

King's Colourful History

A beautiful woman found in the Archives!

One day she suddenly appeared! Mrs. Newton Sproule, the elegant lady whose husband built the "Sproule House" in mid-19th Century, now to be seen opposite the Brownsville plaza on Highway 27.

No, not a ghost, but a touched-up photograph from the 1860s or 1870s used as backing and hidden behind a framed parchment land grant of 1803. The original official document itself was a thrilling gift to the King Township Archives, and once the splintery old frame was removed, and the precious parchment revealed as a grant of 200 acres to a new settler, to have the portrait as a bonus seemed almost too good to be true.

The unknown photographer, probably an itinerant, would have used a wet glass plate to capture the image of the lady sitting before the camera. The plate would be prepared, exposed and processed on the spot. When delivering the resulting print to the sitter, he might have suggested defining the line of her chin or intensify the deep black of her dress using either charcoal or graphite pencil, just to sharpen the image a bit. And she would probably have smiled to see how gladly her husband paid the photographer for this excellent portrait of his beautiful wife.

We are grateful to the generous donor of the framed document and to the government of England's King George III who gave a worthy pioneer this piece of land, which later became part of King Township.

You can see these two treasures at the King Township Public Library's Local History room at the King City branch. For more, visit www.kingtownshiphistoricalsociety.com.

Submitted by the King Township Historical Society

