

History of Colonel Samuel Smith

- My story today is about Colonel Samuel Smith – who he was, what he did for a living, and the land that he owned.
- I will also say a few words about Parkview School and the colonel's Long Gone Cabin, which was built in 1797.

- Colonel Samuel Smith is a name that we often hear about if we live in [Long Branch](#), or if we live in [New Toronto](#).
- Colonel Samuel Smith Park, at Kipling Avenue and Lake Shore Blvd. West, is named after him. That's not in Long Branch, but rather it's in New Toronto. The border between Long Branch and New Toronto is Twenty Third Street.
- Many of us also know of the Colonel Samuel Smith Skating Trail, located near the old Power Plant at Colonel Samuel Smith Park.
- That's a great place to skate in the winter.
- As well, if you drive your car through the [Lakeshore Hospital Grounds](#) where Humber College is located you, will be driving along Colonel Samuel Smith Drive.

Born in 1760

- Samuel Smith was born in 1760, according to the [best available evidence](#).
- Not everyone agrees on the date.
- You can find out more details at the [Preserved Stories](#) website.

- Assuming he was born in 1760, we can say that Samuel Smith was born 255 years ago.
- Colonel Smith passed away in 1826, which is now 180 years ago. He lived to be 66 years old, which in those days was a long time.

Land ownership

- The First Nations previously had ownership of the land in what is now Long Branch for about 10,000 years, ever since Paleo-Indian hunter-gatherers arrived on the scene after the end of the last Ice Age.
- We can add that what are called the [Laurentian Great Lakes](#) were formed nearly 20,000 years ago when the earth's climate warmed and the last glacial continental ice sheet began to retreat.
- Roughly 3,500 to 4,000 years ago, what we now call the Great Lakes attained their modern levels and area.
- That is to say, the shoreline of Lake Ontario, which defines the southern boundary of Long Branch, has not always been where it is now.
- The shoreline has moved north of where it is now, and it has moved quite a ways to the south, as well.

New system of land ownership

- When the British arrived, in what is now called Long Branch,

- they set up the new system of land ownership.
- The first landowner in Long Branch, as part of the new system, was Colonel Samuel Smith.
 - Smith was born in what is now New York State, before the American Revolution.
 - The colonel was a Loyalist military officer who served on the British side, as a member of the Queens Rangers, during the Wars of the American Revolution.
 - The Queens Rangers was a distinguished Loyalist military unit that was led by John Graves Simcoe, who served as the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, which is now the province of Ontario, in the years after the Wars of the American Revolution.
 - In 1793, Smith was granted a large tract of land, which covered all of what is now Long Branch and extended quite a ways beyond.
 - Smith owned a lot of land out this way, as well as land in what is now downtown Toronto.
 - His property in Etobicoke extended from the shoreline of Lake Ontario, all the way north to what is now Bloor Street West, and it extended from what is now Kipling Ave. on the east all the way to Etobicoke Creek on the west.

Not a wealthy man

- That's a lot of the land for one person to own.
- Although he was a big-time landowner - and had a measure of

power, as an administrator in the power structure that was at that time in place in Upper Canada - Smith was not a wealthy man.

- He lived on a very small pension, as a retired military officer.
- On this land, which was all covered in forest, Smith cleared a bit of space and, in 1797 - that is, 218 years ago, as of today's date - he built a sturdy, and solid, log cabin.
- The cabin was located north of Lake Ontario and to the east of Etobicoke Creek, just a short ways to the south of where the Long Branch TTC Loop is now located.
- To be more precise, it was located where the school grounds of the former [Parkview School](#), at 85 Forty First Street, now stand.
- In time a farm was developed on this land.
- Siding and extensions were added to the log cabin, as the years went by, so that you could not tell that it had originally been a log cabin.
- The colonel's house was in continuous use for about 152 years, from 1797 until around 1949, before the house was demolished in 1955 – not in 1952, as is occasionally claimed, erroneously, in accounts posted in the Internet.
- When the house was bulldozed, the original log cabin was uncovered, inside the house.
- The Smith property, sold to James Eastwood some years after Smith died, was one of the earliest farmsteads in this part of Toronto.
- Originally, it was a farm located out in the countryside.

- Then, one day, it had become clear that this was a farm that had become surrounded by a growing city.

Keeping Parkview School in public hands

- A more recent story concerns the efforts, by the local community, to keep Parkview School in public hands.
- In October 2010, residents in the neighborhood close to the school learned that the Toronto District School Board, which owned the property, was planning to sell the school. The school had not been in use as an elementary school for some years.
- There was a concern that Parkview School would be sold to a developer, who would build condos or townhouses at the site.
- The local residents decided to organize a major letter writing campaign, with the aim of keeping the school property in public hands.

Outcome of letter- writing project

- With the help of the local MPP at the time, Laurel Broten, and the local school trustee, Pamela Gough, the project led to a positive outcome.
- In August 2011, the Ontario government announced that it would provide \$5.2 million in funding to enable the sale of the school, by the Toronto District School Board, to the French public school board, Conseil scolaire Viamonde.
- A French elementary school will be opened in the future at the

site. Another school board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, has leased the school, and the building has served as an elementary school - currently known as St. Josaphat Catholic School - starting in September 2012.

- Every day during the week, you can see school children playing on the school grounds during recess periods.
- When the school is closed, the open space of the school grounds provides a great place for local children and adolescents to play games of soccer, baseball, and touch football.
- It's also a great place for running, dog walking, playing with a Frisbee, and riding a bicycle.
- In the winter it's a great place for tobogganing and snowboarding.

Open spaces

- We are most fortunate that this particular open space remains in Long Branch.
- Years ago empty fields were everywhere.
- And kids had great places to play.
- These days, such open spaces are few and far between.
- Most of the available space has been devoted to housing, starting in the 1890s and continuing even today.
- We are pleased that some open spaces, such as at Parkview School, do remain available, here and there, in Long Branch.
- They serve as a tremendously valuable resource for our community.