

From Summer Cottage Colony to Metropolitan Suburb: Toronto's Beach District, 1889-1929

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Volume 35, numéro 1, fall 2006

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015991ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015991ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)
1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Luka, N. (2006). From Summer Cottage Colony to Metropolitan Suburb:
Toronto's Beach District, 1889-1929. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire
urbaine*, 35(1), 18-31. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015991ar>

Résumé de l'article

Comment les lieux de villégiature sont-ils devenus des banlieues métropolitaines ? Cette étude de cas porte sur un secteur de Toronto localisé au bord du Lac Ontario—The Beach—soit une zone de chalets d'été établie au cours des années 1880. Pendant une période de 40 ans, cette zone s'est progressivement transformée en une banlieue peuplée majoritairement de résidents de la classe moyenne (ainsi définis en fonction des occupations de ces derniers). En utilisant des données issues du rôle municipal d'évaluation foncière et de l'histoire locale, croisées avec l'analyse de la croissance de la forme urbaine du secteur, cette étude avance trois énoncés. En premier lieu, The Beach constitue un exemple typique de la croissance des banlieues qui datent d'avant la deuxième guerre mondiale : un processus de développement lent et éparpillé, intégrant à peine les caractéristiques le plus souvent associées aux banlieues pavillonnaires, comme en témoigne, d'ailleurs, l'éclectisme actuel de la forme des tissus qui composent ces secteurs. En deuxième lieu, la géographie sociale des grandes agglomérations industrielles résulte d'une appropriation collective par ses usagers entre 1890 et 1930. Finalement, le chapitre discute du rôle des lieux de villégiature comme antécédents de la banlieue métropolitaine. Peut-on en conclure que l'origine de ces middle-class suburbs reste ancrée dans les usages et les représentations de l'espace en lien avec les notions de loisir et de détente ?

From Summer Cottage Colony to Metropolitan Suburb: Toronto's Beach District, 1889–1929

Nik Luka

Abstract

Over four decades beginning in the 1890s, the east-end Toronto district now known as “The Beach” was transformed from a summer second-home setting into a metropolitan suburb dominated by the middle classes (occupationally defined). Using a systematic random sample drawn from the municipal property tax assessment rolls for the study area at six intervals from 1889 to 1929, along with narrative examples and illustrative analyses of growth and change in urban form, this paper examines three compelling aspects of this transformation. First and foremost, this district is a fine example of pre-Second World War suburban growth: slow, piecemeal, and inconsistent in pattern and form, as now reflected in its eclectic built form and fine-grained mix of housing types. “The Beach” is also a place-based example of how metropolitan social geographies were being sorted out from within by user groups early in the twentieth century. Without becoming exclusively or solely a middle-class district, the Beach came to be dominated by the middle classes—typifying the “weave of small patterns” that characterized the social fabric of the early North American metropolis. Finally, the term cottage colony is used quite deliberately, for it appears that the Beach’s role as a summer leisure destination was instrumental in spurring its transformation into a middle-class suburb, imbuing it with particular qualities that enhanced (or ensured) its desirability. In effect, this district’s “summer cottage” period was a telling prelude to its emergence as a markedly middle-class district in Toronto of the 1920s and later.

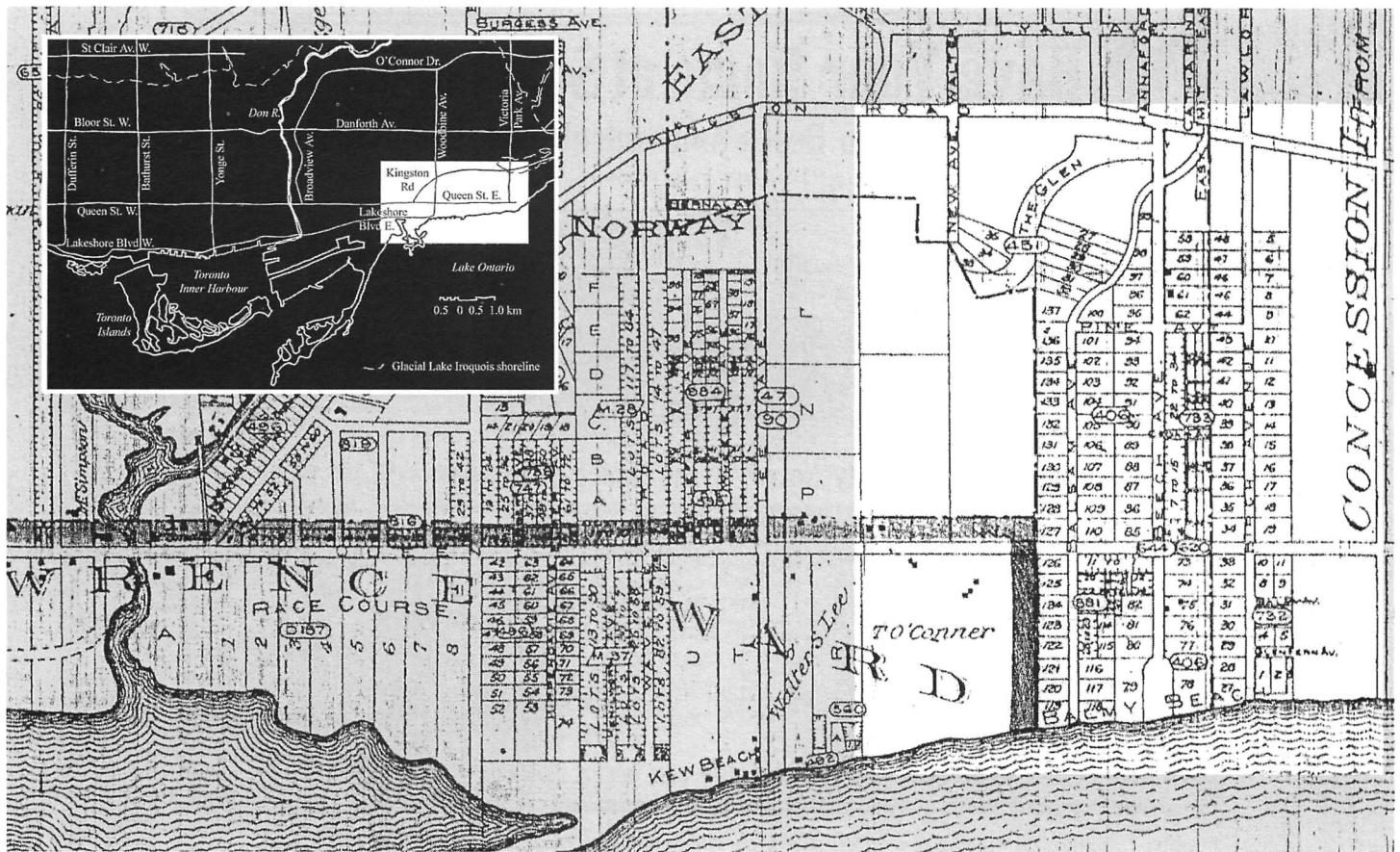
Résumé

Comment les lieux de villégiature sont-ils devenus des banlieues métropolitaines ? Cette étude de cas porte sur un secteur de Toronto localisé au bord du Lac Ontario—The Beach—soit une zone de chalets d’été établie au cours des années 1880. Pendant une période de 40 ans, cette zone s’est progressivement transformée en une banlieue peuplée majoritairement de résidents de la classe moyenne (ainsi définis en fonction des occupations de ces derniers). En utilisant des données issues du rôle municipal d’évaluation foncière et de l’histoire locale, croisées avec l’analyse de la croissance de la forme urbaine du secteur, cette étude avance trois énoncés. En premier lieu, The Beach constitue un exemple typique de la croissance des banlieues qui datent d’avant la deuxième guerre mondiale : un processus de développement lent et éparpillé, intégrant à peine les caractéristiques le plus souvent associées aux banlieues pavillonnaires, comme en témoigne, d’ailleurs, l’éclectisme actuel de la forme des tissus qui composent ces secteurs. En deuxième lieu, la géographie sociale

des grandes agglomérations industrielles résulte d’une appropriation collective par ses usagers entre 1890 et 1930. Finalement, le chapitre discute du rôle des lieux de villégiature comme antécédents de la banlieue métropolitaine. Peut-on en conclure que l’origine de ces middle-class suburbs reste ancrée dans les usages et les représentations de l’espace en lien avec les notions de loisir et de détente ?

The rise of metropolitan suburbs is at once well-scrutinized and neglected in studies of Canadian urban history. In general terms, the literature is abundant, as recently exemplified by *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900–1960*, in which Richard Harris presents an excellent overview of suburbanization in Canada’s metropolitan areas. Yet on how general patterns of socio-spatial sorting, emergent types of urban form, and processes of transformation all played out in specific places, we are somewhat lacking. This paper presents one such case study by examining how factors intersected in the east-end Toronto district known as the Beach (map 1).¹ Named for the wide strand lining the Lake Ontario shore, it is now a sought-after neighbourhood with an upper-middle-income population and a surprisingly fine-grained mix of built form, housing types, and architectural styles. A typical residential streetscape in the Beach reveals clues to its early urban history as a metropolitan suburb, but also its late nineteenth-century origins as a summer-cottage colony and leisure destination for Toronto’s residents. The use of the term *summer cottage colony* in the title refers to the second-home phenomenon as a broader trend of interest in studies of metropolitan growth—the socio-spatial practice of urban households maintaining an ancillary dwelling in relatively non-urban contexts, typically for summer usage and often near a water-body. Many Canadians refer to these as “cottages,” although the terms *cabin* and *camp* are used elsewhere in Canada and the northeastern United States. To preclude confusion with the architectural term suggesting a modest dwelling, the term *summer cottage* is therefore used throughout this paper.²

The advertising rhetoric of a half-page 1926 newspaper advertisement (fig. 1) for a sizeable tract of new semi-detached houses speculatively built at the height of a housing boom proclaimed that here the buyer could “have your city home and summer home all in one.” In this is summarized the historical case examined in this paper: how a second-home colony of Toronto became a metropolitan suburb dominated by the middle classes over a forty-year period. Here is told a familiar story of slow, piecemeal suburban growth beginning with fits of land subdivision in the 1880s. Its purpose is to provide new insight, however, through three arguments. First, evidence is presented to show that the district was a weekend second-home destination for residents of Toronto. Although this was only temporary, important questions are raised: did this late-nineteenth-century role as summer leisure destination influence or perhaps fore-



Map 1: Excerpt from the 1890 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto and Vicinity highlighting the case study area at the eastern end of the Beach district. The inset key map highlights the Beach district within Toronto.

shadow the district's transformation into a metropolitan suburb? In what ways might the Beach's "cottage" period have presaged its emergence as a distinctly middle-class suburb of Toronto by the 1920s? Second, the Beach district is an excellent case study of pre-Second World War suburban change, which tended to be incremental and inconsistent in pattern, process, and form. Its eclectic range of housing types on a modular grid arrangement of streets atop hilly physiography are intriguing examples of suburban landscapes, and this study contributes to our somewhat spotty knowledge of early Canadian metropolitan suburbs. Third, the Beach is a place-based example of how Toronto's social geography was being sorted out from within by user groups early in the twentieth century. Typifying a "weave of small patterns"—to borrow Sam Bass Warner's term—so characteristic of the early North American metropolis, this district came to be dominated in aggregate by the middle classes (occupationally defined), yet neither "exclusively" a middle-class district nor uniformly so in disaggregate units such as the street or the urban block.³

Summer cottage colonies have undeniably tended to become metropolitan suburbs in Canadian cities. Halifax's northwest arm, parts of Ancienne-Lorette and other districts lining the Rivière St-Charles in Quebec City, Bowling Green on the western

end of Montreal's main island, White Rock in the Vancouver metropolitan region, and Cordova Bay in Victoria—all are examples that underwent similar growth and change. Other examples in the Greater Toronto Area include New Toronto and Mimico Beach, as well as the Credit River valley. Part of the imperative for this study is to direct attention to the need for critical consideration of how summer resort areas are incorporated into the suburban fabric of Canadian cities. Indeed, it is part of a larger project examining how leisure settings may offer insight into growth and change in metropolitan regions.⁴ How might such seasonal-use amenity destinations be usefully understood as a phase of urban growth? cursory analysis would suggest that the historic growth of the Beach district, given its relative distance from Toronto's older city centre, can be explained in terms of how mobile professional households "escaped" from the crowded, noisy city to leafy green suburbs. Certainly the Beach district had emerged by 1930 as comparable with other "upmarket" streetcar suburbs such as North Toronto, High Park, Baby Point, and pockets along St. Clair West. Hardly surprising is that all were relatively amenity-rich areas with main streetcar lines linking them to the employment and service nodes of the city core. Yet the Beach district was alone among Toronto's early-twentieth-century east-end suburban districts as a "seemingly"

Have Your Home at Scarborough Beach

On the Site of Scarborough Beach Amusement Park and Athletic Field

The Choicest Part of "the Beach"—on the Lake—on the Car Line—25 Minutes to Yonge

Beautiful Homes in A Beautiful Location

Old "Scarboro Beach" with its splendid lake frontage, fine trees, clean level ground is an ideal place for your home. You've probably been there often and can recall its beautiful surroundings. Now, all this area is laid out with wide streets and attractive, but moderately-priced homes. You have a chance to buy one, and it's a real opportunity. Most of these fifty houses now ready for sale—all solid brick, detached or semi, side drives, six or seven rooms, splendid lots—and every house wonderful value. Have your city home and summer home all in one.

REMEMBER! On the Lake—On the Car Line—25 minutes from Yonge St.



Greatest House Value Offered for a Long Time

\$5,400 to \$7,500! And when you see the homes you will appreciate the value that is offered. Almost any person can carry one of these homes—\$40 to \$60 a month will do it. The terms are easy and the interest is but 6½%. Appreciable economies have been effected by building on such a large scale and, in addition, the builders are working on a very narrow margin of profit. It's a wonderful opportunity for any person who hopes to own his own home and who wants good solid value for his money.

The beauty and freshness of a high class suburban district, but only 25 minutes on Bell's cars from Yonge St.

More Than 50 Homes Ready Now—Great Choice of Designs—\$5,400 to \$7,500

All Solid Brick—All With Side Drives—All With Clean, Dry, Level Lots—All New, Modern Homes

Your Last Opportunity to Have a Lakeside Home so Close to Yonge St.—Wide Streets—All Improvements



See These Homes Saturday Afternoon
Take a Beach Car to Scarborough Beach Boulevard

Builders, or representatives, will be on hand afternoon and evening. Come and look around.

You can telephone any of the builders listed below for information, or see them, or be taken direct without obligation.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>A. V. Padden, Grover 7248. G. Brooks, Grover 8102. Thos. Kramers, Hargrave 6107. Bradley & Halderon, Howard 8418 or Howard 1210. A. Klugman, Grover 9207.</p> | <p>A. W. Kade, Howard 4513. Rydery P. Lenkin, Grover 7057. R. G. Smith, Grover 8556. Wheatster & Sharp, Grover 8089 or Hargrave 1081. J. R. McMillan, Grover 8132 or 8456.</p> |
|--|--|

SCARBORO BEACH HOME BUILDERS



Figure 1: Advertisement for new housing on the Scarborough Beach Amusement Park site.

or "desirable" area, and it was considerably farther away from the urban core than these comparable middle-class districts.

As studies of other pre-1930 Canadian and American suburbs have revealed, a much more complex set of forces should be examined to explain what happened in this east-end Toronto district. In this respect, it is argued here that over the four decades from roughly 1890 to 1930, the Beach district came to be predominantly middle class, largely as a result of the area's distinctive qualities of place and landscape amenity.⁵ Following an outline of the concepts and methods used in this study, the results of primary research using city directories, municipal tax assessment rolls, and other sources are presented. Social transformations from 1889 to 1929 are examined along with a contextualization of these changes in local and regional histories. The paper culminates in a discussion aiming to "ground" social trends in urban form to help make sense of why these changes took place as they did, and suggest several extensions or implications for further research.

Key Definitions, Concepts, and Methods

Notwithstanding the risks of generalizing about suburbs, several formal and locational attributes are consistently identified in current debates, at least in the Anglo-American world. Metropolitan suburbs tend to be peripherally located with lower overall net densities (at least when the "suburb" was being built up) relative

to the historic urban cores to which the suburb is appended. While multi-functional, they are marked by spatial segregation through the zoning of allowable activities, especially by the mid-twentieth century. Many "suburbs" are dominated—at least visually—by streets of dwellings with little or no commercial-industrial activity. These common characteristics are marked in suburbs built with a guiding urban design scheme and/or (as was more often the case) fairly stringent planning by-laws that have been embodied in urban form over time.

Two recent overviews of Canadian and American suburbanization provide useful yet cautiously worded categorizations of metropolitan suburbs: Hadyen's *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000* and Harris's *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900–1960*.⁶ Hayden identifies seven historic suburban landscapes found across the U.S., while Harris names four types of suburbanization in Canada. Three common patterns identified by both analysts are noteworthy:

- The "affluent" or "picturesque" enclave, a suburban type marked by comprehensive design, rigorously governed by protective covenants, and mainly geared to a wealthy clientele
- The "mail-order and self-built" suburb, described by Hayden as typically lacking comprehensive planning for even the most basic of municipal services such as water and sewer-

age, although Hayden draws heavily on Harris's case made that a significant portion of pre–Second World War North American suburbs consisted of owner-built housing⁷

- The ubiquitous middle-class subdivision (in Harris's words) or streetcar build-out (in Hayden's words), in which details varied from place to place, but where speculators built housing on lots created through large-scale land subdivision, yielding fairly uniform overall urban form characteristics

Conceptually, cultural landscape research occupies a prominent place in this study. Aptly described by Upton as “the fusion of the physical with the imaginative structures that all inhabitants of the landscape use in constructing and constructing it,” this interdisciplinary preoccupation is regaining prominence in studies of the North American metropolis.⁸ For present purposes, it is combined with studies of urban form on the broad premise that the built environment is a structured and organized body of things and ideas having both formal and affective dimensions, an understanding of which ideally should encompass more “subjective” aspects—individually defined and articulated—as well as more “objective” dimensions (i.e., those that can be discussed in terms of shared social realities). I therefore refer to *landscape and urban form* as a singular yet complex entity—the everyday organization of space, time, meaning, and communication—all understood as works in progress rather than being “carved in stone.”

This paper hinges on concepts of social class as articulated by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who argued that the logic of social practice generates “classes” as sets of agents. Because they occupy similar positions in social space (i.e., in distribution of powers), these groups are subject to similar conditions of existence and conditioning factors, and they are consequently endowed with similar dispositions prompting them, in turn, to develop similar practices.⁹ These critical patterns of behaviour are reflected in occupation; borrowing from Harris's study of Toronto's early-twentieth-century suburbs, a key distinction is made here between workers and owners or managers.¹⁰ The middle-class folk in the Beach district are individuals who, through their education and monopoly of particular skills, were especially able to manoeuvre within society, both instrumentally—by vocation (i.e., in their roles as professionals, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and managers)—and symbolically, through the space they occupy. Thus the middle-class suburb, as a form of spatial organization and geographic distinction, is a material embodiment of the “suburban ideal” as compellingly suggested by Mary Corbin Sies.¹¹ In effect, “class” is a critical means by which individuals and groups actively endeavour to impose their vision of the world or of their own position in that world and thus define their own social identity.¹² It is a social and practical construct and an endless work of representation, in every sense of the term, through which people explicitly act to modify their own positions in the “social space” of power relations. The working definition of social class used here thus attributes individuals with agency insofar as being able to self-organize and self-identify

with general groups. For practical purposes, a fair proxy for social class is the vocation for the head-of-household, which can be readily ascertained using property tax assessment rolls.

Geographically, this case study is limited to an area at the east end of the Toronto Beach district (map 1). The first three of the lots at the eastern limits of the original 1793 York Township survey have been examined, from Lake Ontario to as far north as Kingston Road.¹³ This corresponds with the area now roughly bounded on the east by Victoria Park Avenue, and on the west by Main Street, Southwood Drive, and Wineva Avenue. Two sets of questions are discussed by drawing on several primary and secondary sources, following several historic peaks and troughs in the business cycle from the 1880s to the 1920s—a time of massive population increase, economic expansion, and resultant waves of housing construction across Toronto.

To examine urban form, dynamics of subdivision, and construction patterns, a systematic random sample was drawn from the assessment rolls for the study area. The key question was whether housing was built in a rapid and sustained manner—the consistent subdivision of large estates into small building lots—or by a gradual densification of urban form through several business cycles. The “bookend” years were selected as 1889 and 1929, the early date reflecting the first significant burst of new permanent housing to be built in the study area (in the 1890s following the peak of a great Toronto-wide building boom in the 1880s) and the earliest year in which continuous and comprehensive data are available. By 1929, at the end of what Lemon has called Toronto's “silver age” and on the threshold of the 1930s Depression, a fairly dense suburban fabric existed in the study area. Narrow residential lots averaged twenty feet to twenty-five feet in frontage, almost none of which were vacant. Between these “bookends” four other sample years were selected, on the basis of building cycles, urban growth, and development patterns in the Toronto metropolitan region:¹⁴

- 1896: Following several lean years, the beginning of another sustained economic boom
- 1907: A short recession—in economic activity, employment, and productivity—just before the study area came entirely within the Toronto city limits through the annexation of East Toronto in 1908 and Balmy Beach in 1909
- 1914: The twilight of the almost twenty-year-long boom, and the beginning of the First World War
- 1922: A minor slump preceding the massive boom of the 1920s, when employment had reached a historic low, and the start of a massive burst of housing growth

Using the six intervals, time-series data for housing tenure, real estate values, and the relative proportion of owner-occupiers versus tenants were gathered, using the same sample of assessment rolls. Growth patterns were explored through an additional systematic random sample of Toronto real estate values drawn from the city-wide assessment rolls for three of the years in question (1889, 1907, and 1929), and by focusing on selected locations.

The social composition and labour force structure of the study area were examined, using head-of-household data found in the municipal tax assessment rolls, based on an occupational classification developed by Harris.¹⁵ The “middle class” comprises not only professionals (e.g., doctors, teachers) and supervisors as well as agents on commission such as travellers (salespersons), but also self-employed “entrepreneurs” in non-professional vocations. Clerks are left in the working-class category because it was not possible to disaggregate more potentially upwardly mobile “middle-class” clerks from working-class shop clerks.

Placing the Beach: Landscape and Urban Form

As the Beach district became a metropolitan suburb from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War, dramatic changes took place across Toronto. The population increased rapidly through in-migration, and the city grew in physical terms by annexing suburbs where land speculation was widespread. Two trends are noteworthy. First, the constricted streetcar network created a very dense city by 1921; while the city experienced unprecedented rates of urban and suburban expansion, the car-lines were not expanded into newly annexed districts.¹⁶ Second, the eclectic residential streetscapes found in many Toronto districts that were built up from the 1880s to the 1920s are the physical traces of premature subdivision, a pattern of over-zealous surveying and platting of building lots that was widespread across Canada and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Lots created in a given economic upswing were often not built upon until the next peak in the building cycle, usually about twenty years later, creating an architectural array of houses built in different decades on uniform lot sizes, especially where owner-building was common in (predominantly) working-class suburbs such as Earls Court. These contrasted with mainly north-end suburbs (e.g., Lawrence Park), which were built out with standard house designs in rapid bursts by speculative builder-developers targeting the growing ranks of the middle class with relatively high incomes.¹⁸ Many early Toronto suburbs were thus uneven rather than orderly in form, quality, extent, and service availability, because the scale on which land subdivision took place was rather small, while the number of actors directly involved in transforming “greenfield” sites to suburban districts was typically great. Until the Second World War, suburban expansion directly involved a motley crew of land speculators, small-scale property developers, builders, loan or building societies, property owners, and everyday householders dabbling in speculative building.¹⁹

The Beach case study area is found where Queen (Lot) Street, the baseline for the original 1793 land survey and division of York Township, meets the physical barriers of Lake Ontario and the beginnings of the Scarborough Bluffs at the eastern end of Toronto's pre-Second World War city (map 1). The district straddles the ancient shoreline of glacial Lake Iroquois—a steep rise ranging from twenty to thirty metres in height—dividing latter-day Toronto into a relatively flat plain at two separate elevations. In the Beach district, the rise widens and is much

VICTORIA PARK, SCARBORO HEIGHTS.



Toronto Evening Telegram, 29 May 1878

Grand Opening, Saturday, June 1st, 1878.

THE NEW AND SWIFT A 1 STEAMER F. B. MAXWELL
Will leave NAIRN'S WHARF, FOOT OF CHURCH-ST.,

at 11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m., calling at the new wharf, foot of Simcoe-st., at 11:10 a.m., 2:10 p.m., and 4:10 p.m. One of the Tenth Royals will accompany the first boat and remain at Victoria Park throughout the day. Fare for round trip and admission to the Park 25c, children 15c.

BOYLE, SHIELDS & CO., Proprietors

Figure 2: Advertisement for the opening of Victoria Park

less steep than elsewhere in the city. With its sandy soils, a post-glacial lakeshore of beaches was generated, as well as fertile ground for stands of red pine (also known as Norway pine)—both features furnishing the most obvious local place names, the Beach for the general area and the other for Norway, an early village settlement.²⁰ A road leading from Toronto to Kingston had been built through the area beginning in 1799. It served as a growth spine for settlements focused on small-scale resource-based activity.²¹ Although Kingston Road was surfaced with wooden planks in the Beach district by the 1830s, an 1868 map still reported that most of the district was still “thickly wooded” and the survey baseline that was to become Queen Street East was described as no more than a “country trail with stumps of trees scattered in its midst” beyond Kingston Road.²²

Extensive subdividing began in 1876, when landowner Sir Adam Wilson registered a plan of subdivision laying out dozens of parcels on north-south road allowances that would soon become Birch, Beech, and Balsam Avenues.²³ Wilson was one of several members of Toronto's elite citizenry establishing summer retreats in the Beach district.²⁴ His initiative coincided with the establishment of a horse-tram service in June 1875 along Queen Street from the Don Bridge to Kingston Road and Woodbine Avenue. At the lakeside centre of his subdivision, Wilson set up Balmy Beach Park as a “private promenade” for residents of the new properties, and by the 1880s, a pattern of premature subdivision was underway. This pattern was repeated in the Beach district at several intervals until the late 1920s, as subsequent waves of subdivision produced greater numbers of new lots than were in demand, at least in the short term. For instance, in 1896, some two-thirds of building lots in the study



City of Toronto Archives, fonds 1244, James Collection, item 190

Figure 3: Frame cottages at an unspecified location as found in the Beach district in the 1870s and 1880s.

area remained vacant. It is also apparent that the district was being suburbanized by city-based individuals. By 1888, several blocks of small building lots with similar dimensions were owned by firms, and consequently assessed in bundles; within ten years the pattern was even clearer, as land had been consolidated into the hands of a few landowners. Sir Adam Wilson's original Balmy Beach subdivision was by then only one among several stretching up to Kingston Road. It was owned largely by a private company based in downtown Toronto. There are thus fewer assessments than there are lots, especially because most parcels remained vacant until at least the turn of the century.

A parallel trend involved a sizeable colony of leisure activities that developed on or near the waterfront. In 1875, Woodbine Park (later the Greenwood Raceway) opened. It was the first of several attractions that soon made the Beach district a summertime destination for day-tripping Torontonians. The grand opening of Victoria Park in 1878 just east of the York Township limits was enthusiastically publicized (fig. 2). Kew Gardens, to the west of the study area, was opened in May 1879. Munro Park, adjacent to Victoria Park, opened in 1896.²⁵ Both amusement parks were taken over by the Toronto Railway Company and substantially "improved" in 1899–1900, to be jointly run as a "pleasure resort" that would welcome "all classes of citizens" but in which "public dancing will be absolutely prohibited."²⁶ In effect, those who could not afford to buy land could at least spend the day there by way of steamers and streetcars.

It appears that the Beach district's role as a leisure landscape was linked to extensive suburban subdivisions, many of which were used at first for summer houses only. Among the owners of Balmy Beach, for instance, both Snow and Beaty had large summer "cottages" on the water's edge in the heart of the 1876 enclave. Indeed, one popular account recently characterized the Beach district at the turn of the century as "a breezy resort community of humble clapboard houses, amusement parks, hotels, and lakeside canoe clubs."²⁷

Historical evidence tends to affirm this view; for instance, a 1900 article in the *Toronto World* stated that 280 houses stood near the lakefront east of Woodbine Beach and that only one-third of these were occupied year-round (fig. 3).²⁸

Hotels, campgrounds, and boarding houses were also established. Just north of Queen Street, for instance, a large summer hotel called The Pines was erected around 1900:

It had verandas all around the first and second floors, and a tennis court on the south . . . A row of cabins was built to the north of the hotel for families. This was called Pine Terrace . . . Guests came over to the main building for meals, and you could hear the big dinnerbell ringing three times a day. Each cabin consisted of two rooms upstairs and two downstairs, with privies out the back.²⁹

Later, Pine Terrace became the site of what a local resident called an "unusual encampment" of "old street cars, perhaps the old horse cars, converted to summer dwellings."³⁰ Soon, however, linkages to Toronto improved. Queen Street was properly opened up within the Beach district in the 1880s, and the horse-drawn trams reached the study area in 1889, soon thereafter replaced with electric streetcars.³¹ Easier transportation access from Toronto meant that more and more of the many building lots surveyed and platted in the 1870s and 1880s were built upon. The late 1890s thus saw the first wave of construction (table 1). Other harbingers of large-scale suburbanization included the City of Toronto's annexation of a 200-foot strip north of Queen Street in 1887 as well as a flurry of small-lot subdivisions that had been registered in the 1880s, with activity slowing somewhat during the economic downturn in the early 1890s.³²

An architectural historian will see in the sometimes-whimsical but often simple frame houses scattered throughout the Beach district (fig. 4) the hallmarks of a nineteenth-century summer resort. While anecdotal evidence, Toronto folklore, and popular history indicate that this was once a choice summer cottage colony of the city, to what extent was this the case and until what time?³³ The assessment rolls for the study area identify

Table 1: Construction data for the Beach district study area, 1889–1929

| Year | Sample size (sampling ratio) | Built-up lots | Vacant lots |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1889 | 76 (1:1) | 17 (22.3%) | 59 (77.6%) |
| 1896 | 29 (1:5) | 10 (34.5%) | 19 (65.5%) |
| 1907 | 52 (1:10) | 38 (73.1%) | 14 (26.9%) |
| 1914 | 108 (1:10) | 77 (71.3%) | 31 (28.7%) |
| 1922 | 172 (1:10) | 150 (87.2%) | 22 (12.8%) |
| 1929 | 258 (1:10) | 231 (89.5%) | 27 (10.5%) |

second homes well into the 1920s, although it was not until 1914 that they were identified (usually as “summer residences”). There is consequently a fuzzy area comprising summer cottages and vacant houses. Conservatively limiting the tally to explicitly identified summer residences, there were twenty-three in the 1914 sample and only ten in the 1922 sample, but these appeared in clear patterns near the waterfront.³⁴ More liberally assuming that a vacant dwelling near the lake was likely to be a summer cottage, an enumeration of the streets between Queen Street and the lake within the study area has revealed a significant enough number—seventy-six in 1907, seventy-one in 1914, and twenty-eight in 1922. For instance, on Balsam Avenue in 1907, nineteen of the first twenty-seven built-up properties from the lake were listed as vacant houses. In 1914, two of the same dwellings were listed as “summer residences,” as were eight of the twenty properties closest to the lakeshore in the 1922 assessment. Nearby streets were similar in the proportion of vacant houses near the lakeshore in 1922, including Leuty (where five of the first twelve houses were shown as vacant) and Maclean (eleven of the first twenty-two houses).³⁵ To be fair, many houses were listed in the assessment rolls as being vacant—whether because they had only just been built and were not yet ready for occupation or as supply outpaced demand as the result of speculative waves of construction. High vacancy rates were thus the norm throughout the study area as the Beach district was being built up. Yet on Kew Beach—a choice waterfront site that was not officially a public street before 1914—a total of twenty-nine vacant houses were listed along with thirty-nine occupied dwellings in 1922. On the basis of narrative accounts of the location and use of many houses in the study area as summer cottages from 1880 to 1920, it is safe to conclude that a good number of the houses described as “vacant” were in fact being used as summer cottages.

The first decade of the twentieth century was a time of growing pains for the district; fierce debates raged among Beach residents over whether to become part of the City of Toronto. The district's role as a “leisure landscape” was waning in the extended building boom that lasted until the First World War. One local resident recalled that while virtually nobody lived year-round by the water before the turn of the century, all new houses built by 1905 were fitted out as year-round dwellings;



Figure 4: The Watson family posing in 1912 on the steps of their house, which was originally built in the 1880s as a summer residence on what is now Balsam Road but by then converted for year-round use.

most of these were further from the lake: “When people built up there they built to stay.”³⁶ Assessment rolls indicate that by 1907 most of the surveyed lots had been built upon, and most of the houses were permanently occupied (fig. 5). In the same year, Munro Park and Victoria Park closed down, replaced by the more elaborate Scarborough Beach Amusement Park modelled on Coney Island (fig. 6). By 1909, three further annexations brought the district entirely into the City of Toronto proper. The holiday hinterland had effectively become one among many in-town Toronto suburbs, although Ontario Railway and Municipal Board records of the 1908 annexation of East Toronto suggest considerable landscape amenity value was still accorded the lakefront. The first term and condition of annexation, for instance, read that “any sewerage system adopted by the City shall be constructed so as not to injure the property along the Lake shore,” while another stipulated that the area “shall be set aside as a residential district free from factories and hotels.”³⁷ Thus, not only was the Beach spatially becoming (sub)urban, it was also being formally managed through rudimentary zoning. At the time of annexation, however, the district was not yet contiguous in its urban form. One built-up pocket existed in the west (Kew Beach) and another in the east (Balmy Beach), separated, as they would remain until 1925, by the Scarborough Beach Park site. Another spatial gap existed at the west end of the Beach district, in the form of Small's Pond (fig. 7), which had been filled in by 1930.³⁸

The dynamic equilibrium between leisure hinterland and residential suburb lasted into the early 1920s. As a Toronto newspaper reported in August 1920, “A higher record of visitors to the Beaches was registered yesterday, when favoured with fair, cool weather, car load after car load of city residents crowded out to the Beaches . . . All the attractions of Scarborough Park were well-patronized . . . It is estimated that over 30,000 left the city for the Beaches district yesterday.”³⁹ Rather than summer cottages, resorts, and amusement parks, though,



Figure 5: View looking southeast along Queen Street in 1906 as the Beach district was being built up with permanent housing.

the main destination for day-trippers from the city were the beaches themselves. Within five years, the Scarborough Beach Park was permanently closed—unsurprisingly, for suburban amusement parks of this sort were declining in popularity, in part as a result of the rise of cinema and vaudeville.⁴⁰ Evidence more strongly suggests, however, that its owners saw much greater profit to be made by subdividing and selling off the land. A Toronto-wide building boom was filling the study area out as a metropolitan suburb by this time. The only other large parcel of land within the study area—an estate straddling the Glen Stewart Ravine in the northwest corner of the study area—had already been bought by a land subdivision company.⁴¹ It was thence developed in the garden suburb manner as a high-end enclave called Stewart Manor, the scenic praises of which were sung in 1923 by an amateur Toronto historian:

The tract is well wooded, and full advantage has been taken of the topography in the building of fine crescent-shaped roads, the location, in a ravine of three artificial Lakes fed from fresh water springs, and the addition of the landscape engineer's art to the prodigal gifts of nature. No pains or expense in the adaptation of this beautiful spot to home purposes have been spared by the company, which has graded all roads, built all sidewalks, laid out attractive drives and foot paths through a charming park, and, in general, has done everything within human artistic ability and ingenuity to make the manor ideal . . . Even thus early in its existence, Stewart Manor compares favorably with the older and most noted residential districts of Toronto.⁴²

The end of the resort and summer-cottage era, although generally brought about by land-market pressures, came definitively and symbolically in 1928, when the newly formed Toronto Harbour Commission announced plans to build a public boardwalk and parkland along the waterfront. At the western end of the Beach district, there was still a handful of lakeshore cottages. Many were being used as permanent dwellings (in part because land reclamation operations had set them about ninety feet back from the water's edge), but



Figure 6: The Midway at Scarborough Beach Amusement Park, 1907.

about half the tenants had permanent addresses in or near the Beach. Although the properties had been let annually for many years, the leases were not renewed for 1928, and all tenants were instructed to remove their houses by April 1928, at their own expense.⁴³ A newspaper report in April of the same year stated that "only a few cottagers [were] remaining at the beach, the greater number having removed their houses and departed."⁴⁴ The long-awaited waterfront park opened in 1932.⁴⁵



City of Toronto Archives, fonds 1231, Salmon Collection, item 345

Figure 7: Small's Pond at the western end of the Beach district in 1920, with owner-built housing on the left and speculatively built housing on the right.

Perhaps ironically, while the area's role as a holiday hinterland had effectively ended by 1929, this history—as well as its landscape amenity—was reflected in its marketing as a metropolitan suburb. Thus the 1926 advertisement for subdivisions of new housing (fig. 1) included the following sales pitch:

Old Scarborough Beach Park with its splendid lake frontage, fine trees, [and] clean level ground is an ideal place for your home. You've probably been there often and can recall its beautiful surroundings. Now, all this area is laid out with wide streets and attractive, but moderately priced homes. You have a chance to buy one, and it is a real opportunity. More than fifty homes now ready for sale—all solid brick, detached or semi, side drives, six or seven rooms, splendid lots—and every house wonderful value. Have your city home and summer home all in one.⁴⁶

This brings us to an important question: how did the Beach district compare to the other suburbs as evidenced by property tax assessments? While assessed values are sketchy proxies for real-estate market trends, it is relatively safe to make inferences based on a supplementary set of systematic random samples of city-wide residential real-estate assessments for three of the years scrutinized here—1889, 1907, and 1929—which have been used as control factors. Average and median valuations indicate that the study area was more or less on a par with the city in 1889 but increased dramatically to equal 1.5 times the city average by 1929 (table 2); the Beach district was growing dearer as it became a metropolitan suburb district. This change suggests that the study area was an increasingly desirable part of the urbanized region in which to reside. Certainly the florid description of the Stewart Manor subdivision attests to a more carefully designed approach to suburbanization, as was commonly the case with higher-end “picturesque enclave” subdivisions across Canada and the United States at the time.⁴⁷ The last of the new streets to be opened up in the study area, such as Glen Manor Drive, were laid out in the 1920s with a “picturesque” and curvilinear form. They contrast (somewhat ironically)

with the very rectilinear streets of the old cottage colonies in Balmy Beach and East Toronto laid out in the 1870s. The deliberate urban design strategy employed in Stewart Manor indicates that a more coordinated planning and design effort was underway, and ownership patterns also suggest that speculative subdivision was becoming a more corporate affair; in the 1921 and 1928 sample data, all non-built lots in the vicinity of Glen Manor Drive were held by two owners (the Toronto Savings and Loan Company, for lots north of Queen Street, and the Price Brothers for lots south of Queen Street). Not surprisingly, speculative building was also underway, as suggested by the fact that about one in ten dwellings in the 1929 sample (excluding unfinished structures) was listed as vacant.

Social Transformations 1889–1929

The labour force unfortunately cannot be determined for the early years. York Township property-tax assessors seldom recorded occupations for landowners who did not reside on the property in question. Ironically, one of the aspects making this district interesting—its origins as a summer resort area—thus precludes the possibility of analyzing historic labour force structure until a permanent resident population had been established. It can be said with certainty that a significant change occurred over several decades. Where the employment profile of the population had been mixed early in the twentieth century, almost two-thirds (64.5 per cent) of the sample labour force were employed in the middle- or upper-class occupational groups by 1928 (table 3). The study area seems to have been dominated by middle-class occupational groups, especially given the small (but apparently shrinking) proportion of upper-class owners and managers. There still was a sizeable population of working-class residents—almost one-third (29 per cent) of the local labour force—but the number had shrunk from the time of the First World War.

Table 2: Median total assessed property value data for the Beach district and City of Toronto, 1889–1929

| Year | Beach district study area | | City of Toronto | | Beach values as percentage of city values |
|------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|---|
| | Sample size | Median value | Sample size | Median value | |
| 1889 | 76 | \$808 | 90 | \$949 | 85.1% |
| 1907 | 52 | \$900 | 65 | \$700 | 128.6% |
| 1929 | 258 | \$3964 | 105 | \$2825 | 140.3% |

Table 3: Labour force structure for the study area samples, 1889–1929

| Year | Occupational group | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------|------|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| | Upper class | | Middle class | | Working class | | Unclassifiable | | Occupation not listed | | |
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | |
| 1889 | 4 | 50.0 | 2 | 25.0% | 2 | 25.0% | — | — | — | — | 8 |
| 1896 | 1 | 7.7 | 2 | 15.4% | 8 | 61.5% | 1 | 7.7% | 1 | 7.7% | 13 |
| 1907 | 4 | 12.5 | 15 | 46.9% | 9 | 28.1% | 1 | 3.1% | 3 | 9.4% | 32 |
| 1914 | 4 | 6.2 | 32 | 42.9% | 25 | 38.5% | 1 | 1.5% | 3 | 4.6% | 65 |
| 1923 | 24 | 17.5 | 55 | 40.2% | 34 | 24.8% | 3 | 2.2% | 21 | 15.3% | 137 |
| 1929 | 21 | 10.5 | 108 | 54.0% | 58 | 29.0% | 1 | 0.5% | 12 | 6.0% | 200 |

Data source: Assessment Rolls (York Township, Town of East Toronto, and City of Toronto), City of Toronto Archives, compiled by author.

This balance appears to have tipped in favour of the middle class by the turn of the century. The transformation was not tidy or linear, for the study area presents a distinctive social profile for each year selected (idiosyncrasies of data sampling notwithstanding). By and large, these findings resonate with the work of Harris (1996) in several early-twentieth-century Toronto suburbs.⁴⁸ Yet the Beach district appears to have been robustly mixed in social class. Small-scale occupational diversity persisted in many pockets that were distinctly different from the general social profile of the study area. At one extreme is Pine Terrace. Initially a row of summer cabins forming part of a hotel complex (described earlier), these had been transformed into modest year-round dwellings—"cottages" in another sense of the word—by the late 1920s. In 1928 the residents of Pine Terrace included a shipper, several labourers, and a driver. All residents were tenants; the owner of the dwellings lived just up the street. This arrangement was typical. Rented dwellings were in many cases owned by individuals who lived in the area (often next door or across the street), as revealed by an 1899 report on preparations being made at "the suburban summer resorts":

The workman's hammer, the carpenter's saw and the merry voices of a hundred builders echo through the groves of Balmy Beach . . . a small boom in the building line is in progress and many houses are under construction . . . Mr Barnett has put up almost the largest house on the grove at Balmy Beach front. It is a handsome residence and consists of twelve good-sized rooms. On Balsam-avenue Mr Reid is erecting four houses, 24 x 24 feet . . . Eight new houses are going up on Waverley road, two are under construction on Kew Beach avenue . . . at Balmy Beach eighteen houses are now under

construction, and others will likely be put up before the summer advances. Building has not been so brisk for years.⁴⁹

In this is evidence that more well-to-do landowners were actively involved in creating a diverse housing stock in their own district, perhaps funnelling excess capital into (ostensibly) worthwhile investments. Only in a few instances were rental properties owned by individuals beyond the Beach district, including several who resided in the Toronto district now known as the Annex—another middle-class metropolitan suburb, but one much closer to the city centre.⁵⁰

At the other extreme of the social-diversity scale were places such as Glen Manor Drive and Balsam Road. The latter is where former Toronto mayor John Sewell was raised, and a comment on his childhood in his 1972 book *Up against City Hall* gives an interesting snapshot of the study area in the 1950s and 1960s, suggesting that the socially mixed landscape of the Beach district had endured:

I grew up in a quiet suburb . . . We lived on a street of big old houses, a street surrounded on three sides by a ravine and cut off from the neighbourhood . . . Other people weren't lawyers or professionals like my father, but they were financially well off . . . Most of the houses were larger than usual, all built just after the turn of the century . . . But the neighbourhood was, in fact, quite mixed and some of the streets there had clumps of working-class and lower-class families with smaller incomes and smaller houses than could be found on our street.⁵¹

An intriguing pattern is seen in housing tenure split. Owner-occupants dropped from 98.6 per cent in 1889 to 53.1 per cent

by 1929, when many of the tenant households fell into middle-class occupational categories. Empirical evidence presented by Harris and others reminds us, of course, that we cannot make assumptions of a link between middle-class status and owner-occupation.⁵² Generally, professionally led households were not necessarily owner-occupiers, partly because mortgages were harder to get before the Second World War.⁵³ In this case study, however, is a remarkable intersection of urban form (housing typology) and occupational class. Across Toronto early in the early twentieth century, a proliferation of four- to eight-unit apartment houses, terrace flats, and “duplex units” (as they are known in Toronto) helped spur on a fierce ideological campaign in favour of more widespread home ownership.⁵⁴ The debate resulted in city-wide bans on various multi-unit rental housing types, and yet the Beach district was built out with a high concentration of the grade-related “plex” housing that caused alarm among certain housing reformists (fig. 8).⁵⁵ Typically comprising spacious apartments with two or three bedrooms stacked within a detached or semi-detached house form, these dwellings were geared by speculative builders to middle-class households. There are about three hundred dwelling units of the multi-unit “plex” or terrace flat type in about one hundred buildings across the study area, mostly built in the 1920s on the Scarborough Beach Park site south of Queen Street at first and rented out by corporate (rather than individual) landlords.⁵⁶ The effort to preclude this housing type in Toronto seems to have bypassed the Beach district. The question of why this multitude of “plex” units did not apparently arouse suspicion or ire merits further study.

In brief, several contrasts are seen in social composition and housing stock over the forty-year period examined here. While the 1920s “plexes” that completed the build-out of the Beach district added considerably to the eclectic mix of summer cottages and small-scale speculator-built dwellings from previous decades, the area was becoming more socially homogenous than it had been. The housing stock of the Beach district appears to have been strikingly mixed by type, size, style, and mode of tenure by the end of the 1920s. This pattern substantively contrasts with what Harris has found in more working-class Toronto neighbourhoods where owner-builders were numerous, and in which “plex” units and apartment houses seem to have been quite scarce, while resonating with Dennis’s argument that rented multiple-unit dwellings were very much part of the fabric in more middle-class districts.⁵⁷ In all, the social patterns correspond with general findings from Toronto and elsewhere suggesting that the social geography of the metropolis was being sorted out from within by user groups early in the twentieth century.

Conclusions

From the 1880s to the 1920s, the Beach underwent a slow transformation marked by piecemeal growth, as was often the case in early-twentieth-century suburbanization across Canada and the United States. Three sets of actors were actively involved in the process: many small-scale professional builders, a handful of larger corporate land developers in the 1920s, and—it ap-



Figure 8: Examples of “plex” or terrace-flat housing in the study area; each of the two buildings shown here contains four dwellings.

pears—numerous landowning householders who speculatively built one or two houses, often near their own dwelling. The creation of suburban space was thus dominated by private interests operating primarily at small scales, congruent with the “individual capitalists” that Dennis found to be prevalent in the early twentieth-century Toronto apartment-house boom.⁵⁸ While producing a suburban landscape of great diversity in architecture and housing stock, this process was also marked by oversupply through premature subdivision. Driven by the zeal to subdivide and speculate on vacant land at the metropolitan fringe and to capitalize on subsequent waves of housing demand, too many lots were laid out in the study area from the 1870s through the First World War, after which time too many houses seem to have been built, at least in terms of immediate demand. Moreover, this case study affirms the historic importance of three common patterns recently identified by Harris and Hayden.⁵⁹

Clearly revealed by this study is a pattern of social transformation from the 1880s—when what little evidence is available suggests that the study area was home to a “local” population of labourers and others involved in resource exploitation along with a growing colony of summer cottages owned by well-to-do city dwellers—to the 1920s, when the Beach had become a predominantly if not exclusively middle-class suburb. In other words, it filtered up over time. Returning to the sociological concepts of (class) distinction articulated by Bourdieu, it is suggested that these individuals sought to maintain and manipulate their social position instrumentally, by vocation (through education and their monopoly of skills in their roles as professionals), and symbolically, through the space they chose to occupy (the middle-class suburb as a form of spatial organization and geographic distinction).⁶⁰ While it took a generation or two for socio-economic groups to sort themselves out, users seemed to be self-organizing, as opposed to experiencing an intervention-driven transformation (e.g., a moralist campaign to remove

the “working class” from the Beach district). Even as it became a predominantly middle-class district, however, the study area maintained a persistent mix of social classes. There seems to be justification for a popular perception among Torontonians that the Beach has historically been a socially diverse part of the city. For instance, Toronto writer Robert Fulford, who grew up in the Beach district in the 1930s and 1940s, recalled that “it was mainly lower middle-class and distinctly unfashionable . . . Most of us were not well off, and our houses were cramped.”⁶¹ What, if any, was the dynamic between this social mix and the district’s incremental growth patterns? This is a point for further research, but to contextualize findings here with work done on the diversity of Toronto’s early metropolitan suburbs, it can be asserted that this early-twentieth-century industrial metropolis was a complex, multi-nucleated system, and that its urban space was characterized by a very fine degree of mixing.⁶² In examining the district’s social composition from 1929 onwards, it would be useful to see whether the “narrowing” of its occupational diversity continued through the mid-twentieth century, and especially in Toronto’s “urban renaissance” of the 1980s and 1990s. Anecdotal evidence suggests that few, if any, working-class households have remained in the district; it has, for all intents and purposes, been gentrified in recent decades. The Beach district at the beginning of the twenty-first century seems vastly different indeed from what it was 100 years before. That it is now considered markedly “middle-class” suggests a slow process whereby lower-income groups were continually squeezed out after 1929, raising another intriguing question: is the full story of the Beach one in which the district has gradually been gentrified because of its “scenic” landscape setting and the related “cottage” charm?

As the Beach district became mainly middle-class, it apparently became a more desirable place in which to live by 1930. This perception is unusual for the east end of Toronto, which historically has not been where sought-after residential districts are found. Moreover, its growth was not a “blind” spatial expansion eastward from the core areas of Toronto; subdivision and building began at the very *eastern* extreme of the district (Balmy Beach) in 1876, and it was not until the 1920s—or perhaps later—that there was a strong continuity of built-up urban space extending from the city into the study area. The Beach acted as a growth pole of its own, owing in part to its pronounced topography stretching down to the waterfront, combined with the cooling effect of summer breezes from the lake. The district’s microclimates undoubtedly made it especially attractive to Toronto’s well-to-do in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶³ In this measure, its antecedents as a popular summer-cottage and resort destination for city folk distinguish it from Toronto’s early-twentieth-century metropolitan suburbs. Many such cottage settings within relatively easy access of a major metropolitan region are appropriated as full-fledged components of the functional metropolitan region through time. Leisure landscapes such as the Beach district can be seen as *foreshadowing* effects of urban growth by which relatively far-flung areas “on the edge” are absorbed into the functional metropolitan region.⁶⁴ Such a hypothesis has been advanced

by Fishman in his popular history of London’s suburban growth: “suburbia” was born when the merchant middle class sought weekend homes within travelling distance of the city.⁶⁵

Evidence has been presented here to show that the Beach district had a marked amenity value as a retreat from the city—a sought-after summer destination for city dwellers—and that this attribute appears to be linked to its suburbanization. To account for this role in critical perspective, it is worth noting work by analysts such as Bourdieu, Bunce, Fainstein and Judd, Hannigan, Lefebvre, Wynne, and Zukin—all linking social class and space through leisure, which clearly figures as both social practice and symbolic system of activity for maintaining and manipulating status to personal advantage.⁶⁶ This study tends to affirm this system of linkages, but reminds us that it is hardly a new phenomenon. That the study area remains a vibrant part of the Greater Toronto Area—an urban neighbourhood in which residents have many transportation and housing options—suggests that some metropolitan suburbs age well. General characteristics of note for planning and urban design might include slow, incremental change driven by small-scale capitalism, the primacy of a pedestrian-scaled, permeable grid-based circulation system, and some semblance of a lasting fine-grained social mix. A compelling follow-up to the findings presented here would be a detailed exploration of the link between the resort and summer-cottage era and the rise of the Beach as a middle-class suburb, perhaps comparatively examining the argument made by Borchert about “residential city suburbs.”⁶⁷

In sum, Toronto’s Beach district clearly coalesced as a middle-class suburban area from 1889 and 1929, maintaining the “weave of small patterns” so familiar in histories of North American suburban growth and development between 1850 and 1950. Perhaps the Beach district, with its many small pockets of diversity in urban form and its architectural eclecticism in a predominantly grid-oriented arrangement of lots and streets atop rather hilly physiography, was a microcosm of Toronto’s metropolitan suburbs in the boom years from the 1880s to the 1920s. In itself, however, it is a compelling case study of how the social geography and urban form of the North American metropolis was continually being transformed before the Second World War.

Acknowledgement

This paper was prepared with the support of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant held at the University of Toronto. Thanks are also extended for detailed feedback from Robert Lewis, for whose graduate course this paper was first put together, as well as Jim Lemon and the three anonymous reviewers of the manuscript.

Notes

1. Local debates have raged for decades over the “proper” name of the district (“The Beach” versus “The Beaches”), as chronicled in part by Robert Fulford in chapter 6 of *Accidental City: The Transformation of Toronto* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter & Ross, 1995). Material examined for this study (such as early writings on the district and nineteenth-century newspaper reports) suggests that the singular version of the name was more common in the past.
2. In architectural history, *cottage* refers solely to a particular house form (as opposed to a dwelling reserved for summer use, as is the case in

- much of central Canada). See L. D. DiStefano, "The Ontario Cottage: The Globalization of a British Form in the Nineteenth Century," *Traditional Dwelling and Settlement Review* 12 (2001): 33–43.
3. Warner used the term to describe the intricately mixed housing types found in suburban Boston as well as the processes by which they came about; see *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).
4. This is the subject of ongoing research; see N. Luka, "Placing the 'Natural' Edges of a Metropolitan Region through Multiple Residency: Landscape and Urban Form in Toronto's 'Cottage Country'" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2006).
5. The term *amenity* is used here in its classical economic sense: non-produced public goods providing "extreme externalities" in that they are indivisible and cannot be transferred—although they may be replicable—and are also embedded (that is, location-fixed). See C. Mueller-Wille, *Natural Landscape Amenities and Suburban Growth: Metropolitan Chicago, 1970–1980*, University of Chicago Geography Research Papers (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990); quote taken from p. 26.
6. R. Harris, *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900–1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); D. Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000* (New York: Pantheon, 2003).
7. R. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900–1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996).
8. See Paul Groth's recent summary: "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. P. Groth and T. W. Bressi, 1–21 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); see also D. Upton, "Architectural History or Landscape History?" *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (1991): 195–199.
9. P. Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 1–18 (quote taken from p. 6); see also P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).
10. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*.
11. See M. C. Sies, "The City Transformed: Nature, Technology and the Suburban Ideal, 1877–1917," *Journal of Urban History* 14 (1987): 81–111; Sies, "Paradise Retained: An Analysis of Persistence in Planned, Executive Suburbs, 1880–1980," *Planning Perspectives* 12 (1997): 165–191; and Sies, "North American Suburbs, 1880–1950: Cultural and Social Reconsiderations," *Journal of Urban History* 27 (2001): 313–346.
12. Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class?" 10–11.
13. The geophysical limits of the Beach district are reinforced by urban form characteristics (e.g., its road network and built form), such that its general limits can be defined as Coxwell Avenue to the west, the railway line to the north, Victoria Park Avenue to the east, and the lake to the south.
14. This is based on J. M. S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1984); R. Dennis, "Interpreting the Apartment House: Modernity and Metropolitanism in Toronto, 1890–1920," *Journal of Historical Geography* 20 (1994): 305–322; Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*; J. T. Lemon, *Toronto since 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985); Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th-Century Toronto: Lost in Management," *Urban History Review* 18 (1989): 11–31; and P. W. Moore, "Public Services and Residential Development in a Toronto Neighborhood, 1880–1915," *Journal of Urban History* 9 (1983): 445–471.
15. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*.
16. The privately run Toronto Railway Company was granted exclusive rights in 1891 to surface transit operations across Toronto for thirty years but refused to extend its streetcar lines beyond what had been the 1891 city limits. This intransigence led to the public takeover of transit service in 1921. See M. Doucet, "Politics, Space, and Trolleys: Mass Transit in Early Twentieth-Century Toronto," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise, 356–381 (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982). See also Careless, *Toronto to 1918*; Lemon, *Toronto since 1918*; J. C. Weaver, "The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880–1915," in *The Useable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City*, ed. A. F. J. Artibise and G. A. Stelter, 39–72 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979).
17. See I. Ganton, "The Subdivision Process in Toronto, 1851–1883," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise, 200–231 (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982); and J. T. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America since 1600* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), particularly the chapter on Chicago. See also Catherine Brace, "One Hundred and Twenty Years of Sewerage: The Provision of Sewers in Toronto, 1793–1913" (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1993); P. W. Moore, "Zoning and Neighbourhood Change: The Annex in Toronto, 1900–1970," *Canadian Geographer* 26 (1982): 21–36; Moore, "Public Services and Residential Development" and "Zoning and Neighbourhood Change," and G. A. Stelter, "The City-Building Process in Canada," in *Shaping the Urban Landscape*, ed. Stelter and Artibise, 1–29.
18. See Hayden, *Building Suburbia*; Sies, "The City Transformed" and "Paradise Retained"; G. Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981).
19. This contributed to the rise of professional planning in Canada, including the founding of the Canadian Town Planning Institute in 1921. See Dennis, "Interpreting the Apartment House"; Ganton, "The Subdivision Process in Toronto"; T. I. Gunton, "The Ideas and Policies of the Canadian Planning Profession, 1909–1931," in *The Useable Urban Past*, 177–195; Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits*; Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th-Century Toronto."
20. "Norway Steam Saw Mill, City of Toronto," *Toronto Patriot*, 2 June 1835.
21. In addition to logging, farming had begun as early as 1802, and a small commercial fishery was based at Woodbine Beach, at the west end of the district.
22. See M. Cross, "The Stormy History of the York Roads, 1835–1865," *Ontario History* 54 (1962): 1–24.
23. The first registered plan of land subdivision in the Beach district dates from 1853; see M. Campbell and B. Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library Board, 1988).
24. This included George Munro, a leading wholesaler and staunch Conservative who had served as mayor of Toronto, Sir Adam Wilson, an eminent judge who also served as mayor, and George Gooderham, president of the Gooderham and Worts distillery founded by his father (Careless, *Toronto to 1918*).
25. This included Woodbine Park (opened in 1875); Victoria Park (1878); Kew Gardens (1879); Munro Park (1896); Balmy Beach Park (1903, on a site that had been set aside in 1876); and Scarborough Beach Amusement Park (1907), as summarized by Campbell and Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures*. For more on the rise of metropolitan amusement parks, see J. Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998), chap. 2.
26. "Munro Park, Balmy Beach: The World Visits the Suburban Summer Resorts and Notes Preparations Made," *Toronto World*, 26 April 1899; "Victoria and Munro Parks: The Street Railway Co. Doubles the Size of Its Popular East End Pleasure Resort," *Toronto World*, 23 May 1900.
27. J. FitzGerald, "Icons: Sand Castle," *Toronto Life*, July 2003, 91.
28. These numbers reportedly matched those for cottage colonies on the Toronto Islands and much farther away on the Muskoka lakes; see "Toronto, a Summer Resort," *Toronto World*, 14 July 1900.
29. C. Commins, "A History of Balmy Beach," *Toronto Beach Times*, 8 April 1980.
30. Notes by A. Keys, lifelong area resident, prepared in 1967; Beaches Local History Collection, Toronto Public Library.
31. Campbell and Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures*; P. Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850 to 1900: Pattern and Process of Growth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

32. Major plans of subdivision in the study area were registered as follows: 1886 (644, Beech Ave.); 1887 (732, Silver Birch Ave.; 733, Cedar Ave.); 1889 (881, Balsam Ave.); 1890 (1038, Silver Birch Ave.; 1047, Park Ave.; 1053, Balsam Ave.; 1064, Silver Birch Ave.); 1895 (1178, Balsam Ave.); 1896 (1183, Spruce Hill Rd); 1900 (1216, MacLean Ave.). See Campbell and Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures*; Careless, *Toronto to 1918*.
33. See, for example, V. Blain, "Toronto's Beach Is Like a Resort Town," *Toronto Star*, 18 July 1992; Fulford, *Accidental City*; "Our Town in Toronto," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 31 October 1981; E. Varangu, "Exploring the City," *Toronto Life* (November 1984): 67–71.
34. A 1900 advertisement for the subdivision of Balmy Beach depicted the "summer residences" of Messrs Snow, Lumbers, and Beaty among others lining the lakeshore (*Toronto World*, 2 June).
35. Maclean Avenue was known as Howard until 1914.
36. Interview with R. Worth, lifelong area resident, 3 June 1975; Beaches Local History Collection, Toronto Public Library.
37. Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, "In the Matter of the Annexation of the Town of East Toronto to the City of Toronto" (Toronto, 1908).
38. Administratively, the Beach remained atomized; before annexation, the study area straddled three jurisdiction: York Township, the Town of East Toronto, and the City of Toronto.
39. "Spent Happy Day," *Toronto Evening Telegram*, 3 August 1920.
40. See Hannigan, *Fantasy City*, chap. 2.
41. Now a city-owned park, it was a private summer estate until 1931; Campbell and Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures*.
42. J. E. Middleton, *The Municipality of Toronto: A History* (Toronto: Dominion, 1923), 3:325.
43. "Residents of Woodbine Beach Ordered to Seek New Homes," *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 6 January 1928.
44. "Cottagers at Beach Must Leave by May 1," *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 21 April 1928; "Put Their All into Homes: Two Woodbine Beach Residents Who Will Resist Harbor Board's Removal of Their Houses," *Toronto Telegram*, 21 April 1928.
45. "Harbor Board Plan for Eastern Beaches Improvement," *Toronto Telegram*, 18 December 1929; "Plan for the Development of Eastern Beaches," *Toronto Star Weekly*, 6 April 1929; J. Hugh, "The Way We Were in '95," *Toronto Beach Times*, Summer 1995; Campbell and Myrvold, *The Beach in Pictures*.
46. Scarboro Beach Home Builders advertisement in the *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 September 1926.
47. Hayden, *Building suburbia*; Sies, "The City Transformed"; Wright, *Building the Dream*.
48. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*.
49. "Munro Park—Balmy Beach," *Toronto World*, 26 April 1899.
50. See J. T. Lemon, "The Annex: A Brief Historical Geography" (Toronto: Department of Geography and Programme in Planning, University of Toronto, 1986).
51. J. Sewell, *Up against City Hall* (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1972), 4–5.
52. See Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*; R. Harris and M. Sendbuehler, "The Making of a Working-Class Suburb in Hamilton's East End, 1900–1945," *Journal of Urban History* 20 (1994): 486–511. See also D. Holdsworth, "House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West Coast Urbanism, 1886–1929," in *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban and Social History*, ed. G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 187–209.
53. Curiously, by the 1920s, about 10 per cent of the residential population comprised households in which men were listed as tenant while the owner was a female of the same surname living in that dwelling (presumably the wife, but categorically not the widowed mother—as this was indicated on the roll).
54. See notably C. Després and P. Larochelle, "Modernity and Tradition in the Making of Terrace Flats in Quebec City," *Environments by Design* 1 (1996): 141–161; and C. Després and P. Larochelle, "L'influence des trajectoires résidentielles et des normes d'habitat sur les significations et les usages du Vieux-Limoilou," in *Trajectoires familiales et espaces de vie en milieu urbain*, ed. Y. Grafmeyer and F. Dansereau (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1998): 43–71.
55. Richard Dennis has shown how a curious mix of civic leaders and moral lobbyists thus came together in the name of making Toronto a "city of homes." See "Apartment Housing in Canadian Cities, 1900–1940," *Urban History Review* 26 (1998): 17–31, and "Interpreting the Apartment House."
56. Very few of these exist in Toronto, although they were predominant at the time in Quebec City and Montreal (see Després and Larochelle, "Modernity and Tradition") as well as Boston—as discussed by D. Ward, "A Comparative Historical Geography of Streetcar Suburbs in Boston, Massachusetts, and Leeds, England: 1850–1920," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 54 (1964): 447–489, and Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*.
57. Dennis, "Apartment Housing in Canadian Cities" and "Interpreting the Apartment House"; Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*.
58. Dennis, "Apartment Housing in Canadian Cities."
59. See Hayden, *Building Suburbia*; Harris, *Creeping Conformity*.
60. Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class?" and Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*.
61. Fulford, *Accidental City*, 91, 97.
62. Just north of the study area was "Little York," a working-class suburban satellite centred on the Grand Trunk railway yards. See Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs* and Dennis, "Interpreting the Apartment House"; Doucet, "Politics, Space, and Trolleys"; and G. Gad, "The Suburbanization of Manufacturing in Toronto, 1881–1951," in *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, ed. R. D. Lewis (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004): 143–177.
63. Dominant winds near Lake Ontario are southwesterly in the peak summer months; relative to the Environment Canada weather station for central Toronto, average daily temperatures from May to September at the Toronto Islands station are from 0.8 to 1.9 degrees Celsius cooler, while the Malvern station, just northeast of the study area, records daily temperatures 0.7 to 1.2 degrees Celsius cooler. While small, the differences can make a significant difference on hot humid days. Data taken from Environment Canada, "Canadian Climate Normals 1971–2000," <http://www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca>.
64. Using Chicago in the 1980s as his case study, Mueller-Wille has similarly shown how the quality of "landscape amenity" drives certain processes of residential suburban growth in metropolitan regions. See *Natural Landscape Amenities*.
65. R. Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).
66. See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction*; M. F. Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1994); S. S. Fainstein and D. R. Judd, "Cities as Places to Play," *The Tourist City*, ed. D. R. Judd and S. S. Fainstein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 261–272; Hannigan, *Fantasy City*; H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); W. Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend* (New York: Penguin, 1991); D. Wynne, *Leisure, Lifestyle, and the New Middle Class* (London: Routledge, 1998); and S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyworld* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
67. J. Borchert, "Residential City Suburbs: The Emergence of a New Suburban Type, 1880–1930," *Journal of Urban History* 22 (1996): 283–307.