

THE NEW MISSISSAUGANS

The old master builder

by
Arthur
Lowe



He built the first home in Scarborough in 1912; he built a big chunk of Lakeview in the 1920's; he built Virginia Town in the 1930's and he has been building homes, apartments and factories here, there and everywhere ever since.

Correction. He retired in 1966 when he reached the 80 mark, but he is still doing the plans and estimates for his old firm. The actual building — no.

Thomas Jordan Groves was born in Suffolk, England, in 1887 and came to Canada in 1910. His father, Thomas Henry, had emigrated some years before, giving up a cabinet-making shop in Somersetshire to do so. He had started a similar business in Toronto.

The son, Thomas Jordan, had learned cabinet-making from his father and brick-laying on his own. It looked like a good trade combination with which to tackle life in a new country.

It was, but let Tom himself tell you how he got started.

"We got to Toronto, my wife and I, and Dad wanted to know if I was going into cabinet-making. I told him no I was going into building. All right, says Dad, then you'd better see Mr. Craig who's got the building of the Bell home on Greenwood.

"So I saw Mr. Craig and he said sure he had a job for me making sashes for the Bell home. I was to report to the foreman on the job.

"I got lost looking for the house for it was off the road and back in the bush a bit. However, I got there, and the foreman put me to work at a job with him.

"I was faster than he was and made a better job of what we were doing, and the result was he kept nibbling me — nibbling and nibbling.

"Second day it was the same. He wouldn't give me any peace, but kept nibbling all the time, trying to get my goat. I told him if he didn't quit I was walking off the job, and with that he got real nasty.

"You get back to work," he says.

"Oh no I don't," I says and with that I boomed him one and knocked him off the scaffold into a pile of mortar.

"Well, I went back to Mr. Craig and told him what had happened. Seems the foreman had been nibbling the other men, too, and Mr. Craig was kind of glad I'd boomed him. Upshot was I became foreman, three days after reaching Canada, and I've been building ever since, mostly on my own.

Tom, who lives in Port Credit, doesn't look his 82 years. Nor 72 for that

matter, but everybody tells him that. More to the point is that he has beaten the years both actively and mentally. He is sun-bronzed, firm-jawed, alert, brisk in his movements and with a comptometer-like memory. He showed me plans for a factory in Oakville which he had completed the day before with floor plan, elevation and all the rest of it. Beautifully executed it was — a work of art.

"I have done all my own designing, planning and estimating right through the piece," he told me. "Not just houses — I've done the plans for hundreds of them — but factories and stores as well. I did the plans for the IGA store in Oakville and several for Loblaw's.

In the old days T. P. Loblaw was a close friend of Tom Groves and Tom did work for him on his estate in Mimico. In 1950, after the Loblaw estate was sold, Tom built apartments on the property.

"T. P. was a wonderful man," he said. "He was very fond of my two kids and used to take them

strawberry-picking in his garden."

Tom is proud of all the building he has done, but his greatest pride is in the Groves family's war record. His father served 21 years in the Somerset Light Infantry before becoming a cabinet maker. Eight of his sons and grandsons piled up 55 years' service in the two world wars and accumulated a total of 28 medals. William John Groves, Tom's brother, was killed in action at the battle of Cambrai and Tom him-

Cambrai and I never did find out what happened to Tommy Holmes."

When the second war came along Tom was in his sixties, but some way he succeeded in getting back into the Canadian Engineers. He served as an instructor first, then after Pearl Harbor he was sent to Alaska where he found himself back in the building business — building quarters for the American troops.

Before the second world war the Groves Construction Company of which Tom was president, had undertaken various construction jobs in northern Ontario, most of them near the producing mines. In 1938 he started building Virginia Town for Kerr Addison and at the same time he was building homes for Noranda. At Virginia Town alone, where he had his head office, he was employing over 200 men.

"In that one location we were building homes at the rate of 25 a month," he told me. "And fine homes they were, well insulated and all different designs. What's more we saved the trees — as many as possible."

He showed me photographs. They were indeed fine homes.

Tom is a builder, but he has achieved distinction in other fields, too. He has patented a number of inventions, including the Groves Estimating Rule. He paints in oils, in the Grandma Moses style; he is an expert draftsman. But building has been his life, and he is particularly proud of the fine homes he built, the grand ones — Sir William Mullock's on Green Lane, the H. V. Tyrrell home on Finch Avenue, the Reginald Watkins home in Streetsville.

The secret of his success has been probity and fine building — no cutting corners, no skimping on quality, and his word was his bond.

He started building in Elliott Lake after the war and he showed me a joint letter he had received from the three biggest suppliers of building materials. He could have half a million dollars' worth of materials on credit, they told him, more if he needed them. And they concluded by saying that they were putting \$50,000 into his bank account to cover his initial expenses.

A nice tribute that, and it gives you a better picture of Tom Groves, octogenarian, than ever words can do.

TOWN OF MISSISSAUGA Engineering and Works Department

CONTRACT P.N. 48-66

TENDERS FOR SANITARY SEWERS

Sealed tenders, submitted in the tender envelope provided, will be received by the Clerk on behalf of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Mississauga until 12:00 o'clock noon E.D.S.T.

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 1968

for the construction of approximately 1,560 lineal feet of 12" and 15" diameter vitrified clay pipe sanitary sewers on Airport Road in the Malton area of the Town of Mississauga.

To be opened at a Public Tender Opening on Friday, July 19, 1968, at 2:00 o'clock p.m.

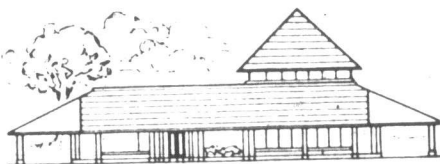
Contract documents, specifications, tender envelope and blank form of tender may be obtained from the Engineering and Works Department 3185 Mavis Road on payment of \$5.00 which is not refundable. They may also be viewed at the office of the Metropolitan Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association, 165 Cartwright Avenue, Toronto 19.

Each tender must be accompanied by a marked cheque in an amount equal to 5% of the tender submitted.

Lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

D.G. McALPINE P.A.

R. W. Speck, Mayor
G. Lummiss, Clerk
W. J. Anderson, Town Engineer



Officially Opened April 1967
PEELS CHAPEL
2180 Hurontario St., 279-7663
Wilfred L. Goltz



RONCESVALLES CHAPEL
436 Roncesvalles Ave., 533-7954
Alan J. Lawrence



YORKE CHAPEL
2357 Bloor St. W., 767-3153
William Sellors

Turner & Porter



FUNERAL DIRECTORS LIMITED
Established 1878

Off-the-Street Parking at all Chapels.