

## A MOUNTAIN PARK AVENUE STORY

By Robert Williamson

Last month this Mountain Memories column explained the mystery associated with a mountain brow curiosity; an old stone garden wall with an abandoned wrought iron gate bordering Mountain Park Avenue. Searching for an explanation was like opening Pandora's Box because there are so many interesting stories associated with our "One-of-a-Kind" Mountain Park Avenue.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, City Councillor, Tom Morris, made himself a constant thorn in the side of fellow legislators over funds to beautify the escarpment edge. The Minister of Highways, Hamilton's own T.B. McQueston, called him "Father of the Mountain". Consequently in 1905, Mountain Drive Park, one of the city's earliest parks was created by the Board of Parks Management. It stretched along Mountain Park Avenue from Upper Wentworth Street to Upper Gage Avenue. At the west end was the Wentworth Incline Railway terminal, the seasonal Summers Theatre, a refreshment stall and a picnic park. The east end had a large Mountain Park Dance Pavilion, an open air stage, picnic area and City View refreshment stand and lunch counter.

Entertainment and outdoor activities including a lengthy walkway for strolling along the landscaped escarpment edge, imparted a resort-like atmosphere. The novelty of the incline railway was the key to this development and the wealthier members of society began to build summer homes and cottages along Mountain Park Avenue overlooking the city. With apartment construction on this prime real estate in the 1950s, many of those holiday homes began to disappear with little evidence left other than a stone garden wall and wrought iron gate as with the former Rose Arden estate reported in last months Mountain Memory column.

However, the stories are there if you know where to look. Let's consider two examples; the vanished Bishop Dowling's summer cottage and the current Rose Arden Bed and Breakfast establishment. These two neighboring homes were built ca. 1900 overlooking the city just a few blocks away from the Wentworth Street Incline Railway in the heart of the Mountain Park community.



Bishop Dowling's Cottage courtesy Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton Archives

According to City Directories at Hamilton Public Library, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Joseph Dowling, the fourth Bishop of the Hamilton Diocese (1889-1924), lived at 354 King Street West. He purchased a mountain brow cottage #256 on the southeast corner of Viewpoint and Mountain Park Avenues ca. 1912. His presence brought about the building of a white frame Chapel of the Sacred Heart on the adjacent southwest corner and the establishment of the first Roman Catholic parish on the mountain. The Bishop donated his summer home to the parish as a rectory in 1921. It was later moved to the site of the Sacred Heart Elementary School on the west side of Viewpoint Avenue when the new Sacred Heart Church was built in 1952. With the rapid growth of Mountain population, seven more parishes were created, all beginning with Bishop Dowling's summer cottage on Mountain Park Avenue.

Next door to the former site of the Bishop's cottage where the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus stands today is Ken and Gwen Mallard's Rose Arden Bed & Breakfast. Built in 1901, it is a very large 2 ½ storey brick vacation house with sunrooms overlooking the city. A distinguished retinue of successful owners include: Henry Bennett ca. 1910, possibly a Flour and Feed Wholesaler; Insurance Broker, Wm. Robinson, 1914-1928; a retired Dry Goods Store mogul T. H. Pratt, who named the house Rose Arden, 1929-1937; the versatile Moorcroft communal family, 1955-1976 and for the last 44 years, business entrepreneurs Ken & Gwen Mallard.



Photo courtesy Ken & Gwen Mallard, Rose Arden B & B.

Before converting the house to a Bed & Breakfast in 2000, many upgrades were required. Old gas lighting, room call-bells and an art studio were removed. Several rooms were reconfigured to create three suites. The garden and lavish decor of the house has been restored to its former prestige accounting for the recent filming of two love stories on site. All this can be experienced on the B & B web site: <[rosearden.com](http://rosearden.com)>.

*Mountain Memories* by award winning writer Robert Williamson appears monthly for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society. <[Hamiltonheritage.ca](http://Hamiltonheritage.ca)>.