

The Way We Were Westdale Memories

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Charles Houghton was kind enough to relate some of his fond memories of Westdale for your reading pleasure.

When Charles's family moved to Westdale circa 1924, they occupied the only house on **Dromore Crescent**, and a mud road went down to the intersection of **Oak Knoll**.

The back window of Charles's house afforded him a view of his father coming home from teaching school via Main Street West.

Before the McKittrick Bridge was built in 1914, the area had been the city dump, and dumping continued long after the bridge was built. The streetcars stopped at **Dundurn Street**. Later they turned in the loop at **King** and **Sterling Streets**, and the **Westdale Oval** began to take shape.

Growing up, Charles played in the houses under construction west of **North Oval**. Night watchmen were stationed in caravans parked nearby, and the site was lit up with smelly coal-oil lamps. Charles attended school at **George R. Allan** (built 1927) and was



First kindergarten class at George R. Allan, 1927. Photo: Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections, Cunningham Collection 1927.

in the first kindergarten class there; he is in the front row, second from the right, in the above photo. "We all knew **Mr. Little** as the principal. Illuminated toboggan slides were built overlooking Cootes Paradise. We would go down the hill on a toboggan, and out onto the marsh; depending on the state of the ice, we could almost reach the **Desjardins Canal**."

Charles recounted that the road to Toronto went down **Longwood Road North** and around the arm of **Cootes Paradise**. There were a number of boat houses/shacks (**Shacktown**) on the north side up to the **Desjardins Canal**. The **Hamilton Isolation Hospital** for diphtheria patients was situated at the very north end of **Paradise Road**, overlooking **Cootes Paradise** and **Chedoke Creek**. "We were too terrified to go

near the place!"

A nice drive in the 30s was through the woods, entering either at the corner of **Dromore** and **Marion** or **Dalewood Crescent** and **Oak Knoll**. The roads came out at a hay

field near what is now **Les Prince Field** at McMaster. A favourite hike, if the water was low, was down **Marion** to the sand hills just beyond the creek and then right on a path out to the island with no name (now **Rat Island**). Behind the Westdale **Aviary** parking lot, at the edge of the woods, were a number of picnic tables and a hut where soft drinks and snacks were sold to picnickers.

Charles currently lives in Ainslie Wood East with his wife, Jan, and we thank him for his recollections.