

York is a historical place — just look beyond the concrete

By HOWARD VANEK

There seems to be a mystique surrounding the old. That could be due to a longing for days gone by; simpler times when 30 mph was considered daring and men were peeking at ankles.

It might seem contradictory to look for historical landmarks on a campus as new as York but, in actual fact, there is history. History that is not so far removed. Drive along Steeles Ave. where on the north side of the street, you can see the land of our campus as it was 10 years ago and probably as it was before the 20th century.

If you're looking carefully at the right moment, on a cold, blowy winter morning, you can see the wolves running along those fields between the forests looking for food.

There is a lonely looking white farmhouse, a quarter mile west of the graduate residences on the edge of Black Creek Valley. This is the Passey house which was given to York at its opening in 1965. In the winter you can hardly see it set against the white background of the snow; but, it's there and has been for the better part of a century.

If the trees directly behind and adjacent to what is now Osgoode



Stong house

Hall could talk, they would tell of the countless times that Dr. and Mrs. Hart must have ridden along that path leading to their country home in the woods which still stands

today. The Harts were connected to the Massey family and the house was left empty for years after the death of the doctor until 1965 when it was given to York by Mrs. Hart.



Hart house

Arriving at the Hart house, now used by York secretary Bill Farr, you are greeted by a rough wooden fence that is falling down in places. The house is set back on the large front lawn. Symbolically, the house is shadowed by a number of large apartments. The long gravel driveway leads to a white double garage with a grey, sagging roof. The front porch is ranch style, also with a roof that sags.

The last homestead of the Stong family sits on the corner of Steeles and Keele. The first two, which now exude nostalgia in Pioneer Village, date as far back as 1826 and 1840. There isn't much to say which can't be seen in its bricks or wooden beams and rafters.

Of the three original buildings on the university grounds, the most interesting is probably this one. The farmhouse itself is made of red brick, faded with age, with yellow bricks used on the corners. On the left of the house is a tool shed and on the right is a vacant hen-house with a green roof with various large holes. Further along the dirt driveway and surrounded by various piles of somebody's memories, is a large, grey barn.

Inside among collapsing timber, old burlap sacks and horse stalls with petrified hay, there are tractor wheels, rotten ropes and a derelict, rusted muffler. The hayloft has caved in. A wall of one of the smaller rooms which might have been the tack room, is lined with empty sacks of Super Flow Fertilizer.

It would take more than fertilizer to make the Stong farm or the others what they had been. The clocks won't stop. They only seem to slow down for those who remember.

Photos by Harry Kitz



Passey house

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