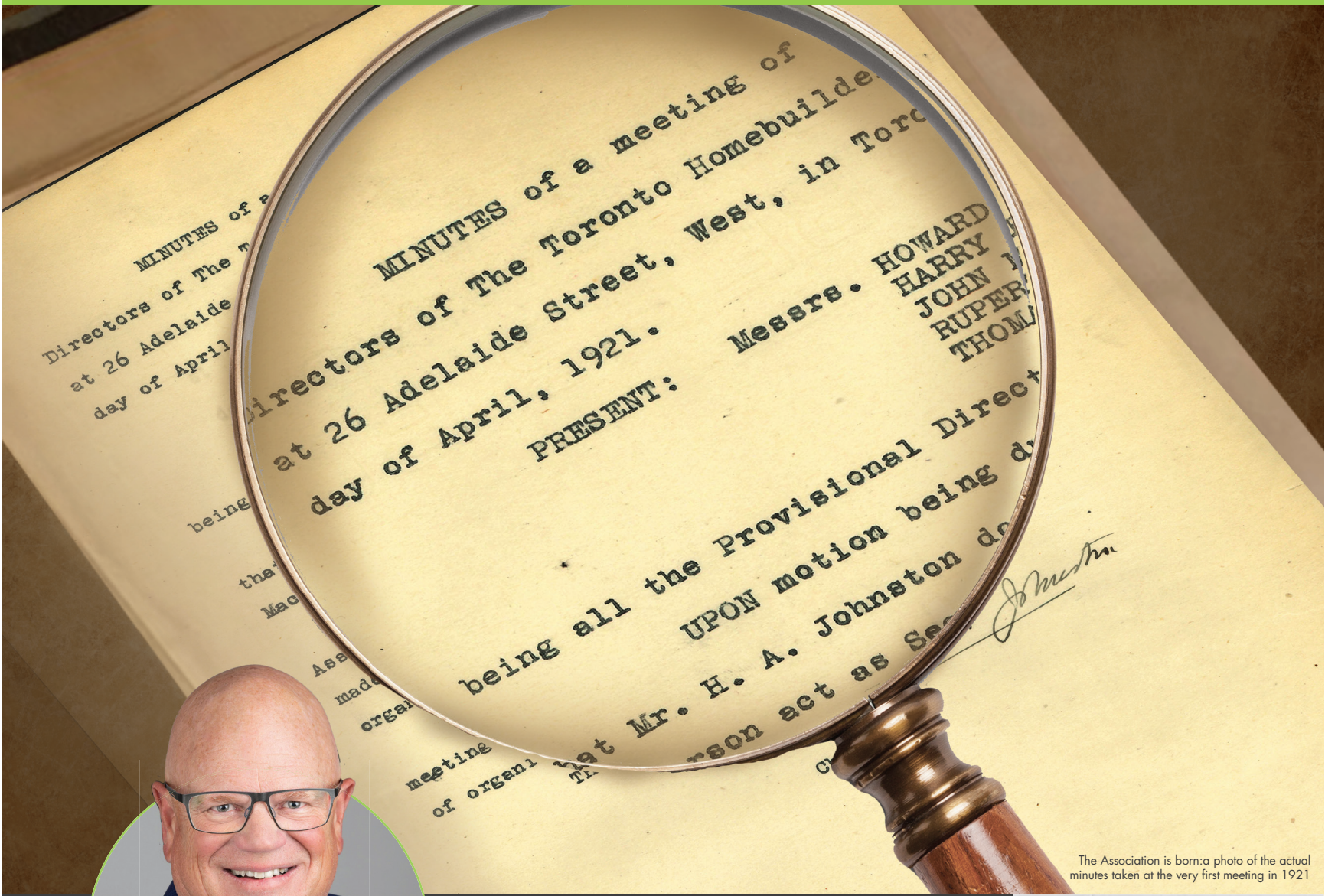


BUILDING BY DECADES



The Association is born: a photo of the actual minutes taken at the very first meeting in 1921

DAVID WILKES
PRESIDENT & CEO OF BILD

THE FOUNDING OF AN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

On a spring day, April 5, in 1921, five home builders from the city of Toronto assembled at 26 Adelaide St. West. They gathered with a very specific purpose: to create an industry association for Toronto's home builders. It was called the Toronto Home Builders' Association and its first President was Howard Addison Johnston. One hundred years later, the successor of this early industry association, the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), is marking its centenary this year.

Over the next 11 weeks, BILD and the Toronto Star will be presenting Star readers and residents of the Greater Toronto Area with a brief history of the development of the region and the evolution of our Association. We hope to share with you how the residential and commercial building and development industries of the region have collectively built the cities and towns of the GTA and helped to shape Canada's preeminent city and region. Each week, a special print insert will cover a different decade. It will be complemented with in-depth and dynamic content online, at https://www.thestar.com/Bild_Timeline.

Now back to April 1921...

Industry associations, like the first Toronto Home Builders' Association, bring together similar businesses to advocate on common interests with a unified voice. They enable networking, exchange of ideas and

learning, as well as the development of standards and best practices. Associations are an important resource for governments, playing a vital role in ensuring that public policy achieves its goals by providing an industry perspective about its impact on not only the industry, but also its customers.

Industry associations have a long history in Canada, dating back to the 18th century. Some of the oldest still in existence are the Halifax Board of Trade, which was founded in 1750, and the Law Society of Upper Canada, founded in 1797. Throughout the 19th century, as the economy grew, many more industry groups – agricultural, industrial and financial – were formed and incorporated.

Following a general downturn in building during the Great War, the 1920s saw an increase in residential construction in Toronto. In what cannot be a coincidence, the Toronto Home Builders' Association was founded one year after the establishment of what would become the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board.

By today's standards, the founders of the Association would be considered custom home builders. With some notable exceptions, in those days builders would construct a limited number of unique homes every year, often according to specifications outlined by clients who intended to live in the homes or sell them. The home building and land development industry in its modern form came into being after World War II.

One of the first orders of the Association in 1922-1923 was Bylaw 9868, a precursor

to later zoning and city building code requirements. (Ontario did not have a province-wide building code until 1970.) While previous Toronto bylaws around construction dealt mainly with mitigating fire risk, a perennial hazard in pre-20th-century towns and cities, Bylaw 9868 sought to "regulate the erection and provide for the safety of buildings." With many amendments, this bylaw served the city through the early 20th century.

Home builders then, as builders and developers do now, valued the communities in which they operated and the opportunity to give back. In fact, the first order of business of the newly formed Toronto Home Builders' Association was to raise money for a community tea and picnic in High Park.

I look forward to sharing the hundred-year journey of our region, our industry and our Association with you over the next 11 weeks.

First Nations in the GTA

The land that comprises the Greater Toronto Area was originally inhabited by a variety of distinct First Nations people – many generations before modern-day development began to evolve. We shall seek to acknowledge and honour the specific First Nations that originated in each of the communities in this 10-decade exploration, Beyond the City.

See next page.

This content was funded and approved by the advertiser.

1920s

1921

THE BILD CORNERSTONE

Toronto Home Builders' Association founded **1921**

SCAN TO SEE OUR 1920s TIMELINE

City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 10085

Congratulations to **BILD** and its members on 100 years of advocacy and support for the building industry in the GTA.

We are proud to be a partner.

WeirFoulds LLP

THE BUILDING OF A CITY

THE RISE OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS SHOWS A CITY IN FLUX



A construction crew working at 80 King St. W in Toronto, 1928. Toronto Star Archives / Contributor

In a city that defines home-ownership by single-family homes, it's no surprise apartment living is viewed with mistrust by some and even outright hostility by others. This has almost nothing to do with size, height or built form; it's a purely emotional response to the idea of rental accommodation. Its roots lie in the beliefs of the mortgage-holding homeowners that owning is better than renting. For these reasons and more, apartment living has sometimes been criticized as anti-family and anti-neighbourhood. It's also assumed to be bad for property values and accommodating transience.

So when apartment buildings suddenly became fashionable during the 1920s, it was clear Toronto was a city in flux. Not that they were new – temporary accommodation had been around since the mid-19th century. Indeed, there was so much that in 1912 council took the unprecedented step of banning rental projects. Regardless, the 1920s would become known as the Golden Age of Apartment Buildings.

In fact, the apartment boom of the '20s was the result of several factors: To begin with, there was a growing class of moderately well-to-do people who didn't fancy the idea of sinking their hard-earned cash in Toronto's increasingly expensive housing market. Some things never change.

Then there were the examples of New York, Paris, London and Boston, international cities where being a tenant didn't make one a social outcast. As Toronto grew more modern and cosmopolitan, such precedents resonated more powerfully than ever.

Finally, there was the growing number of single working women who chose to live downtown, who were choosing not to start families and who weren't generally wealthy. The efficiency apartment was especially appealing to this emerging demographic. Units such as these still exist; they have morphed into the one-room condo that accommodates eating, sleeping and working in the same space.

At the other end of the scale were the new luxury apartment buildings that offered the most up-to-date amenities such as party rooms and private restaurants for residents who preferred not to cook, many of which continue to be offered today. The projects that best illustrate what Toronto architectural historian William Dendy called "the romance of apartment living" are the Balmoral, the Clarendon and the Claridge. Located on Avenue Rd. south of St. Clair Ave., all three still grace Toronto with their presence.

With their splendid architecture, extravagant flourishes and exquisite materiality, they are elegant reminders of what high-end urbanity looked like before the advent

of the modern condo and in-fill housing development.

Somewhere in between the two extremes were more prosaic structures like Broadview Mansions on Broadview Ave. south of Danforth at Tennis Cres. Dating from 1927, it exemplifies the expanding role rental buildings now played in housing Toronto's growing population. Located in the newly accessible Riverdale neighbourhood, it wouldn't have been possible without the recently completed Bloor Street Viaduct.

At the same time, low-rise housing also reached new heights. As a 1922 Daily Star headline put it, "Bungalow Craze Has Toronto Home Builders Gripped." By the early '20s, these one- to one-and-a-half-storey houses accounted for more than half of all residential starts. Once again, experts argued that women were the driving force behind the appearance of these low-rise houses popping up across the city. The narrow vertical houses typical of old Toronto provided homemakers a less labour-intensive home. The bungalow's popularity also signalled that women were beginning to envision life beyond domesticity. As birthrates declined and families shrank, they demanded greater freedom, independence and economic self-sufficiency.

In what would become a regular feature of development in Toronto, the city had tried to stop apartment buildings before World War One. Developers quickly learned how to accommodate the market's continued demand for apartments and a good thing, too. As the number of construction permits issued for apartment buildings makes clear, the rules were badly outdated. From seven in 1922, approvals grew to a healthy 96 in 1928. But with the advent of the Great Depression, development came to a crashing halt. By 1932, not a single project went ahead. Though business would eventually pick up from where it left off, it would take the city a decade to recover.

Unsurprisingly, growth patterns reflect larger demographic trends. The 1920s, a time of societal upheaval, not all of it positive, saw big changes in how people inhabited the city. As cars reduced the obstacles of time and space, urban densities increased and land values rose. New forms of housing and financing were inevitable. Contemporary developers, mostly small players at the start of the decade, were replaced by larger corporate enterprises. Then, as now, foreign capital found Toronto an attractive place to invest.

Though still decades off, the modern city had arrived.

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BEYOND THE CITY: OSHAWA IN THE 1920s

The 1920s were a boom time for Oshawa, which in later years would earn it the title of Automotive Capital of Canada. By 1924, it received "city" status as its population — and employment opportunities — soared. Its first mayor was W. J. Trick. Of course, there has long been settlement on this site, as early as the 1400s by the ancestral Wendat. Historians believe Oshawa started out as an exchange point in the fur trade, where furs were loaded onto canoes in the harbour for transport to nearby trading posts. Indeed, the name "Oshawa" translates from native dialect to mean "the crossing of the stream where the canoe was exchanged for the trail."

This "crossing of the stream" grew into a hub of transport, first through its harbour, known as Port Sydenham, and later with the development of the Grand Trunk Railway from Toronto to Montreal. But it was the automobile that would change the course of the city's history. In 1876, the McLaughlin Carriage Company moved to Oshawa, becoming the largest carriage works in the British Empire. But with the growing popularity of the automobile, the company evolved into the McLaughlin Motor Car Company — developing the McLaughlin-Buick automobile — and merged with General Motors of Canada in 1918. Oshawa soon became Canada's car capital.

Shortly after the Second World War, Highway 2A (which later became Highway 401) brought new residential growth to Oshawa. GO Transit trains connected Oshawa with Toronto and Hamilton, and Via Rail offered a service along the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor. As such, Oshawa started attracting Toronto commuters, which expanded the city's suburban neighbourhoods in the north. Later, it saw the growth of new subdivisions for Toronto commuters with the extension of Highway 407. Oshawa is now booming, with its population expected to grow 20 per cent over the next decade thanks to investments in housing and transportation. In fact, despite the pandemic, Oshawa saw a 2.1 per cent population growth rate in 2020.

These days, the Automotive Capital of Canada is an education and health sciences hub, and new developments are proposed or in the works to house more than 42,000 new residents, with 5,000 of those in a revitalized downtown core. The Northwood Business Park is being zoned for future development, near the 407 and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology/Durham College main campus. Columbus Part II is another major expansion within the Columbus Planning Area surrounding the 407. And Lakeview is expected to be 'discovered' in the next decade, with properties in close proximity to the beach boasting some of the best prices in the GTA.

THE BILD CORNERSTONE

City passes Bylaw 9868
1923

Oshawa becomes a city
1924

Celebrating GREAT Accomplishments.

46

Years of building greatly

80K

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8,000+

Units in development or under construction by our North American high-rise division.

1000's

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THE ROARING TWENTIES

A PROMISING DECADE DELIVERS TRUE PROGRESS IN TORONTO

A century later, the myth of the 1920s – the soaring, roaring, fabulous Twenties – has lost none of its lustre. It was a decade when everything seemed possible. Money flowed, old ways slowed and while fashion got cool, jazz got hot. Science had never been so exciting, so heroic and offering so much promise. And technology, its child, would lead to a better, brighter, braver new world. The party would never end. Life was easy, speakeasy.

Even Toronto – until then Toronto the Good – joined in the fun. Suddenly, everything had changed, or if it hadn't, soon would. Women led the way. Discarding their hooped skirts and whalebone corsets as well as others' expectations, the "new" woman was smart, independent, willing to take risks and, yes, wear pants.

Leisure was also fast transforming. The advent of radio led to the creation of new forms of popular culture, including advertising, which wielded huge influence over North American audiences. Talkies took over from silent movies. And when Prohibition was finally repealed in 1927, another vestige of the past finally disappeared. Although horse-drawn carts still clattered up and down the streets of Toronto, the car was quickly overtaking them.

Thanks to the automobile, the pace of life increased. The barrier of distance was vanquished. Or so it seemed. Cars made far-flung areas of the city more accessible and opened them up for suburban development.

The founding of the Toronto Transportation Commission in 1921 further improved mobility. Its predecessor, the Toronto Railway Company, had been around for years and had become a badly run private monopoly interested in little more than the bottom line. Toronto's at-

tempts to sue for better service were routinely rejected by the courts. When the TRC's second 30-year franchise finally expired, the city was ready to roll. The TTC started operations the next day.

Inevitably, the '20s also witnessed a rising sense of civic consciousness in Toronto, if not pride. It was increasingly clear the city had a larger role to play in the lives of residents. Most notably, public health became a significant municipal function. So did housing. Then there was the pressure to construct the infrastructure needed by the growing city. Roads had to be surveyed, new communities planned, sewers installed, traffic signals erected.

As much as anything, the optimism of the 1920s resulted from the end of the Great War. After five years of conflict the world was desperate to move on. A hunger for change swept the globe. Reverence for the past, for tradition and old ways was swept away by a wild search for newness and modernity. The future couldn't come soon enough. Societies that had remained unaltered for centuries were suddenly remade. Long-standing divisions of gender, class and ethnicity began to disintegrate after the upheaval and dislocation of war.

The Toronto we know today had begun to take shape, yet even it remains a work in progress. But that's true of all cities. For the first time, however, Toronto in the '20s looked to its future as a self-aware city, not an outpost of some remote imperial centre. Its identity remained fluid, but Toronto had begun to acquire a sense of itself as a distinct civic entity.

R.C. Harris, Toronto's legendary Commissioner of Public Works from 1912 to 1945, showed what this meant when he presided over the construction of



Union Station officially opens, 1927. Toronto Star Archives / Contributor

the Bloor Street Viaduct. It was Harris who insisted the structure be built with a lower level that was then unnecessary. But decades later, it cut the cost of the Bloor subway by millions.

Far from a muddy colonial outpost, Toronto in the '20s was a city that embraced everything modern. It opened its arms to the wider world, warily at first, but with growing awareness that the city should and could take control of its own destiny and enjoy itself in the process.

But nothing lasts forever. On 29 Octo-

ber 1929 – Black Tuesday – Wall Street crashed, setting off a chain reaction of disasters that culminated in the Great Depression. In the decade that followed – the Dirty Thirties – optimism was buried by despair. With an economy based on raw materials, Canada was hit harder than most countries. It would take years to recover. Even when things did improve, they would never be the same.

This content was funded and approved by the advertiser.

THE BILD
CORNERSTONE

First Picnic of the Toronto Home Builders' Association
1926

Union Station opens
1927

A VISION THAT PUTS PEOPLE FIRST.



The Daniels Corporation builds with a passion for creating vibrant communities in every sense of the word. Daniels looks beyond the bricks and mortar, including social, cultural and economic infrastructures that will create a unique sense of place. This commitment has been an integral part of their corporate philosophy for over 37 years along with a longstanding reputation for using their business platform as a catalyst for positive change in building strong and resilient communities through supporting local, capacity building and employment initiatives.

Daniels has built more than 30,000 award-winning homes and apartments, master-planned mixed-use communities, and commercial and retail spaces, and has earned its standing as one of Canada's largest and preeminent builders/developers.

As a member of BILD for the past 37 years, we want to thank BILD for their leadership, guidance and sense of community they have brought to our industry. **Congratulations on an incredible milestone!**

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WHO WAS TORONTO IN THE ‘20s?

A DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT



A crowd from the Island Ferry waits for streetcars to pass on Front Street, 1924. Toronto Star Archives / Contributor

Toronto is celebrated today as one of the most tolerant, diverse and inclusive cities on Earth. And although the 1920s saw the beginnings of that modern multicultural metropolis, Toronto still had a long way to go 100 years ago.

According to the 1921 census, Toronto’s population stood at 521,000, more than double the 208,000 recorded a decade earlier. Despite its impressive growth rate, however, the city remained overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. The same census found that 62 percent of all Canadians were born in this country while nearly 30 percent came from Britain.

Nevertheless, other nationalities were starting to make their presence felt: In 1921, 8,000 Italians lived in Toronto, as did 2,000 Asians. Though both groups experienced considerable hardship upon arrival, things soon improved. At the

beginning of the decade, Italians and Asians typically ended up in an area known as the Ward. Bounded by Queen, College, Yonge and University, it was a transitional neighbourhood, an “arrival city” that residents left once they had gained an economic foothold in Toronto. Almost immediately, Italians started to move west of Bathurst to the area around College and Clinton. By the late ‘20s, the neighbourhood was firmly established as Little Italy, which it remains to this day.

Life in Toronto was even harder for others. Facing legislative discrimination and low-wage, long-hour jobs, Chinese immigrants were employed as cooks, labourers or domestic servants. But the figures also tell a more hopeful story of people who made their own opportunities: by the early ‘20s there were 80 Chinese restaurants in Toronto and no fewer than 370 laundries. The work was

far from glamorous but it enabled the community to put down roots and in time integrate into the larger city.

On the other hand, the British Welcome and Welfare League, an organization dedicated to uniting families from the UK and finding jobs for newcomers, greeted immigrants from the “old country.” In 1928, the president of the League warned the federal Immigration Committee that Canada “should not become a melting pot, and must be kept British.”

As it turned out, Toronto (and Canada) would ignore his advice and over time devote itself instead to becoming a “cultural mosaic.” Not only did Canada not stay British, as its ties to the UK gradually weakened, it drew ever closer to the United States. In 1922, for the first time, American investment in Canada exceeded that from the UK. By the end of the

Though the voluntary religious and fraternal organization was formed in Ulster, Ireland, in the 18th Century, it found fertile ground in Canada, especially Toronto, which at its height had nearly 100 Orange lodges. Now largely forgotten, the Order then boasted 100,000 adherents from coast to coast. In this city, mayors, councillors, judges, even policemen and firefighters, almost without exception, were members. When Nathan Phillips was elected mayor in 1955, he was not only the city’s first Jewish mayor, he was also its first non Orange chief magistrate.

But the most significant demographic trend of the ‘20s was the phenomenon of working women. The shift began during World War One when women took manufacturing jobs previously held exclusively by men. Though the end of the war undid much progress, the number of women employed as textile workers, teachers, typists and telephone operators increased dramatically during the decade.

That in turn would lead to seismic societal shifts. As more women were able to pay their own way, they expected greater freedom and independence. They wanted lives – and places – of their own. Ultimately, women insisted that they should be defined by more than their relationship to men. Just as males were more than simply fathers, husbands, sons or brothers, women now refused to be limited to being mothers, wives, daughters or sisters. Today that seems obvious, but the ‘20s were an era when single working women could be fired for marrying. The assumption, until then unquestioned, was that married women would automatically become mothers and homemakers.

That, too, would change, albeit slowly. Still, Canadian women’s long journey to a better future had started. So had Toronto’s.

“

In 1922, for the first time, American investment in Canada exceeded that from the UK.

decade, more than 60 percent of foreign investment in Canada came from south of the border. No surprise, then, that at the same time nearly a million Canadians left to seek their fortune in the US.

None of this would stop the Orange Order from reaching its peak of power and popularity across Canada in the ‘20s.

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THE BILD
CORNERSTONE

Princes’ Gate built
1927

Leaside Bridge completed
1927

STANDING TALL.



TORONTO IS MORE THAN A CITY. MORE THAN A PLACE WITH TALL BUILDINGS AND A WATERFRONT AND PARKS. MORE THAN A COLLECTION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS, OF SHOPS, RESTAURANTS, SCHOOLS, AND HOUSES. TORONTO IS ALL OF US. THE PEOPLE WHO STAND TOGETHER, FACING THE FUTURE, RESILIENT, HOPEFUL, AND OPTIMISTIC. WE ARE TORONTO. WE STAND TALL. [MENKES.COM](https://www.menkes.com)

TAKING TO THE ROAD

Cars put development firmly in the driver’s seat

Even now the answer is unclear: Do we control the automobile or does it control us? The only thing we know for sure is that the car changed our world from top to bottom. Like most cities, Toronto embraced motorized mobility from the moment it first appeared early in the 20th Century. But it wasn't until the 1920s that the auto really took over. At the start of the decade there were 32,000 cars and 6,200 trucks on city streets. By 1925 those numbers had risen to 63,000 and 8,500 respectively. Five years later there were 106,000 cars and 14,200 trucks in Toronto.

Though horse-drawn carts remained a feature on local roads – surprisingly both Eaton’s and Simpsons still used equine transportation – their days were numbered. As late as 1928 Toronto’s street cleaning department owned no fewer than 400 hacks, with another 200 privately owned horses on call. The division also had six blacksmiths on staff to keep its hard-working quadrupeds properly shod. In fact, the city didn’t sell its last 25 horses until 1946.

By then, it was glaringly obvious that the future lay with the internal combustion engine. But cars, trucks and buses need roads, highways, freeways, expressways, bridges, traffic signs, parking lots, gas stations... the vast infrastructure of driving. In Toronto, that necessitated the paving of hundreds of local streets whose

condition gave the city its nickname, Muddy York. A surprising number of roads were also out of alignment, which meant they had to be straightened, widened and connected. The cost was narrower sidewalks and the loss of countless trees and grassy verges.

Most difficult of all, though, driving had to be regulated. The speed limit, for example, was a stately 15 miles an hour (24 km/h). Not nearly fast enough for a city in a hurry. Gas pumps were installed on sidewalks so cars could fill up without turning off the street. However convenient for drivers, it was hazardous to everyone else.

It didn’t take long for safety to become a serious issue. Already, automobile accidents were killing scores. Drivers blamed pedestrians; pedestrians blamed drivers. Cars were too fast; pedestrians were too slow. Worst of all, nobody paid attention to anybody.

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE...

None of this dampened Canada’s love for the automobile. By the mid-’20s, only the US had more privately owned vehicles. The impacts– economic, social, logistical and cultural – were profound. The car was ideally suited to this country’s geography and sprawling landscape. Sitting behind the wheel of the latest Model T, distances shrank and time moved faster.

The obsession with speed was so over-



Stumping operations prepare for sidewalk widening along Bloor St., 1929. Toronto Star Archives / Contributor

whelming it also inspired artists in various disciplines. Avant-garde art was preoccupied with motion, movement, modernity and machines. As the car proved, technology would usher in a new age of human potential. The future was theirs to grasp.

Equally dramatic was the economic impact of the car. By the ‘20s, more than 12,000 people were employed in 11 automobile factories across the country, churning out Canadian-made cars that were exempt from tariffs levied on those imported from the US. Then there was the expanding network of car dealerships. Furthermore, pressure to sell cars led to institutions like the General Motors Acceptance Corporation of Canada that made credit more easily available.

The popularity of the automobile also changed how and where people lived and worked. Communities, industrial and residential, sprang up in previously inaccessible areas beyond city borders – the very existence of Etobicoke and Mimico, for instance, was actually enabled by the automobile. As suburban expansion gained momentum, old Toronto, built and laid out before the car,

entered a period of slower growth. Fully 40 years later the city’s population had increased just 150,000 to 672,000.

Inevitably, as traffic grew so did congestion. Photographs of Toronto in the ‘20s show city streets clogged with cars and trucks. The proliferation of parking lots only exacerbated the desperate search for a place to leave waiting vehicles. Worse still, streets were lined with parked vehicles, which further slowed traffic. The absence of stoplights meant that policemen had to be stationed at major intersections. Ever slow, traffic lights didn’t appear here until 1925, when the first set was installed at Bloor and Yonge.

On the other hand, empty land quickly found new use. In 1926, when the now demolished Maple Leaf Stadium opened at Bathurst and Lake Shore, it was an island of sport surrounded by a sea of parked cars.

The future had indeed arrived; looking back at the ‘20s, for the first time in history, we see ourselves looking ahead.

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THE BILD
CORNERSTONE

Royal York Hotel completed
1929

Collapse of the NY Stock Exchange
1929

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Inspired by our past and committed to the future growth of the Greater Toronto Area, DiamondCorp is dedicated to developing innovative, high-quality and award-winning residential, mixed-use, and master-planned developments that translate into outstanding places to live.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO BILD ON CELEBRATING 100 YEARS AS AN ASSOCIATION!

This special anniversary is an incredible accomplishment and a testament to the dedication and passion everyone working at BILD has had since 1921.

At Herity/Heathwood, we have been proud members of BILD for five decades, and continue to be impressed with the tireless efforts to ensure that the voice of this wonderful and important industry is heard and respected.

As a board member, and later as BILD President, I was privileged to meet and work with many professionals from across the membership. I met many people I now call friends through participating in events, forums and various social gatherings organized by BILD.

As the President of Heathwood Homes, I bring that experience and relationships to work each and every day – and we are a better company for it!

CHEERS TO THE NEXT 100!

BOB FINNIGAN
PRESIDENT

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