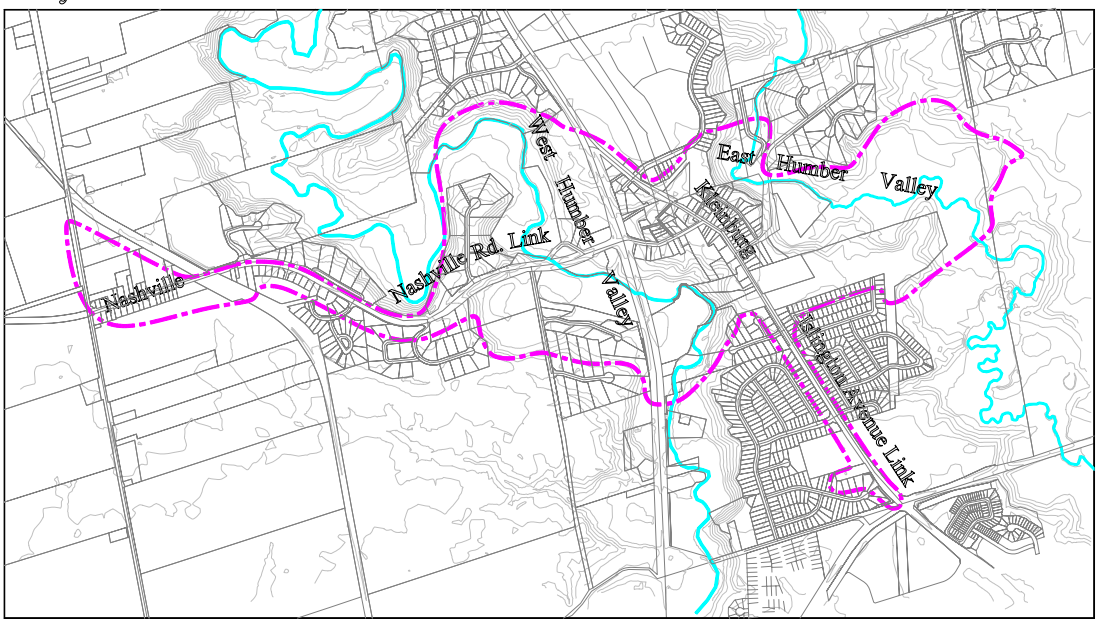
# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Kleinburg-Nashville
Heritage Conservation District Study

Study Area




## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY & PLAN

This Study and Plan is undertaken pursuant to Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, RSO 1990, Chapter O.18. The purpose of the Study and Plan is to provide the supporting data necessary to effect the designation of a Heritage Conservation District for a portion of the Kleinburg-Nashville Community in the City of Vaughan, as called for in Section 3.7 of the City's Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 601, and to establish policies and guidelines for the preservation and enhancement of the heritage resources and character in the District. The intent of this Study and Plan is to provide clear and readily understood guidance to the City of Vaughan and its citizens for the conservation of important historical, architectural, and landscape elements in the District, and for the design of new development and redevelopment that preserves and enhances the District's heritage character.

## 1.2 THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT CONCEPT

Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* provides for designation of Heritage Conservation Districts. A Heritage Conservation District is a collection of buildings, streets, and open spaces that collectively are of special historical or architectural significance to the community. The legislation enables municipalities, through study, to define the areas to be designated and to prepare Official Plan provisions which regulate development activities within the area in order to ensure that the Heritage character of the District is maintained or enhanced.

A Heritage Conservation District designation is not intended to prohibit or discourage the changes required by contemporary needs. Its purpose is to guide those changes so that change preserves and enhances the District's architectural and historic character.

# 1.3 Origins of the Kleinburg-Nashville Heritage District

## 1.3.1 Commercial Concerns

OPA 601 recognizes the commercial concerns of maintaining a prosperous and vibrant Kleinburg core, and encouraging business of a sort that can provide local employment. The small population base in the immediate vicinity make success difficult for the kind of main-street businesses that can prosper in larger centres. There are simply not enough people to support a full-service grocery or hardware store, for example. But, as noted in Section 1.4 above, the village has been a "stopping place" since its inception. Kleinburg had a tourism industry since before the term was invented, and tourism remains an important part of the regional economy. Provincial figures show that tourism in York Region generated over $500 million dollars in 2001.[1]

The village of Kleinburg is one of the five tourist attractions listed on the City of Vaughan's website. The McMichael Canadian Collection is another. These are both long-standing regional 'destinations,' but significant changes in visitor patterns require a review of commercial strategy. "Let's take a drive in the country, and have lunch in Kleinburg" is a phrase that has been rendered obsolete by the ever-growing expansion of the Greater Toronto conurbation: there's not much country left to drive through. The McMichael Gallery, like all cultural institutions, has felt a financial squeeze in recent decades, and necessarily attempts to entice visitors to spend their food, drink, and artifact budgets on the grounds. To a certain extent commercial Kleinburg is casting about for role to play in the larger economy. It's not that there are no prospects, but that the changing conditions need to be identified and acted upon.

One prospective focus springs from the modern interest in the conservation and the natural environment, and the related concerns in outdoor activity and fitness. The nearby Kortright Centre, the natural landscapes in the Humber valleys, and the growing network of regional hiking and bicycle trails in those valleys are all outgrowths of these concerns, and all possess potential to attract growing numbers or local visitors. Visitors arriving under their own power have the virtue of not requiring parking spots in the village core.

A hiking and biking trail in the East Humber valley. The growing interest in outdoor activity and the environment has great economic potential for Kleinburg, and fits in with efforts to preserve the natural and built environment.

The disappearing countryside, which has taken away the 'rural ride' aspect, has intensified the qualitative contrast that distinguishes Kleinburg from the surrounding recent development: it's a completely different environment. Although comparisons are always tricky, it is worthwhile to look at another village that shares many of Kleinburg's characteristics. Unionville is on a river, was built around a mill, was a 'drive in the country' destination for Toronto, and became surrounded by suburban development within the last two decades. The village core is now a heritage conservation district. As a historic village island in a sea of postmodern

[1] Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation: available on the Ministry's website.

housing, it is a stronger tourism destination than it was thirty years ago, drawing its visitors from the nearby new development, rather than from the old central city. Although the village is rich in heritage architecture, the visitors are not there for historic study, but to be in an extremely pleasant environment, unique to the area, for a morning coffee, a business lunch, or a dinner with friends.

The mention of food and drink is not incidental in the case of Unionville. Commercially, it is dominated by cafes and restaurants, and plays a role in Markham like the cafe/restaurant strips of Little Italy, the Danforth, and Yorkville play in Toronto. Commercial specialization like this is not without its pitfalls. As the Ontario Heritage Foundation's Manual puts it, "Massive investment in tourist-oriented development...may overwhelm and even wipe out the heritage value that attracted such interest in the first place."[2] At the most mundane level, attractiveness creates parking demand, which requires scarce acreage to accommodate, and the prospect of idling tour buses lined up on Islington Avenue is not a happy one.

Commercial development along these lines represents intensification, and increased localization of the market, and the commercial strategy is intimately connected with that of the entire City of Vaughan. Care is required to maintain the village character in the face of the intensification, and municipal controls need to be established and maintained to strike the right balance.

### 1.3.2 Residential Concerns

The feeling of the residents of Kleinburg is epitomized, in all its ambiguity, by a remark made to one of the authors as he was photographing on one of the village streets. "I've lived here for 37 years, and what we all want is for it to stay the same." The ambiguity arises from the fact that scarcely a single neighbouring house had not been built, added on to, altered or re-clad within that 37 year span. The ambiguity is abated by the realization that what the residents most want to preserve is a character that is based on more than architectural style and detail. The fine well-preserved heritage buildings, like the Kline House and Abermory, are treasured, as well they might be. But the entire village atmosphere is treasured as well, and elements of scale, streetscape, landscape, environment, village forestry, planting, and the valley setting all loom large in the character that residents want to maintain.

Recent nearby development is of a scale and style that is out of keeping with the modest character of Nashville and Kleinburg. The threat to the village scale and its natural setting is the most commonly voiced concern among residents.

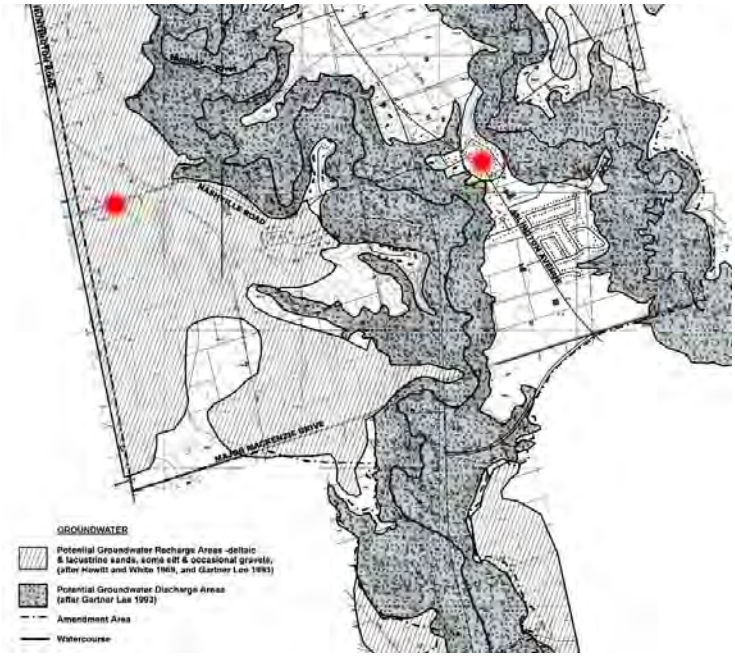
Napier Street is the prime example of the dominance of these elements in creating the character of the village. It was the original residential "back street" (and is locally so called), appearing on John Kline's original 1848 plan of subdivision. It is certainly not 'frozen in time': there are not many decades, since the founding of the village, that are not represented in the houses that line the street. Instead of a collection of period architecture, there is a collection of architectural periods. Nonetheless, the street has a recognizable and charming character, due to the unifying elements listed above.

Damage to the existing scale is a common worry for residents. They have expressed concern about the scale of recent commercial developments on the west side Islington Avenue in the

[2] Fram, *Well Preserved*, p82

commercial core, and the scale of recent residential developments and of the houses within those developments, to the north, south, and west.

### 1.3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS




Both Kleinburg and Nashville sit on groundwater recharge areas, and they are adjacent to groundwater discharge areas

This map is from the Sims Report. Dots have been added at the centres of Kleinburg and Nashville for orientation.

In the early days of settlement the natural environment was taken for granted, as a source of timber, as farmland when the timber had been cleared, and as a source of water and water power to drive the mills. Hurricane Hazel issued her environmental wake-up call in 1954. It was recognized in the aftermath that the removal of forest and bush had depleted the ability of soils to retain the rainfall, and that casual construction of obstructions in the Humber valleys then impeded the overwhelming flood waters. The immediate result was the creation of the Metropolitan Toronto Region Conservation Authority, now the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) charged with regulating the watersheds in the Toronto area.

As public awareness and concern about environmental issues grew over the past several decades, the TRCA's mandate expanded to address those concerns, and it is today involved in ecosystem and species protection, and outdoor education, recreation and tourism.

Most of the East Humber Valley lands in the Study Area are now owned or managed by the TRCA, and their *Boyd North and Glassco Park Management Plan* covers a wide range of environmental issues that can be applied to the mostly private lands in the Main Humber Valley. The TRCA continues its original role in watershed regulation, and regulations on fill control and a prohibition on flood plain construction limits the development opportunities in the Main Humber valley.

*The Agra Earth & Environmental Report* was completed as a "Natural Environment Background Study" as part of the OPA 160 Kleinburg-Nashville Community Plan process. It is generally referred to as *"The Sims Report"* It addresses environmental issues across the whole community, and includes groundwater, habitat enhancement, forest regeneration, and recreational opportunities among its concerns.

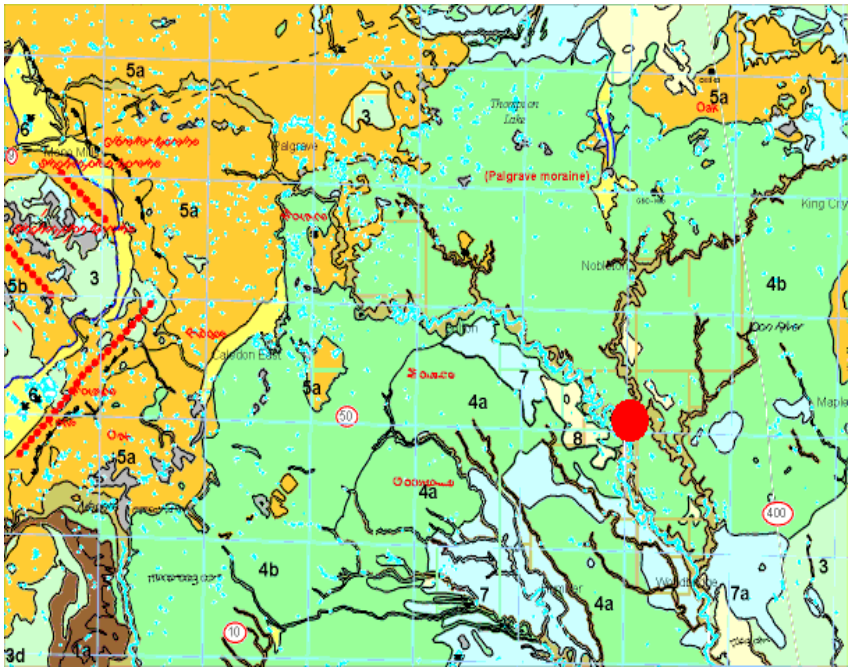
The valleys are significanct as the setting for the villages, and preservation of their heritage character involves preservation of the health of valley ecosystems, as well.

# 1.4 A Short History of Kleinburg-Nashville

## Prehistory

**The glacial history of Kleinburg-Nashville is written in its geology.**

**4 Glacial Deposits (till): clayey silt to silt,** 1-2% stone content; 1 -15 m thick; often with interbedded fine sand, silt and clay.
a. Wildfield / Kettleby
b. Halton
**7 Glacial Lake Deposits**: **silt and clay**, massive to laminated
a. silt and clay interbedded with diamicton and some lone stones, 1 -10 m thick.
**8 Glacial Lake Deposits[1]: sand and**




When the ice sheets retreated about 12,000 years ago, they left behind the soils (glacial till, sand and gravel) that Kleinburg-Nashville rests upon.[3] The meltwaters found watercourses that evolved into the Humber River valleys. Small human populations began to inhabit the region: a succession of aboriginal cultures, which evolved from big game hunting, through hunting and gathering, to the slash-and-burn and trading economy of the Late Woodland culture, which had occupied eastern North America for about 600 years by the time of European contact. The trading networks were remarkably extensive, stretching from the Canadian prairies to Central America.

The principal tribal groupings around Lake Ontario were Iroquoians: the tribes to the north of the lake constituted a group called the Huron Confederacy; those to the south were the Five Nations (later six) of the Iroquois League. Both were loosely organized groups of smaller tribes or nations, and the two groups vied over trade and territory. The trading system had established what is now called the Toronto Passage, or Carrying Place Trail. This was a 45 kilometre portage between the Humber and Holland Rivers, which linked Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay, and thence to the northwest beyond. By about 1500 the Humber watershed was home to two large permanent trading settlements connected to this trail. Sometime between 1550 and 1600 these settlements, along with all of South Central Ontario was abandoned by the Hurons, who moved to the lands to the south of Georgian Bay, and Iroquois moved into some of the old Huron territory.[4]

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3 Geological information and mapping by Natural Resources Canada, Oak Ridges Moraine Project.

4 City of Vaughan, *History Briefs, Bulletin No 2, Archaeology.*


When this map was produced, in 1688, New France extended over the whole Great Lakes basin, and the English colonies were penned against the Atlantic by the Appalachian mountain chain.

The arrival in North America of the rival European nations of France and England, shortly after 1600, changed everything for the aboriginal inhabitants. The French built a fur trade, based on control of the St. Lawrence, extending through the Great Lakes and beyond. Etienne Brule was the first European to visit the Humber River in 1608. In 1616, he became the first European to travel the Carrying Place Trail, which soon became an important route for New France, carrying explorers, traders, and missionaries between Fort Toronto, Fort Rouille, and St. Marie Among the Hurons (now Midland).

The Federal Historic Sites and Monuments Board has designated the Carrying-Place Trail nationally significant, and the Humber is a National Heritage River.

Trade with the newcomers introduced European goods into the tribal economies and intensified trade, increasing trade rivalries. Eventually, European diseases and inter-tribal warfare over ended the old tribal dominion. By 1700, an Ojibwa tribe from the north, the Missisaugas, became the aboriginal occupiers of the old Iroquoian lands.

The European rivalry between France and England naturally spilled over into their colonial empires. The French had about 45,000 colonists, ranging over thousands of miles in pursuit of furs. The English colonists were penned in by the Appalachian Mountains, but numbered a million. The population disparity, and British naval power, proved telling. In 1760, New France was defeated on the Plains of Abraham outside the walls of the Quebec fortress. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 ceded the land to Britain, and it became the English colony of Canada.[5]

There was little immediate effect of this change of ownership in the Great Lakes region. A few forts were manned, and the fur trade was revived, under English licenses. Britain's 1783 defeat in the American Revolutionary War changed the situation, leaving Canada as England's only remaining North American colony. In the war's aftermath, American colonists who retained loyalty to the Crown, desiring to remain British subjects and fearing rebel persecution, began to migrate to Canada. These were the United Empire Loyalists, and they began settling in such places as Kingston, and Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake). Soon, unhappy with the limited rights and French-based land tenure laws under the Quebec Act, they agitated for a separate colony. As a result Lord Dorchester divided the colony into Upper and Lower Canada in 1791, and Col. John Graves Simcoe was made Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. He set about to build a successful English colony.

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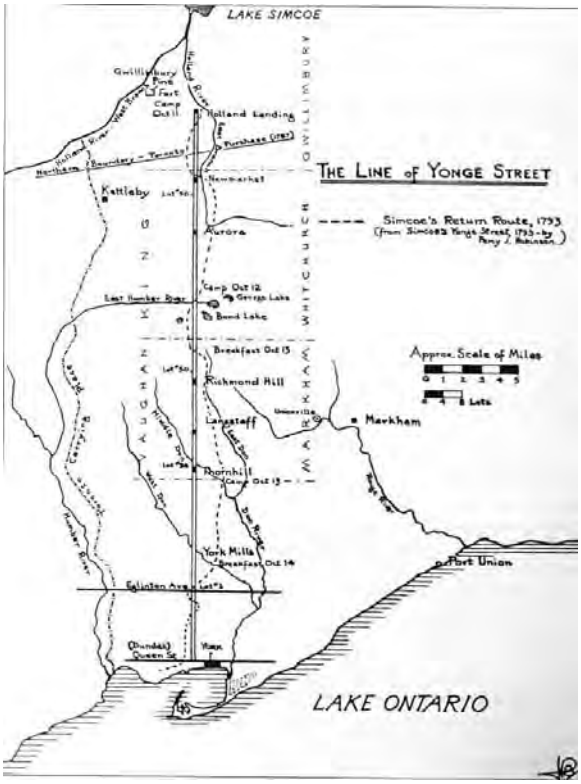
5 See Francis Parkman's *France and England in North America* for an extensive history of European exploration and conflict. A more recent, and much more concise, account is found in Chapter 2 of John Keegan's *Warpaths.*

## SIMCOE'S PLAN

When France and England went to war again in 1793, Simcoe feared that the Americans would support their former French allies. Realizing that his Capital in Newark and his Lake Erie and Lake Huron communications to the west and northwest were open to attack, he took decisive action. He moved the capital to York (now Toronto), on land which Lord Dorchester had purchased from the Mississauga tribe in 1787, beginning English settlement in the area. He then projected two military roads from the new capital, one westward to the fort at Detroit and the other northward to Georgian Bay. Believing that the Carrying Place Trail would serve for the northern road he set out with a small survey party on 25 September, 1793 from the mouth of the Humber. He travelled by horse to the end of the Carrying Place on the West Holland River near present-day Kettleby and thence, through Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching and the Severn River, to Georgian Bay. On the return trip, an Ojibway named Old Sail suggested a more eastern route, avoiding the marshes on the upper West Holland River. Simcoe found this eastern route much more favourable. Arriving back at York on 14 October, he had the Deputy Provincial Surveyor laying out his route the next day. The new military road was laid out straight from York to Holland Landing, roughly following his return march. Simcoe named the road after Sir George Yonge, Britain's Secretary of State, and an old family friend.[6]




Simcoe set out on the Carrying Place trail in hopes that it would prove suitable for his military road to Georgian Bay. On his return he found a better route, and laid out Yonge Street to the east. Map from F.R. Berchem, *The Yonge Street Story*, Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1977.

Soon the surveyors were laying out the familiar grid of sideroads and concessions, to create the infrastructure for agricultural settlement. Drawn in the comfort an office in the capital, these roads were lines on a map, laid out over forested wilderness without regard for topography. The Humber valleys still have many 'unopened road allowances' where those lines were drawn over terrain that proved impracticable for road building.

The creation of the road grid initiated the pattern of land-based open-ended development for Ontario. This contrasted with Quebec's river-based transportation network, and the effect of the difference is seen on maps to this day.

[6] *Early Days of Richmond Hill* describes Simcoe's survey trip in detail, including diary entries of Alexander Aitken, the Deputy Provincial Surveyor.

## SETTLING IN

Under the Statute of Labour, clearing and maintaining the early roads was the responsibility of the land owners adjacent

Simcoe made a determined effort to encourage settlement, offering generous land grants in the new colony and going so far as to advertise in newspapers in Philadelphia. He'd been impressed by the industriousness of the 'Pennsylvania Deutch' when stationed there during the American Rebellion. The wealth of German names on the monuments at Lester B. Pearson Park is a tribute to his success at recruiting them to Vaughan Township. He preferred working settlers, whatever their origin, to absentee landlords, however British and posh they might be — an attitude that met with official disapproval higher up the political ladder. [7]

Early settlement was made difficult by a lack of reliable transportation. The Statue of Labour required, as a condition of the land grants, that settlers clear and maintain all roadways adjacent to their assigned property. The statute proved difficult to enforce, as the settlers were busy building their homes and clearing the forest from their lands, and as a result the road network was poor. It was hard for farmers to get crops to market, and hard for suppliers to get goods to the farmers. As a result, settlement on the established Yonge Street artery came almost a half-century before it reached the wilds above the forks of the Humber. Thornhill dates to 1801, Kleinburg to 1848.

Once settlement arrived, the transportation difficulties required local production of many essential goods. The establishment of mills to cut timber for construction and grind grains for food was a critical part of the early pattern of settlement. The resulting availability of milled grain for the production of whisky was a bonus. The reliance on water power to drive the mills necessitated their location on reliable watercourses, and Ontario's rivers became the engines of settlement and growth. A mill and the traffic it generated would attract supporting trades and shopkeepers, and a village would grow up around it. And so it was in Kleinburg.[8]

John Nicholas Kline had lived in the area for a while after immigrating from Alsace-Lorraine. In 1837 he let a contract for the construction of sawmill on the Humber in Lot 10 of the 8th Concession, the area known as Vaughan Mills. He served on the Home District (predecessor of Vaughan Township) Council in the 1840s. In 1848, John Kline bought 83 acres of Lot 24 in Concession 8, west of Islington Avenue. He built both a sawmill and a gristmill, and according to plats from 1848, he subdivided his land into quarter- acre lots, anticipating the village that would grow up around his mills. The map of subdivision of February 25th 1848 shows lots on both sides of the King Road (now Islington Avenue) extending from 230 feet south of Stegman's Mill Road to the intersection of Kline's Mill Road (now Nashville Road), on both sides of Kline's Mill Road, and on both sides of Napier Street (un-named on the map) as far as Kellam Street. The plan names the part of the settlement west of King Road

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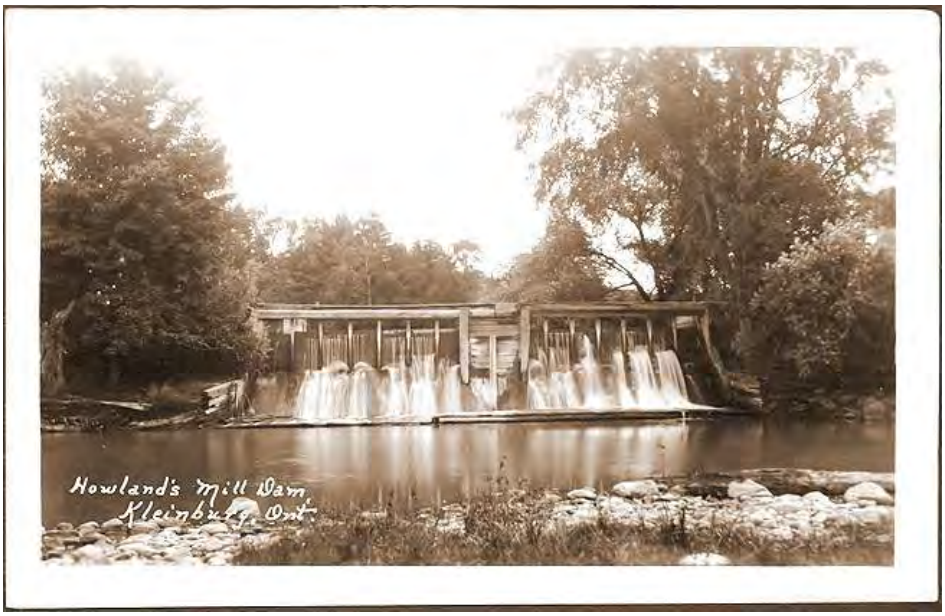
[7] *A History of Vaughan Township* describes Simcoe's efforts and success in attracting Pennsylvanians of German origin, and his difficulties with his superiors.

[8] City of Vaughan, *History Briefs, Bulletin No 5. Early Milling Communities in Vaughan.*

as Kleinburg and the part east as Mount Vernon. The plan is signed by "John Kline", though he sometimes used "Klein" as well.[9].□

A charming but unlikely story says that the present spelling was derived from a combination of two German words: *Klein*, translating as "little or small" and *berg* meaning "mountain". This explanation skips over the obvious *burg*, the German word for "town". On his plan, John Kline used "Klein" for his town name, and "Kline" for his mill, his road and his signature. Kline/Klein and berg/burg.... it's hard not to believe that the pun was intentional. To add to the confusion, both the 1860 and 1880 York County Atlases spell it 'Klineburg.'




The rivers and the energy they provided for the mills gave Kleinburg its start. Under the Howlands, John Kline's mill ground 300 barrels of flour a day, and the sawmill across the river provided the barrels.

A second sawmill, George Stegman's, is shown on John Kline's 1848 plan of subdivision, across town on the East Humber River. George's father, John Stegman, was a German mercenary soldier who was paid by the British to fight the colonists in the American Revolution. John Stegman was compensated for his services with free land in Canada. In 1790, John Stegman was deputy-surveyor of Upper Canada. The range of neighbourly political differences is shown by the fact that George Stegman, following his father's military example, was prominent in the militia, while John Kline was one of the 12 men in Vaughan Township imprisoned as a result of the 1837 Mackenzie Rebellion.

In 1851, John N. Kline sold his property to James Mitchell, who sold it the following year to the Howland brothers, sucessful millers with operations in Lambton, Waterdown, and St. Catherines. The Howlands, William Pearce, Fred and Henry Stark Howland, went on to great success in business and politics in the world beyond the Humber River valleys.

By 1860, the village around the mills had grown to include: a tanner, a tailor, a bootmaker, a carriage maker, a doctor, a saddler and harness marker, and undertaker, two hotels, a church and a school. By 1870 a chemist (druggist), a cabinet maker, an insurance agent, a butcher, a milliner and a tinsmith had been added to local business roster. The mills that John N. Kline had built and the Howlands had developed were the largest between Toronto and Barrie, and the King Road was a heavily-used transportation route. Klineburg became a popular stopping place for travelling farmers and businessmen on their way to and from Toronto.[10]

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9 A copy of John Klein's 1848 plat, traced in 1948 by the York County Engineering Department, is in the City of Vaughan Archives.

10 City of Vaughan, *Brief History of Kleinburg.*

## ROADS, CANALS AND RAILS

To encourage improvement in the transportation network, the government began to encourage the incorporation of road companies in the mid 1800s. The companies would sell shares to fund the construction of roads, and tolls charged for passage on the roads would pay for maintenance and provide shareholders with dividends on their investments.

The Vaughan Road Company was formed in 1850, establishing the roadway route known today as Islington Avenue and becoming Highway 27 north of Kleinburg. Four toll-gates were found along this route: the first toll was at the present day Albion Road-Finch Avenue area; the second at Woodbridge and Clarence Street; the third near where (present day) Islington Avenue meets Clarence Street; the fourth at the junction of Islington Avenue and Highway 27.


This map, from the 1880 *Atlas of the County of York*, shows the basic layout of roads and lots that remains today.

On the map, 'PO' means post office, 'SCH' means school, 'GM' means grist mill, and 'SM' means sawmill. Both rivers are thick with mills.

The projected canal connecting Lake Ontario with Georgian Bay can be seen snaking up the East Humber valley.

The third tollgate, near what is today Islington Avenue and Clarence Street, was historically referred to as Toll-Gate Corners. There was at one time a hotel and tavern located on this site, known affectionately as the "Half-Blanket" road. Local folklore tells of hotel customers receiving blankets with such large holes in them that they were considered only "half-blankets". The introduction of the railway system in the middle of the nineteenth century created an easier mode of transportation for the general population and the use of toll-roads rapidly declined. By the 1880s, the Vaughan Plank Road was in great disrepair and road maintenance was practically abandoned.

In 1890, a revolt broke out against the continuation of the toll road in Vaughan. It is recorded that sixty-three young farmers from Woodbridge and Kleinburg gathered by night to destroy the toll-bar at Islington Avenue and Clarence Street. They removed the toll-bar at Woodbridge Avenue and Clarence Street, and at the Woodbridge toll, Sandy McIntosh, the toll-keeper, fired his shotgun at the young "rebels", injuring several men. This revolt and several like it across the country prompted the removal of all toll roads in favour of public roadways administered by municipal governments.[11]

11 City of Vaughan, *History Briefs, Bulletin No 3, Roads, Tolls, Rails & Automobiles*.

## The Unbuilt Canal

The industrial revolution created the need for some means of large-scale transportation, and canals were the first system built to meet this demand. Canal companies were organized on the same basis as the road companies: charging tolls to repay the investors. In 1857, Rowland Burr, a mill owner, who is considered the founder of Woodbridge, proposed the construction of a canal four metres deep and thirty-seven metres wide to link Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay, by way of Lake Simcoe. The lower part of the canal was to follow the Humber valley. Various companies were organized to advance the project, but it was never built. It appears on the Vaughan map in the 1880 Atlas of the County of York, as the "Projected Toronto and Georgian Bay Ship Canal."

## Railways

The expense of constructing railways, and the limited revenue to be earned in relatively unsettled country discouraged the formation of rail companies for some time. In 1849 the Railroads Act was passed, guaranteeing six percent interest on half the cost of construction of any railway more than 75 miles in length. The first lengthy railroad in Canada was the Ontario Simcoe and Huron Railway, which went from Toronto to Lake Simcoe in 1853, and was extended to Georgian Bay at Collingwood in 1855. The success of the route made Collingwood the busiest port in Ontario, and put paid the canal scheme of Mr. Burr. The line remains in place today as a CN line, also used in part by Go Transit. It crosses Major Mackenzie on the bridge just east of the Vaughan City Hall, and the original station was located not far past the north end of the bridge. At that time the crossroads of Major Mackenzie and Keele was scarcely a hamlet, and the railroad called the station Richmond Hill, as seen in the 1880 atlas.

The railroad, industry and inn-keeping made Kleinburg a prosperous little village.

The success of the Ontario Simcoe and Huron Railway prompted imitation, and in 1868 the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway was organized. The line from Toronto, through Woodbridge and Orangeville, to Mount Forest was opened in 1871, and is now part of the CP main line to North Bay. It is said that the politically powerful Howlands arranged for the rail line to swing east so as to be closer to their mill. The deviation is known as the Howland Bend. The second Kleinburg Station, built in 1907 to replace the 1870 original, was designed by Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, but built in a mirror image to the plans. As in Richmond Hill, the Kleinburg Station was located some way west of the village, and, to similar confusion, became the site of the hamlet of Nashville. The 1907 Station building was relocated in 1976 to Kleinburg, just north of the Elementary School.[12]

The hamlet of Nashville appears to have come into being because of the railway station. It got its present name from a resident named Jonathan Scott who had come from Nashville, Tennessee. It was previously known as East's Corners. Matthew East was the first postmaster. The presence of the railway station once supported commercial enterprises such as Card's lumber yard, a hotel, and more than one grain elevator, the last of these being built about 1930.[13] The importance of the railroad to the prosperity of Kleinburg's mills created an important connection between the two communities.

In the 1890s Charles Shaw Jr. was the local distributor of binder twine, used by farmers to tie up their sheaves of wheat at harvest time. Mr. Shaw solved the problem of mice eating his stock by making a fuss over the arrival of the twine. The delivery date was announced in advance, and customers were offered a dinner in appreciation of a year's business. As a result the twine was all sold in a day, and the mice had to find alternate nourishment. The Binder Twine Night grew into to a sizeable community festival, including games, refreshments and entertainment, lasting into the 1930s. The event was revived in 1967, as described below.

## Decline and Rebirth

When Charlie Shaw held his first Binder Twine Delivery Night, Kleinburg was at its prosperous height. The population topped 350. Half a dozen manufacturing industries produced farm implements, furniture, harnesses, clothes, and carriages. Howland's was the largest mill between Toronto and Barrie. The village's location and road connections put it on the main road to Toronto, and the main street held three hotels to cater to the traffic. The prosperity was not to last.

The Village Inn looks prosperous enough, but the next door house on the left is showing signs of neglect.

Every silver lining hides a cloud; to some extent the very elements of the village's success contributed to its decline. As the lands were cleared, the sawmills steadily consumed the timber that had called them into existence. As in many smaller communities, the

12 Short histories of both railways are found in the Ontario Railway History Page on the internet.

13 *A History of Vaughan Township*, Chapter VII

railway initially helped the mills get their product to market. More significantly they allowed larger firms in the cities to expand their markets over wider areas, to the detriment of smaller local businesses, and customers could easily ride into the cities to purchase basic supplies as well as goods not available locally.

New technologies also contributed to the decline. Electrification came sooner to the south of Kleinburg, and the water-powered mills were put at a competitive disadvantage. And the coming of the automobile and the faster, farther travel it allowed eliminated Kleinburg's role as a stopping place on the way to the city. The construction of Highway 27 in the 1930s laid out the facts in concrete: the village was being bypassed.

## A Rural Retreat

By the end of the Second World War, Kleinburg had lost more than 2/3 of its population, and might have faded entirely away, as did many of Ontario's villages and hamlets. But the improved roads had not only taken shoppers off the main street, they began to make it possible for villagers to drive to work in the city. The postwar housing shortage, and returning veterans looking for housing affordable on their de-mobilization payments began to see Kleinburg as a good place to start a family. The Windrush Co-operative, at the end of Stegman's Mill Road began the transformation of a bald cornfield into a wooded valley enclave. "Starter" homes, on the model of the Levittown Cape Cod style houses in the US, were built on Napier Street, where they can still be seen. The postwar resettlement of Kleinburg was as significant as the original settlement a century before, and there is something of a pioneer spirit visible in the image of a young mother in a field, holding two small children, as the frame of their new house rises in the distance.

Road improvements, like the new Highway 27 made it possible to live in Kleinburg and work in Toronto. Here is a postwar infill house on Napier Street.

Among the postwar arrivals were Robert and Signe McMichael, who moved into their six-room squared-log house, in the valley southeast of the old village, in 1954. They began collecting paintings by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries in 1955, and in the early 1960s they opened their home and gallery to the public. In 1965 they donated their home, property and collection of 177 works of art to the Province of Ontario. Since then, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection has expanded in both its physical extent and its holdings, and is a significant world cultural resource, attracting 125,000 visitors a year.

Kleinburg's renewal was interrupted on October 15, 1954, when Hurricane Hazel dumped 8-1/4 inches of rain on Southern Ontario. A century of timber cutting left little to restrain the rush of water into the Humber valleys. Downstream in Toronto, the river rose 20 feet. Kleinburg's bridges were among scores that were swept away. The bridges were soon replaced, but it was recognized that a long-term approach to conserving and managing the watershed was required. The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, now the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), was created to take on this responsibility. Public ownership of the flood plain, and public stewardship of the valleys

have been instrumental in restoring the valley ecosystems, and preserving the character of the Kleinburg's setting. In addition, a growing interest in outdoor activities like hiking and cycling has made the Humber valleys recreational resources, as well as natural ones. The Kortright Centre, just south of Major Mackenzie Avenue on the East Humber River is an environmental education facility, operated by the TRCA. Since opening in 1979 it has attracted over a million visitors.

## The Bindertwine Revival and the Growth of Heritage Awareness

In Canada's Centennial Year, 1967, the whole nation recalled its history and celebrated. In Kleinburg, under the leadership of Vic Ryder, the festivities took the form of a revival of Charles Shaw, Jr.'s Binder Twine Festival. The event was so successful that it has been retained as an annual event ever since. The Binder Twine Festival has become an integral part of community life, and the funds it generates have contributed to parks, building and storefront restoration, school trips, fireworks displays, and countless other community projects.

The most significant benefit of the Bindertwine Festival may be the sense of heritage that it sparked. "The original tree-shaded community is now almost encircled by subdivisions and this encircling process has not ended," wrote Pierre Berton in 1968.[14] The feeling of threat to the old village character was not abated by the developer who opined that Kleinburg had nothing worth keeping, and should be bulldozed to the ground. Villagers, both old and new, began to look back on their history, and give value to it. The Bindertwine Festival Guides, which used to be published every year, told of the old buildings and the people who inhabited them. Efforts to preserve the village character began in earnest.

### The Doctor's House

1967 was also the year that a few local women concluded that Kleinburg needed a little tea room, and opened a modest business in the old house at 21 Nashville Road. From this beginning, the Doctor's House enterprise grew into a full-service restaurant and, in 1993, a large expansion added banqueting facilities and a chapel. The Doctor's House is now the largest private attraction in Kleinburg, hosting banquets, conventions and weddings.

### The Approaching Megalopolis

Mr. Berton's prediction of continuing suburban growth has come to pass, and the concerns raised thirty-four years ago are only more vivid today. In the Steering Committee, and the Public Meetings, a strong desire for the preservation of the rural village character of Kleinburg-Nashville has been repeatedly expressed. An analysis of the various concerns that animate this desire is provided in Section 1.5, below.

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14 Bindertwine Festival Guide, 1968. Reprinted in *A Walking Tour of Kleinburg.*

## 1.5 A Note on Property Values

The fear of negative impact on property values is a common source of public concern about Heritage Designation of individual properties and districts. The theoretical argument is that designation restricts what the owner can do with a property, that this limits the number of buyers willing to accept such restrictions, and that the law of supply and demand necessarily diminishes the market price. This fear, and the theory that supports it, is not borne out by research.

The most recent study, by Robert Shipley of the University of Waterloo, investigated market trends over time, for 2,707 Designated properties in 24 Ontario communities, including 5 Heritage Districts. The study found that a large majority of Designated properties, approximately 74%, performed above or at average in price-trend compared to similar but undesignated properties in their communities. Results for properties in the Heritage Districts studied were similar: though only three Districts had enough sales transactions to provide meaningful data, in two of them 50% of the price trends were at or above the average for similar properties outside the District in their communities. In the other District 100% of the price trends were at or above the average. In addition, the prices of Designated properties showed a marked resistance to general real estate market downturns, retaining value at average or better rates in 79% of the cases, and rate-of-sale figures for Designated properties were generally higher than average, showing that Designation does not hamper sales.[15]

Preliminary results from similar studies currently underway in Canada and the United States tend to confirm Shipley's conclusions that the impact of heritage designation on property values is positive rather than negative.

15 See Shipley, Robert. *Report on Research Concerning Property Values of Designated Heritage Properties In Several Ontario Communities*, Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1998