordshire, England, settled in Hogs Hollow in Toronto in 1835. His five sons Robert, William Henry, Thomas, Charles and Alfred moved to Mississauga in 1859 and began acquiring tracts of land.

Robert moved into 1600 Dundas St. E. and bought the 40 acres of land bordering the south side of Dundas St. which was recently sold by the TD Bank.

This first generation of Palletts had four priorities — the business, family, church and politics — which were passed on to their offspring.

Robert helped haul bricks for the Bethesda Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1864-65. Along with William, Robert joined the Sons of Temperance, entertaining themselves as a reaction against getting drunk in the pubs.

Don's uncle, Leslie, acquired the land where the Brick Warehouse is situated today and started the Dixie Fruit Market in 1916. Complete with its own orchard, the fruit market lasted for 65 years before being sold to Stuarts in 1980.

Leslie was instrumental in constructing Dixie Arena, Dixie Curling Club and the first

lit baseball park behind the arena.

In 1913 and 1927, he was a Peel County councillor, deputy reeve from 1914 to 1917 and was reeve twice — in 1924 to 1925 and from 1931 to 1937.

His son Les Jr., became the president of the Credit Valley Golf and Country Club and his son John became a member of Parliament.

As the city began to grow, there was a change in farming throughout Mississauga toward specialization. The Palletts planted a new orchard in 1900 and developed a name as poultry breeders.

WAR HARVEST

During World War Two, Colonel Thomas L. Kennedy instructed Don Pallett to harvest fruit and vegetables to help the war effort. In conjunction with the Federal Provincial Farm Labor Committee, a camp was established on the Palletts' property.

The existing buildings on the land were constructed to serve as barracks and a mess hall for the people sent in to harvest the land.

Don struggled on the land by selling produce on the roadside and to fruit markets in the city. He sent his brother and three sisters to university. And for 22 years he served in

the Lorne Scots (Peel, Halton and Dufferin Regiment) Reserve. Don left the army as a major and was decorated with the Canadian Forces Decoration.

Currently, he is the oldest living member of the Credit Valley Golf and Country Club. He has been past president of the Rotary Club, and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers and was a charter member of the Dixie Curling Club.

And now, with his son Dave, 42, acting as president of their Pleasant View Farms, which sells feed, hay, fertilizer, eggs and other farm needs to the community, the heritage has been "cut off."

"It's been a constant battle to support ourselves with an ever-increasing loan hanging over our heads," says Dave. "For 125 years, my family has worked this land and it's all over. It's really hard to accept."

By the Toronto Dominion Bank's count, the Palletts owe them more than \$1.8 million, a result of accumulating interest over the years.

And if an agreement isn't reached before September, a sheriff will remove them from the land and end the heritage of Mississauga's Palletts.

Peel Biog. Bk.
Aug. 15-84
MN

Anatomy of a farm sale

Peel Biog. BK.

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- William Pallett was 43 years old when he moved to Hogs Hollow in Toronto from Hertfordshire, England, in 1835. One of his sons, Robert, acquired 40 acres of land bordering the south side of Dundas St. E. in Mississauga in 1859. When he died in the 1890s, money was owing on the property.
- Fourth-generation Donald Pallett, now 69, struggled to support his family on the land as the interest owing on its mortgage steadily increased. On Dec. 31, 1971, the land was sold to Pallett Development Ltd. (comprising his seven children). Don holds the mortgage on the land, then valued at \$1.7 million. Royal Bank is owed \$550,000 for the land at this time.
- Beginning in 1972, the \$550,000 is refinanced to \$600,000 to Polaris Realty for a two-year period.
- In April 1974 the Toronto Dominion Bank (TD) provides Pallett with \$80,000 to help him keep up with his payments.
- In August 1974, the TD Bank refinances the Polaris mortgage to \$680,000.
- By 1978, the loan is classified as non-performing, owing to irregular payments from Pallett. The TD Bank again refinances the loan to \$870,000 to pay for accumulated interest. Pallett stops making any payments on the principal or interest owing in December 1978.
- The TD Bank files a formal demand for repayment in February 1981.
- After more than two years of effort, the Palletts receive a draft approval for development of the land on Aug. 11, 1981.
- The TD Bank issues a power of sale in November 1981 and Palletts have 30 days to find a buyer for the land during a time when the market is bad.
- In January 1982, TD Bank gets two "independent" appraisals of the land's value of \$2,064,000 and \$2,325,000, which the Palletts claim are "phony."
- In April 1982 AQS Management buys the land from the Palletts for \$2.8 million and provides a corner for the Pallett business. The bank agrees to this.
- But in July 1982, the deal collapses.
- On Aug. 1, 1982, Babel Investments Ltd. is instructed by the TD Bank to deal with Palletts for the purchase of land. Pallett asks for \$3 million and a corner for his business.
- Later that month, Babel buys the land for \$2.3 million with no corner for the Palletts. "Much to our surprise, they made the deal with the bank with no consultation with us whatsoever," says Don Pallett's son, Dave, 42.
- Since then, the Palletts have appeared in court before 10 judges over the past two years to question the validity of the power of sale. Palletts have lost each time.
- Local developer Harry Turk makes a firm offer on the land in April 1984. Turk offers to buy the frontage of 10 acres for \$1,950,000. Turk also agrees to lend Pallett family an additional \$450,000 to develop the remaining 30 acres.
- In May 1984, the TD Bank pays \$341,000 owing on property taxes. By this time the TD Bank says the Palletts owe \$1.9 million.
- TD Bank also refuses the Turk offer — a deal which would save the Palletts' land, pay back the bank and allow existing garden business to continue — because they "have a legal commitment to Babel."
- In July 1984, TD Bank sends out notices to vacate the land.
- On Aug. 3, 1984, a representative from Babel tells the Palletts the company would drop the deal for \$3.2 million. "That offer in itself is proof that the bank sold the land too cheap," says Dave Pallett.
- A demonstration is planned for Aug. 13, 1984, with more than 300 individuals expected to march along Dundas St. and give a petition to the local TD Bank.
- Negotiations begin on Friday, Aug. 10 and the Palletts have allowed the TD Bank one week to come to a reasonable agreement before the demonstration takes place. After that, the Palletts will consider suing TD Bank for improvidential sale of the land.
- Unless the Palletts and the TD Bank come to an agreement, a sheriff will evict the Palletts from the land during the upcoming Labor Day weekend.