

Downsview Stories

GORE VAUGHN PLANK ROAD

Getting goods to market was a constant challenge for Downsview farmers in the years before Confederation. Roads were unpaved and their carts and wagons would get bogged down in the muck when it rained or during the spring thaw.

To alleviate the problem, a plank road was built in 1851 on what today is Dufferin Street, but was then known as the Gore Vaughn Road. White pine planks were laid on the southbound lane to accommodate farmers on their way to Toronto. The roadbed consisted of 16 inches of boards layered on top of each other, held in place by four foot-long spikes. Still, the planks were unstable and proved to be dangerous for the carts and for the horses pulling them.



Dufferin Street south of Finch Avenue West in 1954
showing former roadbed of the Gore and Vaughn Plank Road

Two toll gates were set up, one at Wilson, the other at Sheppard West, and farmers were expected to pay what they considered to be exorbitant tolls to use the new road (see below). The gates were finally closed in 1891, as farmers found the railroad to be a more reliable and safer way of getting their goods to the big city.

Under the Authority of Parliament, The Gore and Vaughn Plank Road rate of tolls to be collected thereon for each time passing whether loaded or otherwise:	
for every Vehicle drawn by two Horses or Other Cattle	6 pennies
for every additional horse or beast	2 pennies
for every Vehicle drawn by one horse	3 pennies
for every Horse Ass or Mule	2 pennies
for every score of Neat Cattle	1 penny
for every score of Sheep or Swine	1 penny
By order of Directors—January 1, 1851	

A chart of tolls charged on the Gore and Vaughn Plank Road in 1851