

Weeds

of



Wychwood

1888 - 2019

Weeds of Wychwood
1888-2019

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Table of Contents:

The History and Development of Wychwood Park, 1888-1918 <i>Keith M.O. Miller</i>	4-17
Archival Images of Wychwood Park from the City of Toronto Archives	18-35
Internet Mysticism and Urban Re-embodiment <i>Parker Kay</i>	36-51
Wychwood Park <i>Murray Wilton</i>	53
Image Index	54-65

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The History
and
Development
of
WYCHWOOD PARK :
1888 - 1918

By Keith M. O. Miller

Originally compiled, with the help of Albert Fulton, on the occasion of Wychwood Park's centenary and in conjunction with the 1988 commemorative exhibition titled **"The Joy of Wychwood: an exhibition of art and photography."**

©Text, Keith M. O. Miller, Wychwood Park, Toronto, 1981.

PREHISTORY:

The Oldest house in Wychwood Park is no. 6, built by Marmaduke Matthews in 1874. He called the house 'Wychwood'. In order to fully appreciate the history of the name Wychwood Park, it is necessary to digress in some depth to discover its origins.

Marmaduke Matthews was born in England in 1837. He grew up in the village of Fifield, Oxfordshire – a hamlet on the edge of the Cotswolds and the edge of the Wychwood Forest. His family rented Fifield House and the Manor Farm, part of the Manor House estate. The Manor House was bought by Marmaduke's brother, Frederick, at the end of the 19th century. Fifield is about three miles west of Shipton-under-Wychwood.

The Hwicce were a people or kingdom of Anglo-Saxons which can be traced back to the 6th century. The kingdom took in Worcestershire, most of Gloucestershire, the southern half of Warwickshire and the neighbourhood of Bath. At various times the Hwicce came under the control of either Mercia or Wessex. In 840 a Charter refers to Huiccewudu (i.e. Wood of the Hwicce). The name Hwicce survives in Wychwood. Wychwood Forest was near the eastern border of the kingdom.

The Wychwood Forest by A.D. 1000 covered approximately 50,000 acres. Its size varied according to the dictates of the kings of England. A Saxon king had by then enclosed parts of the Forest, nearest to the royal manor of Woodstock. This became known as the Woodstock Park and was later changed to Blenheim Park.

Henry I (1068-1135) kept his collection of exotic animals – leopard, lynx and camels – at Woodstock Park. Within this park he built a lodge near 'High Lodge' and another deep in the Forest at Cornbury.

Henry II (1133-1185) extended the bounds of Wychwood to take in the villages such as Charlbury, Swinbrook, and Shipton – and

Ascot-under-Wychwood.

By the end of the 13th century Henry III had redefined the bounds of the forest to include only those areas of natural woodland. This divided the forest into three parts: Woodstock Park and a broad strip between the Evenlode and Glyme rivers, a broad strip running from Cornbury down to the outskirts of Swinbrook, and a third area from the Windrush River between Asthall and Whitney extending north almost to Ramsden.

In the mid 1800s Marmaduke Matthews would have looked east to the retreating Forest. Today, Cornbury Park and the area around the 'High Lodge' in Blenheim Park contain the last of the true Forest. (SEE frontispiece)

Marmaduke Matthews emigrated to Canada in 1860. He landed at Quebec City, October 26, spent some days travelling about the Ottawa area, and first arrived in Toronto on November 8, 1860.

In about 1864 he married Cyrilda Bernard. For approximately the next four years they lived in New York, returning to Toronto in 1869.

Before he settled on his property in what was to become Wychwood Park, his whereabouts within the City of Toronto are varied. By 1870 he was working as a landscape artist and photographic painter, and by 1872 he was a partner in Macorquodale & Matthews, Photographers, with offices at the corner of King and Church. In the 1874 city directory he is listed as living at 678 Yonge, the farm of H.D. Barnard. His studio in the mid 1880s was at 14 King Street.

Marmaduke Matthews was a founding member of the Ontario Society of Artists, 1872, its Secretary Treasurer, 1880-81, and became its President in 1894. He was elected as a member of the Royal Canadian Academy in 1880 and served as Secretary from 1880-90. Every summer from 1888-98 he travelled West to paint pictures of the scenery along the CPR line. William Van

Horne hired Matthews and other artists to do this as a means of promoting the railway through their paintings.

In view of their later connection and parallel pursuits one may as well outline briefly here the early life of G.A. Reid, who was, for a long time, a close friend of Marmaduke Matthews.

George Agnew Reid was born in Wingham, Ontario, in 1860. He came to Toronto in late 1878 to study at the Ontario School of Art which was under the auspices of the Ontario Society of Artists at 14 King Street. While studying here he became a good friend of W.A. Langton.

In late 1882 he went to Philadelphia to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. It was here that he met Mary Hiester (born Reading, Pennsylvania, 1854). They were married in early May 1885.

The Reids returned to Toronto at the end of 1885 and began art classes at their Adelaide Street studio. In early 1887 he was elected to membership in the Ontario Society of Artists.

The Ontario School of Art, founded 1876, was in financial difficulty at this time. It had moved from 14 King Street to the Normal building. In the summer of 1888 the Reids moved their classes to the public institution.

In 1889, after a year in Paris, the Reids returned to Toronto and settled in two rooms on the top storey of the Arcade building on Yonge Street.

During the summer of 1894 George Reid held a painting class at Oteora in the Catskills. One of the students who attended from Toronto was Mary Wrich. She attended his private classes in Toronto from 1895-97. Her studio was also in the Arcade building.

In the years 1897-1902, George Reid worked on many murals. One of these, The Scroll of Life, was done for B.E. (later Sir

Edmund) Walker at his house at 99 St. George Street.

In March 1900 the Reids moved to a house that George Reid designed and had built on Indian Road.

Two families were instrumental in the establishment of Wychwood Park. One was the Matthews, the other the Jardines.

Alexander Jardine came to Toronto from Bradford. He married Agnes Litster, daughter of James and Agnes Litster. In 1877 he bought the land to the West of the 'Wychwood' property to be near his friend Marmaduke Matthews, and built on the land his house 'Braemore'.

The property ran from Davenport Road north up to the south edge of the present no. 32 Wychwood Park land, and from the road which passes the present nos. 24-30 Park houses, west to Christie Street. The entrance to the property was on Davenport Road. The Jardines moved into their house in late 1877 or early 1878.

Alexander Jardine was a proprietor of the Pure Gold Manufacturing Company which had its offices at 31 Front Street. The company was an importer and manufacturer of coffee, spices, baking powder and grocers' sundries.

PLAN 854:

Sometime between 1877 and 1888 it was decided by the 'area' resident to subdivide parts of lots 26 and 27. It has been said that this was done in the hopes of establishing an artists' colony and there is no real reason to doubt this. However, it is worth noting that at this time two things were happening which would have an effect on the later development of the Park. One was that neighbouring lots were also being subdivided (although not immediately developed), the other was that the City of Toronto was expanding and rapidly approaching the area of the Park and these other subdivisions.

Accordingly, Plan 854, dated July 19, 1888 and registered on November 13 of that year, was drawn up. It was a "Plan of Subdivision into Villa Lots of parts of lots 26 and 27, 2nd Concession from the Bay, Township of York". The Plan shows 18 numbered lots bounded by Christie Street on the West, Davenport Road on the South gates running North to lots along the Southern edge of Batoche Street (later Alcina Ave.), proceeding West with a jog Southward to join up with the Northern edge of lots 1-5. Lots 1-5 were owned by a Col. George A. Sweny. Braemore Avenue as shown on this Plan and other Maps was a right of way to these lots but as an actual road never existed.

The Park as depicted on this Plan consisted of Lots 6, 8-18 with ingress/egress to these large lots through the South gates off Davenport road. The road wound its way North around the ravine up to the edge of Batoche Street, then West to approximately where the present 87 Alcina Avenue is, then South, turning down the hill merging with itself at a point just North of the Davenport entrance. At the top of the hill the road also went to the West meeting with the Eastern end of Braemore Avenue.

Soon after this Plan was drawn up, Marmaduke Matthews and Alexander Jardine bought 10 acres of land to the East from Mr. Blake. This land was subsequently sold to Sir William Gage who soon proposed to build a Tuberculosis Sanitarium on it. Protests against his proposal arose with the result being that the Sanitarium was built in Weston and those 10 acres remained undeveloped for many years.

PLAN 1092:

Apparently with a clearer idea of how the land was to be used and developed, Plan 854 was revised with Plan 1092, which was drawn up on April 8, 1891 and registered on May 22 of that year. This revision was a "Plan of Subdivision into Town and Villa Lots of Portions of Lots 26 and 27 in the Second concession from the Bay, Township of York" (being an amendment of registered Plan 854). Although the boundaries remained consistent with

Plan 854, several changes should be noted.

The roadways were altered to their present location. The part of the road that had gone along the South side of Batoche Street was moved South approximately 150 feet to allow for lots 31-38. This meant that the road had to go across part of the ravine ('Park Reserve'). This road, although shown, was not built until the early 1900s, so the road North from Davenport Road ended in a turning circle. Presumably, the road as originally drawn, was placed to deliberately avoid problems which might be encountered by crossing the ravine. The road down from the present no. 81 – no. 5 was widened slightly. Also a strip from the present no. 20 North to what is now Wychwood Avenue was drawn in as was a road leading out to the East. It is now the driveway to the present 49 Burnside Drive. The road going down the hill (between nos. 3 and 4) was moved slightly to the North.

The lots were further divided: 18 large lots in 1888 had become 38 lots in 1891.

Along with these changes a detailed and important document was agreed to by the first six and then only residents: This was Document no. 1: Wychwood Park Trustees, 22 Acre Park. It is dated July 3, 1891. The six who signed were: Alexander Jardine (of the first part), Marmaduke Matthews (of the second part), Agnes Litster (widow of the third part) [mother of Agnes Jardine], Jeanie Jardine Hunter (of the fourth part) [sister of Alexander Jardine], Cyrida Justina Matthews (of the fifth part) [wife of Marmaduke Matthews], Agnes Jardine (of the sixth part) [wife of Alexander Jardine], and Alexander Jardine, Marmaduke Matthews and Agnes Litster, Trustees (of the seventh part).

The remarks in the Land Registry book area a simplification of the trust deed – "Private roadways, drives, Park Reserve, spring, etc., on Plan 854 amended by Plan 1092. To hold unto said trustees upon trust for said parties of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th parts for uses therein set forth. To keep roadways, drives, reservations, etc., in good repair. Owners of lands on Plans 854

and 1092 subject to their proportion of charge of \$500 and such sums as may be necessary to pay taxes due in respect thereof. Such charge to be a first lien and encumbrance thereon."

Document no. 1 was much more detailed than this brief description would suggest. (SEE Appendix A) Besides setting out the manner in which the various parcels of land were joined and laid out and besides naming Trustees and their order of succession, it also clearly stated a 'code of buildings that were and were not acceptable, their location, types of building material, etc., which could and could not be used in the Park.

It is worth noting that this Document refers to "... the plans of Wychwood Park registered in the Registry Office for the County of York as number 854 amended by Plan registered 1092..." This is the first place that the name Wychwood Park appears!

PARK DEVELOPMENT:

As stated earlier, in 1900 G.A. Reid moved to Indian Road, near High Park. In the very early 1900s other important people in the development of the Park were also to be found living in this area. G.A. Reid was at 435 Indian Road, Eden Smith at 405 Indian Road, E.A. DuVernet at 401 Indian Road, Gustav Hahn at 96 Boustead Avenue (which intersects Indian Road between nos. 435 and 405) and nearby at 6 Indian Grove lived G.A. Howell.

Unfortunately for them, but fortunately for Wychwood Park, the Indian Road area came under developers' hands soon after the Reids built. The rapid development out there precipitated many moves to Wychwood Park.

[The early numbering system within the Park is not entirely known, but probably equally as confusing at that of today! (1981). Therefore, although not historically correct, but to avoid some confusion, I am using the present numbers to aid in identifying the houses being discussed.]

About 1905 G.A. Reid bought the land which backed onto Alcina Avenue and faced into the Park. He designed and built his house (no. 81), Upland Cottage, in 1906. Shortly after this, c. 1907, Eden Smith designed and had built his house (no. 5). At this time E.A. DuVernet bought a number of lots (which constitute the present no. 16 property) but didn't build immediately.

The third house to appear in this developmental stage was that belonging to Gustav Hahn, Artist, c.1908 (no. 15). (SEE photograph no. 1) Then followed: no. 16, E.A. DuVernet, Lawyer (Architect: Eden Smith, c. 1910), no. 80 Harry H. Love Manager at W.J. Gage co. (Architects: Burke, Harwood and White, c. 1910), no. 49, Eric T. Owen, Professor (Architect: Eden Smith, 1910), no. 45, Michael Chapman (Architect: Eden Smith c. 1910), no. 7, G.A. Howell (Architect: Eden Smith and Son c. 1911), no. 69 Mary E. and Agnes Wrinch (Architect: [Attributed to Eden Smith, probably in conjunction with G.A. Reid, c. 1911]), no. 17, Saxon Shenstone (Architect: Mrs. Shenstone, c. 1911), no. 19, C.T. Currelly (Architects: Sproatt and Rolph, c. 1911/12), no. 67, Edmund M. Walker (Architect: W.A. Langton, c. 1912), no. 4, Ambrose K. Goodman (Architects: ? c. 1912), no. 3, Harry Eden Smith (Architect: Ralph Eden Smith, c. 1913), no. 97, Ralph Eden Smith (Architect: Ralph Eden Smith, c. 1913), no. 91, Alan Sullivan (Architect: F.R. Cowan, c. 1913), no. 77 George C. Burnett (Architect: ?, c. 1915) and no. 49 Burnside Drive, William J. Gage (Architect: Charles S. Cobb, c. 1917).

Note: For biographical information on the owners, etc., SEE Appendix B, "Brief Biographical Notes".

One might well question here why development of the Park took 14 years (1891-1905) before starting and why it increased from 1910 onwards. There are two factors which both individually and collectively answer these questions. One is that Marmaduke Matthews, although thought of as an artist, spent most of his time (and money) as an inventor. His inventions, various steam turbine engines, and his many attempts to patent bicycle pedals apparently led him into heavy debt. He ended up (c. 1907)

mortgaging his house to his son-in-law Ambrose K. Goodman. The second factor was the annexation of this area in 1909 by the city of Toronto. High city taxes on the land could have proved ruinous. The obvious way to avoid financial ruin was to sell off various parcels of land.

WYCHWOOD CORPORATION:

About 1907 three new owners, G.A. Reid, Eden Smith, and E.A. DuVernet reorganized the original trust deed (Document no. 1) with Mr. DuVernet being responsible for the creation of the Wychwood Corporation. The object of the Corporation was to purchase, lease, take in exchange or otherwise acquire lands or interest therein. Shortly after incorporation, the Park lands, roadways, drives and reservations were conveyed by the Trustees under the trust deed to the Corporation as well as certain other lands within the Park area.

Restriction under the Corporation were much more confining than under the deed and among other matters, the Corporation could now erect gates (at the expense of the residents) to shut out the public, and had the first right to purchase any property within the Park should it be offered for sale. All restrictions were declared to bind the purchaser, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assignees and might be enforced by any owner in the name of the Corporation.

Throughout this period G.A. Reid was largely responsible for supervising many of the improvements in the Park and for the selling of many of the lots, including those on the South side of Alcina Avenue. During 1908-1911, the Corporation moved (SEE Photograph no. 5) various existing houses from the South side of Alcina Avenue to lots purchased on the North side. It was at this time that the roadway across the ravine was completed. The earth from house excavations formed the basis of the local roads which for many years were only covered with cinders. Earth from the excavation for C.T. Currelly's house was dumped into the ravine to the east of his house to add support to the foundations.

In 1917 difficulties arose as to the property control by the Corporation and under the date of October 11, 1917, Mr. Justice Middleton directed that the Corporation do deliver to the new Trustees, which he appointed, (Messrs. G.A. Reid, H.H. Love, and G.T. Clarkson) the trust estate and property upon the trust as originally set out in the trust deed of 1891. The present trustees and their successors hold the lands conveyed by their predecessors on a conveyance registered as No. 5922W.D. on December 31, 1918.

THE PARK RESERVE:

An important feature on the Park from its earliest conception is the 'Park Reserve' or ravine. Although, over the years, this area has undergone many changes, it has, in fact, retained much of its integrity.

Taddle Creek, fed by springs, flowed above ground from the corner between the present nos. 77 and 69, wound its way South until it reached Davenport Road. (Access to nos. 69 and 67 from the Park was by a long wooden bridge over the ravine which was much deeper then than now.) From here it continues its flow to Lake Ontario underground. A small bridge crossed the Creek north of the pond. (SEE photographs nos. 2 and 3). Sometime prior to 1900 Marmaduke Matthews enlarged part of the natural basin to form the pond. The purpose was twofold. It added to the natural beauty of the ravine, but more importantly, in the winter it provided Marmaduke Matthews and Alexander Jardine with ice for their ice houses. The surplus ice was a small source of revenue. It was sold to the Crystal Ice Company of Toronto. (See Appendix 'C').

The goldfish in the pond are descendants of fish put in by Marmaduke Matthew's grandson, Harold Goodman, shortly before he left for World War I.

Plans were tentatively made for a road to go between the present no. 5 and 7 and cross the Creek by bridge to enable traffic to join the 'Green Lane' (the Eastern Road). Fortunately, these plans did not materialize. [About 1920 the area around the pond was re-landscaped and the course of Taddle Creek was straightened.]

WYCHWOOD PARK FOREST:

The Park on the East side was for some time a large pine forest. There were also many large, obviously old, oak trees especially on the West side. Today, either because of development or air pollution, their numbers have dwindled. Only about thirteen white pines remain. The few remaining oaks are to be found mainly located on the present no. 16 property. A good example as to the density of the oaks is to be found on the land belonging to no. 20.

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Registered on December 13, 1912 was Plan D1362 which was a re-division of part of Plan 854 (1092). This was the division of lots to the West of the Park and was called Braemore Gardens. Development did not begin until about 1917. One effect of this plan was to eliminate Braemore Avenue as a route, direct or indirect, to or from Christie Street and the Park, once the development began. (SEE Appendix 'D').

In 1910, T. Herbert Barton and his wife Jean (nee Jardine) moved into no. 22, the Jardine House. In 1914 they sold the house to a Mr. Bustard (the man who later developed Braemore Gardens) and moved to California. In 1915 the Bartons returned and bought back from Mr. Bustard, 'Braemore'.

Before 1918 there were changes in ownership in some of the other houses in the Park, (e.g. Michael Chapman selling to G.T. Clarkson, E.A. DuVernet selling to the Hon. W.J. Hanna, Ralph Eden Smith selling to Alfred Shann, etc.). These new owners lasted into the Twenties and some much longer than that. There-

fore, if and when the continuation of the Park history gets written, these people (and in particular G.T. Clarkson) will be covered in full.

POSTSCRIPT:

From the brief biographical notes and from the detailed parallel study of Marmaduke Matthews and G.A. Reid at the beginning of this history, it is interesting to see how the paths of the various peoples involved kept crossing. Early friendships lasted lifelong. The 'interplay' between the early developers and first residents is enormous and was a good basis for the formation for a 'neighbourhood'. Even with subsequent development, this 'interplay' is one of the enduring qualities that has remained constant throughout the years.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1246A

Wychwood ravine, 1907.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 12468

Wychwood ravine, 1907.



City of Toronto Archives. Fonds 1244. Item 1246C

Wychwood ravine, 1907.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1246

Path in Wychwood, 1908. Wychwood Public School is visible in the distance, 1907.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1252

Wychwood Path, 1908.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 2305

Gage property, Wychwood Park



City of Toronto Archives. Fonds 1244, Item 7254

Gage property, Wychwood. The property was at Bathurst Street
and Davenport Road, 1922.



City of Toronto Archives. Fonds 1244. Item 7368

Wychwood Park, 1922.



City of Toronto Archives, Series 393 f1548_s0393_t13270

Wychwood Park - general creek scene. June 17, 1916.

Internet Mysticism
and
Urban Re-embodiment:

By Parker Kay

This text is an altered version of the paper “**Internet Mysticism and Urban Re-embodiment**” that was originally presented at the **Networks of Experience: Art and (Dis)Embodiment** at OCADU on March 16, 2019.

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First, an insecurity:

I've never felt very comfortable with the title of *artist*.

I find that my experience is more like an explorer or archeologist. What compels me to make work is not a period of inspired creation but rather what I would describe as uncovering buried treasure.

The drive to construct a compelling narrative within an academic framework turns facts into readymade plot points. This sense of discovery often comes through the creation of parafictions that are not history, but can't be called not-history.¹ Although these tactics have been abused in politics and the media lately, their narrative qualities have the potential to greatly augment the experience of the city.

Toronto is defined by its multiplicitous perspectives and I think it is important to address that my perspective as an artist, wearing the mask of an urban explorer, is fixed on the corporeal city-dweller and the embodied experience of the city that follows. In other words, how do we understand the ways in which space affects the experience of the body in all its fleshy existential precariousness? Toronto is a city of 2.8 million people and occupies an area of just over 630 km²; however, the question the embodied perspective asks is:

how big does the city feel to you?

It is precisely the intensity of the individual experience that is the kernel of exploration and discovery.

Urban exploration and an embodied experience of the city has seen a total paradigm shift with the rise of an Internet-aware

¹ "Poststructuralism and the Paraliterary," *Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983), pp. 291–95.

culture and the proliferation of digital communications. What used to be a practice limited to the physical exploration of urban infrastructure like subway tunnels, storm drains, off-limits or abandoned buildings, relics and ruins, bridges, and all manner of architectural abnormalities has now evolved to possess an additional digital layer of experience. *Google Earth* (2001), *Maps* (2005), and *Streetview* (2008) now render a version of these spaces, that used to be only accessible to the physically able, but now can easily be explored through nearly any modern screen-based product. We have witnessed a duplication of souls that places the embodied experience in two versions of space at once. The digital city is an ever-growing mosaic of two-dimensional images that coalesce around us to form a hyper-real representation of our urban centres. However, a counter narrative has emerged: the hungry consumer pushes advancements in these technologies to be faster, higher resolution, more accurate, and all encompassing while they also burn with resentment stating that these applications have cannibalized serendipity and are erasing the unknown. With the ability to experience the city through the mediation of screen-based technologies how does embodied urban experience change?

I would like to take you through a narrative with three distinct acts that will explain how we conceive of embodiment within a hybrid urban space where the physical collides with the digital:

Act 1 (setup): **The Disappearance of the Unknown**

Act 2 (conflict): **The Anti-Sublime**

Act 3 (resolution): **Internet Mysticism**

Act 1 (Setup): *The Disappearance of the Unknown*

Although defined by the subjective experience, urban exploration has always also been driven by the desire to engage with the unknown. To articulate the allure of the unknown I'd like to share an anecdote from my youth:

It was 1997, I was seven years old and unbeknownst to me there was a videogame company called Ensemble Studios in Dallas, Texas that was about to release a real-time strategy game that I would quickly become obsessed with. This game was called called "Age of Empires," it focused on European historical events between the stone age and the classical period putting the player in the role of commander, royalty, and deity with the playable characters following your every instruction. At the outset of each game the user starts with a few hunter-gatherers who are huddled around a primitive hut, surrounded by a seemingly infinite black void that represented the unexplored territory beyond. The player then sends their naive and devoted hunter-gatherers into the unknown to find resources or more likely certain death.

As the game progresses, the exploration of the map creates a visualization resembling a network: An array of pathways and roads connect the disparate villages and burgeoning cities. Eventually, the end to a given game comes when the player conquers the opposing civilizations or is conquered. Interestingly, though, this end usually comes before the map can be fully explored - the unknown looms even in the face of a predetermined point of resolution. What this suggests to me is that the game developers had the foresight to see that the visualization of the unknown was a major component of the gameplay. The shape of the network that the player delights in creating is only visible through the juxtaposition that is inherent to the unexplored territory that remains. That which appears to be negative space, representing darkness, is what creates the opportunity for adventure and discovery.

In its infancy *Google Earth* appeared to users as a haphazard mosaic of images of varying resolutions. North America's largest cities looked like a patchwork quilt where each tile represented a different capture from the camera aboard the Landsat 7 satellite. However, even in its original, fairly rudimentary, version the novelty of being able to find a satellite image of your own home became curiously profound. This marked a very important moment in the trajectory of digital space mediating a connection between the body and physical space. Being able to see your home, captured from this alien vantage point, signified that you are seen - you exist. This self-affirming moment cast the individual into a dual role of both the voyeur and that which is being viewed.

These satellite images and geographic information systems (GIS) have become increasingly convincing, as if we are spying on our neighbours, checking up on loved ones, or vicariously exploring possible vacation destinations in real time. With the launch of the newest version of Google Earth (version 9.2.78.1) in 2018, we see the addition of 3D modelling to render cities not only from a top-down bird's eye view, but now from any perspective the user desires; like a videogame. With this new update, cities around the globe now bear a striking resemblance to the user-generated cities within Age of Empires; however, there is one glaring difference. The presence of the unknown, the darkness that compels exploration, has been a casualty to the unwavering and unstoppable thrust for technological perfection. As we move towards a digital facsimile of the physical world we must stop to think about the elements of experience that this omits and why?

Google Maps is a service that realizes a desire to be able to control the relationship between human beings and the landscape, to dominate the scale associated with nature and the built world. In art historical terms, this compulsion to wrestle with the natural landscape is known as the sublime. However, in the moments we gazed at our homes through *Google Earth*, for the first time, the sublime saw a reversal.

Act 2 (Conflict): **The Anti-Sublime**

During the romantic period (approx. 1800 - 1850), artists rejected the scientific rationalism brought about by the enlightenment in favour of leveraging strong emotional experiences as aesthetic inspiration. The source of these experiences, termed the sublime, came from confronting the vast, unknowable qualities of nature.² The sublime provided people with the faculties to articulate the threshold between the body and nature without being totally consumed by it.³

In 2002, one year after the public launch of *Google Earth*, Russian new media theorist Lev Manovich described the feeling of often being moved by data visualization projects.⁴ Manovich describes this as the appearance of the anti-sublime, an experience that promises to render datasets “that are beyond the scale of human senses into something that is within our reach, something visible and tangible.” The anti-sublime turns the artists’ gaze away from the natural world and towards individuals. It is clear that in light of the constant stream of data that continues to grow second by second, the sublime could no longer only come from looking out at nature, or up at the stars; instead, it would come from an examination of the self. The 1,100 operational satellites currently orbiting the Earth,⁵ gazing down with precise views of

² “The Island Dweller.” Vimeo. February 21, 2017. Accessed February 4, 2019. <https://vimeo.com/82531226>.

³ Kay, Parker. “Observations of Foreign Objects in a Remote Town” Exhibition Text. Toronto: Ryerson Image Centre, 2017.

⁴ Manovich, Lev. “Data Visualization as New Abstraction and Anti-sublime.” August 2002. Accessed January 12, 2019. http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/040-data-visualisation-as-new-abstraction-and-anti-sublime/37_article_2002.pdf.

⁵ “Stuff in Space.” Stuff in Space. Accessed January 24, 2019. <http://stuffin.space/>.

humankind represent that the sublime is no longer a void, it is a mirror.

A notable example of the inward turn of the anti-sublime came when it made its way to the mainstream media in 2006 as *Time Magazine* announced that their person of the year would be “You.”⁶ By devoting their annual award to *you*, meaning *you*, *me*, and all of *us*, Time acknowledged the arrival of the second generation of the Internet, which was defined by dynamic user-generated content and social media. This period of the Internet’s history ushered in an era of heightened narcissism, with the anti-sublime as a major factor. As social media grew more prevalent the digital experience moved farther away from the concerns of the body and instead towards notions of idealized representation. Within psychoanalysis, the definition of a narcissist is when a person “cannot distinguish between an image of who they imagine themselves to be and an image of who they actually are.”⁷ The narcissist can only see the idealized image while the actual self-image is lost. The anti-sublime has blended the digital image with the notions of the self-image into a nearly indistinguishable chimera.

The anti-sublime represents a shift in the cultural consciousness away from an embodied notion of space in favour of a screen-based interiority. In 1935, Walter Benjamin articulated a connection between consciousness and space when he “described two ways of perceiving the world: contemplation, and distracted perception. Contemplation is the way we perceive a painting, when we take the time to look at it, really. Distracted perception is the way we perceive buildings when we walk in the street. It is the way we see the world when we don’t take the time to look at it, really.”⁸ Situationist Internationale member Guy Debord

⁶ Grossman, Lev. “You Yes, You Are TIME’s Person of the Year.” *Time*. December 25, 2006. Accessed February 24, 2019. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570810,00.html>.

⁷ Lowen, Alexander. *Narcissism: Denial of the True Self*. New York: Collier Books, 1997. p7.

⁸ Galibert-Lainé, Chloé. “Flânerie 2.0 (english).” Chloé Galibert-Lainé. April 18, 2018.

describes this as a form of the *dérive*. Debord's *dérive* adds a layer of humour to Benjamin's *flânerie* that encourages a "playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects."⁹ This method highlights the connection between the physical geography of the city with the pliable mental landscape of perceptive emotions. The *dériveur* is meant to sever all ties with what they know of the city in order to be open to new experiences. Places of work, spots where you were broken up with, your favorite bookstore, or a house where your friend used to live all must be suspended to knock yourself into a psychogeographic tabula rasa. Although the anti-sublime focuses the individual towards an acute interiority, the extent to which this sense of self is mediated by screens causes a move away from an embodied experience of the city and towards the digital.

In Chloé Galibert-Laîné's film titled "Flânerie 2.0" (2018) we see a similar interest in the evolution of urban exploration and the appearance of a digital layer. "Flânerie 2.0" contrasts shots of strolling Parisians with clips from the film "Paris N'existe Pas" (1969).¹⁰ We see the main character of "Paris N'existe Pas," an artist named Simon attend a party where he smokes magical "dope" which causes him to see past visions of Paris overlaid with his present. Simon wonders the street looking for artistic inspiration but is overcome with this time travelling double exposure. Galibert-Laîné uses time travel as a device to discuss the way that the contemporary urban *flâneur* has been distracted by screens. The screen-based *flâneur* is consumed with distracted perception, fixated on the representation of the body as a roving dot on their Google Maps screen.

The stroll becomes the scroll.

Accessed February 2, 2019. <https://www.chloegalibertlaine.com/flanerie-20-francais>.

⁹ Debord, Guy. "Theory of the Dérive." Ubu Web Papers, 1956. Accessed December 17, 2018. <http://tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/deriveddebord.pdf>. p.2.

¹⁰ Paris N'existe Pas. Directed by Robert Benayoun. Performed by Serge Gainsbourg. France: Lycanthrope, 1969. DVD. October 18, 1969. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0141709/>.

Through narration, Galibert-Laîné makes an important observation that "perhaps the radio station switcher, the television zapper, and the internet clicker is the evolution of Benjamin's *flâneur*."¹¹ In the closing scene of "Flânerie 2.0," we see a split screen depiction of the *dérive* in Paris. On top we see footage from "Paris N'existe Pas," the camera appears to be mounted on the hood of a car speeding through the crowded Parisian streets. The second, a modern view of the same route seen through the lens of *Google Street View* - each click of the mouse drives the viewer forward through the blended image sequence. The anti-sublime has not erased the *dérive* from today's modern cities; however, the embodied experience has receded into the background, waiting to be revived.

¹¹ Galibert-Laîné, Chloé. "Flânerie 2.0 (english)." Chloé Galibert-Laîné. April 18, 2018. Accessed February 2, 2019. <https://www.chloegalibertlaine.com/flanerie-20-francais>.

Act 3 (Resolution): *Internet Mysticism*

Internet Mysticism is a term that represents the injection of the unknown into screen based *flânerie*. With access to a limitless archive of information online, we have the ability to answer nearly any question or prove any thesis. In 2017, 3.7 billion humans used the internet and Google processes 40,000 searches every second.¹² When I did a Google search query for the sentence “how fast does a Google search take” I was returned 11 billion results in 0.76 seconds. With 90% of the internet’s data being created in the last two years¹³ it is clear that humans have an exponentially growing pool of data to reach into to satiate any possible desire. However, as the ability to find answers becomes increasingly accurate to an almost forensic degree, there is a growing desire to explore the corners of the internet that are unknowable - this is the mystical internet.

Emerging in only the last few years, “internet mysticism” is the pursuit of a realm of online knowledge that is inaccessible to the intellect and is only accessible through deep contemplation or self-surrender to some sort of unknowable, and ungoogleable, power. Simply put, internet mysticism is a desire for the mysterious, the celestial, the occult, and the conspiracy minded within the hyper logics and infinite choices of the internet.

The unknown returns.

12 Marr, Bernard. “How Much Data Do We Create Every Day? The Mind-Blowing Stats Everyone Should Read.” *Forbes*. July 09, 2018. Accessed March 01, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2018/05/21/how-much-data-do-we-create-every-day-the-mind-blowing-stats-everyone-should-read/#c1bd1e260ba9>.

13 Ibid.

In a New York Times article written by Amanda Hess titled “Astrology Is Fake but It’s Probably Fine,”¹⁴ Hess claims that the rise of astrology online, for example, is not necessarily a sign that there is an increase in people who believe the positions of celestial objects actually have an effect on your personal life. Instead, Hess proposes that this is evidence of a desire to move away from the algorithmic coldness that dominates the internet in favour of intuition and empathy. On the opposite end of the spectrum of internet subcultures, the rise of conspiracy theories can also be attributed to this type of quest for the unknown within the mystical internet. On the surface these two subcultures seem at odds; however, what they share in common is a practice of narrativizing the unknown through the infinite permutations and combinations of data available online.

Canadian artist Jon Rafman showcases internet mysticism with his project “Nine Eyes of Google Street View” (2008). Using the objective lens of Google Maps’ “street view,” Rafman leverages the so-called neutral gaze of the images to augment the stakes of the depicted scene. Each image transforms into a still from an unfolding narrative. The intrigue of the image along with Google’s GPS invites the viewer to fill in the remaining details of an imagined three-act structure. Internet mysticism transforms the inconsequential into the tantalizing. An example of this could be what looks to be a supernatural event caught on camera that, in reality, is easily explained by a camera glitch. However it is in the indulgence of the possibility of the compelling narrative that the unknown makes its return. As the name would suggest, internet mysticism is most clearly seen in the evolution of online subcultures and the re-narrativizing of the internet’s data; however, I am interested in exploring how this has affected the practice of embodied urban exploration.

14 Hess, Amanda. “Astrology Is Fake but It’s Probably Fine.” *The New York Times*. August 27, 2018. Accessed January 25, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/27/arts/astrology-mysticism-internet.html>.

In 2001, it was the novelty of seeing ourselves from space that thrust us towards the image-obsessed web 2.0 that we live with today. From that point forward it became more and more likely for people to experience physical space via digital mediation. I would spend hours exploring cities on *Google Maps*, using street view to try and glimpse views of interesting architecture or areas that are off limits to physical visitors. Moreover, since *Google Earth's* release, millions of people have grown up in a time where the experience of physical space is not just mediated by the screen it is defined by it. How then does the experience of physical space change when it has been preconditioned by the disembodied lens of *Google Maps*?

Seeing images of ourselves from the vantage point of satellite images has become the new normal. Re-embodiment now comes in the form of the urban explorer seeing the digital layer, manifested through digital communications and the internet, all around them. Because the digital experience of space often precedes the physical, the small micro details that are only perceptible through physical exploration take on a similar narrative quality to those found in internet mysticism. Now, when the urban flâneur makes the transition from the digital to the physical, they do not take the point of view of the limited omniscient overseer like in *Google Maps*, but rather a character within the larger narrative that is unfolding in physical space. It is this juxtaposition of scales that makes you aware that you have a body. The oscillation between the macro (digital space) and micro (physical space) is what creates the opportunity for a re-embodied urban space to appear.

I would like to end with a recent example of how this method works in practice. There is an oasis at the centre of Toronto that defies all categorization. Just north of Davenport and Bathurst, Wychwood Park was founded by artists Marmaduke Matthews and George A. Reid in 1874. The goal of Wychwood was to create a natural haven for artists to cultivate inspiration. The neighborhood has many intriguing elements such as: the unique presence of Arts and Crafts architecture, suspicious deaths, fa-

mous residents like Marshall McLuhan, and traces of the now hidden Taddle Creek. Wychwood Park is also one of the only examples of a planned neighborhood in Toronto and, although it was amalgamated into the city of Toronto in 1909, it has remained under the jurisdiction of a private council made up of the residents. Practically speaking this means that services like road maintenance and property bylaws are handled by the residents, and the neighborhood itself is deemed to be publicly accessible private land. As a result of this unique designation, the mysterious Wychwood Park is one of the few neighborhoods that is not available on *Google street view*, nor is it visible on *Google Earth* due to its dense tree canopy. Wychwood Park defies the anti-sublime, it is un-google-mappable, and is private and public simultaneously - this is internet mysticism physically embodied.

Upon my first visit I reveled in discovering what was unavailable to me online. Even entering through the front gates felt as if I was walking over the digital cliff into the unknown. As I explored the neighborhood I could visualize it from above and it was as if with each step I was uncovering unexplored territory like I was one of the characters within *Age of Empires*, not the player in control. I noticed small details like a covered boat on the shore of the stagnant pond that used to be Taddle Creek that I had seen in an article published 10 years earlier. Frozen in time, this boat is an example of how micro details of place become plot points in an unfolding narrative. Indeed, as I walked by no. 3 in Wychwood Park, the former residence of Marshall McLuhan, I started to understand the zeal behind his civic activism later in his career. Perhaps it was not only that the proposed Spadina Expressway would increase traffic, a modern scourge to progress in McLuhan's view, but rather that it could potentially destroy his precious Wychwood. McLuhan's description of Wychwood resonates with my own wandering experiences of the Park; he describes it as "a place to play." He goes on to say that "at play, man uses all his faculties; at work, he specializes. A place like St. James Town is specialized. It is not, and can't become, a community.

It's built on a few concepts, rather than precepts -- programmed around traffic."¹⁵

Internet mysticism shows the value in this type of playful narrativizing of place that conjures the allure of the unknown. Moreover, when the narrative moves from digital to physical space, it is the inclusion of your body within the narrative that creates a deeper understanding of the physical location as well as your body within it.

Internet Mysticism is two things:

1. wayfinding device

In the case of Wychwood Park, and many other locations like it, Internet Mysticism can be used as a compass that pushes towards the liminal. It would be shortsighted to claim that Internet Mysticism is in some way responsible for the peculiarities of Wychwood Park. Of course, the Park's history goes back over 130 years and has been advanced and altered by a countless number of factors. However, it is through the lens of Internet Mysticism that this sheltered oasis shows itself. By understanding the cultural conditions that define how we see, and shape, the urban environment the city-dweller is armed with the tools to augment even the most inconspicuous of urban spaces. Internet mysticism's focus on constructed narratives is the antidote to the anti-sublime in the face of aggressive technological progress.

2. cultural paradigm

As the preceding pages show, Internet Mysticism is a product of now. It encompasses a response against the hyper-narcicism brought about by Web 2.0. It suggests that perhaps in the darkest corners of the all-knowing-all-consuming Internet we can find the unknown, again. This unknown, however, is not found in one piece but rather as an array of bits that call to be assembled.

¹⁵ "Letters of Marshall McLuhan", Oxford University Press, 1987

New York based urban explorer, Steve Duncan remarks that to see a single image of Time Square is not enough information to develop a true understanding of it. To accurately process, and truly understand, an image of Time Square one would need to see the network of sewers beneath it that stop it from flooding, the corridors for electrical conduit that power the bright lights of Broadway, and of course the series of bridges that bring people onto the island of Manhattan. Duncan makes a case for how urban explorer can leverage Internet Mysticism as a tool to develop this multiplicitous perspective of cities. The unknown continues to loom large, drawing us towards it for a new adventure, even if we are the ones who are creating it.

Wychwood Park

Moon-struck the pond embraces
Lingering shadows of the shore,
The paths encircling follow
Subtle trails to evermore.

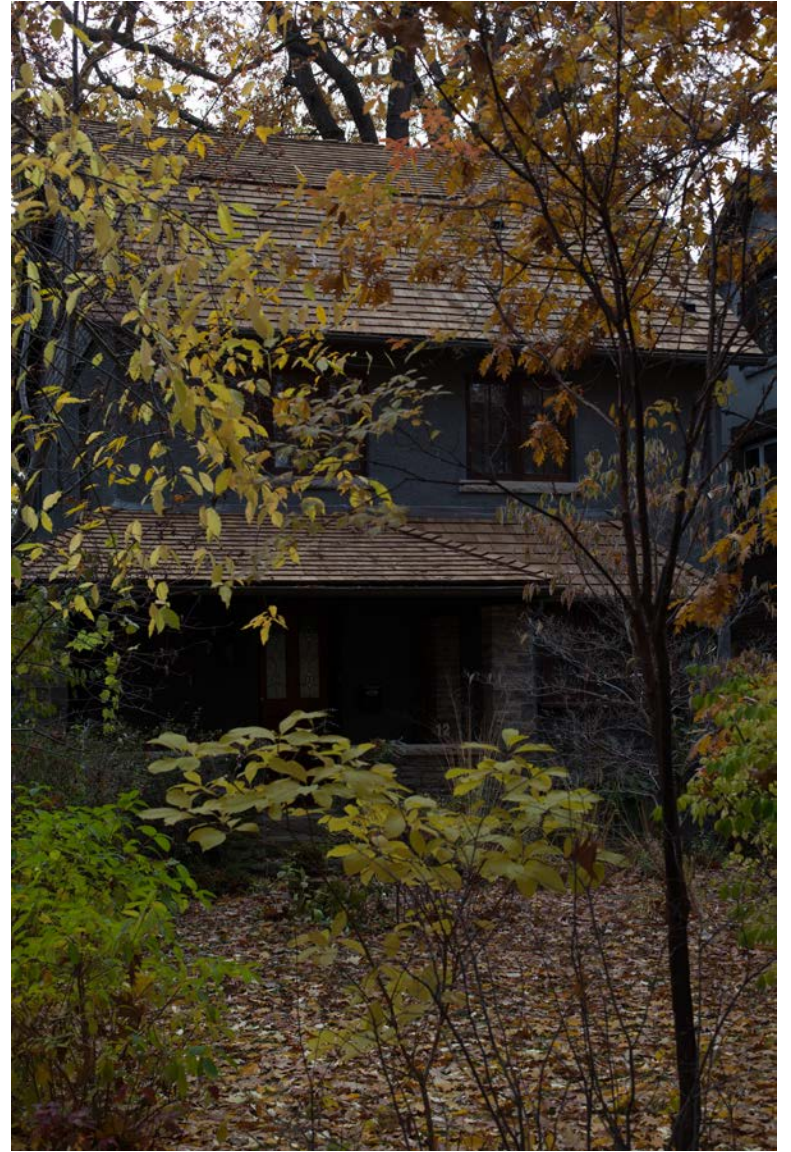
Tall trees on deep tiptoes stretching,
In verdant robes soon doomed to fall,
Resignedly anticipate
The autumn artist booked to call.

Upon Toronto's lake-formed hill,
Where creek and trees consort together,
Wychwood Park and whispers ancient songs
Of past and present bound forever.

Memory, an invisible guest,
Gently rejoins the darkling scene.
I see, again, in cavalcade,
A hundred years of what has been.

Murray Wilton
September 4, 1988.















House Description (clockwise)

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| #81 Wychwood Park | “Upland Cottage”, G.A. Reid House (c. 1905) |
| #15 Wychwood Park | Gustav Hahn House (c. 1905) |
| #45 Wychwood Park | George F. Watts House (c. 1910) |
| #106 Wychwood Park | Controversial 2012 Redevelopment |
| #96 Wychwood Park | Mary Jane Baillie House |
| #80 Wychwood Park | Harry H. Love House (c. 1910) |
| #49 Burnside Drive | W.J. Gage House (c. 1917) |
| #3 Wychwood Park | Marshall McLuhan House (c. 1913) |
| #5 Wychwood Park | Eden Smith House (c. 1906) |
| #7 Wychwood Park | G.A. Howell House (c. 1911) |
| #6 Wychwood Park | “Wychwood”, Marmaduke Matthews House (c. 1874) |
| #22 Wychwood Park | “Braemore”, The Jardines House (c. 1878) |
| #16 Wychwood Park | E.A. DuVernet House (c. 1910) |