

“Cruickshank Park”

By Cherri Hurst, Weston Historical Society

As the days grow longer, and the sun gets warmer the residents of Weston emerge from their winter hibernation. People can be seen enjoying the warm spring days up and down the paths of our very own Cruickshank Park. Located along the east bank of the Humber River, north of Lawrence Avenue, the park was given to the Town of Weston by the Cruickshank family.

In 1830 John Porter built and operated a sawmill on the site of the present day park, until it was sold to Rowland Burr in 1844. Burr tore down the aging building and built a large woolen mill, only to have it burn down three years later.

The site was then sold to Robert McDougall in 1849. McDougall erected a large five-story flourmill; however the dam he built was so large it caused water shortages to the Wadsworth mill up stream. They sued Mr. McDougall for damages and forced him to lower the dam. Since this crippled him financially he sold it to the Wadsworths in 1882. They immediately took the mill out of operation.

Wallace Cruickshank, son of the Weston pioneer James Cruickshank, finally purchased the property from the Wadsworth brothers in 1893; the old mill building was used as part of the Weston Wagon Works, predecessor of today's Cruickshank Motors on Weston Road.

In 1929 the Cruickshank family offered the land to the town of Weston as a memorial to James Cruickshank. The town councillors actually hesitated about accepting it as they knew it would require upkeep, at a time when there was no money to spare. The Cruickshank family threw in the entrance off Lawrence Avenue and so it was decided to accept the gift.

The park sat dormant until Hurricane Hazel passed through. In her wake it was deemed necessary for municipalities to clean up their lowlands and so it got a much needed boost. To celebrate Canada's Centennial the stairs and entrance at the bottom of Church Street, off Weston Road were added.

Over the years litter became a problem so the Weston Ratepayers Association organized a clean up day. Sponsors were solicited and a small group of volunteers from the community pitched in to help. Ten years later, the Cruickshank Park Spring Clean Up has become an annual event. People of all ages, individuals, and families with children volunteer their time and energy. Some children have grown up attending the event every year. They have hauled everything away, including the kitchen sink, but contrary to popular opinion there has not been a lot of drug paraphernalia.

Perhaps Cruickshank Park has not played a vital part in the history of Weston but it has brought people together over the years, in play and in work. What better legacy could a park offer?

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