

Secrets of the Forest

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A spring walk along King Township's unopened road allowances in Happy Valley Forest not only features may-flowers and frog choruses, but also the history buff can discover the forest's old stories and mysteries.

On the 16th Sideroad trail between the 7th Concession and Weston Road lie piles of lichen-covered stones, evidence of past field clearing and agriculture. Now large maples and beech grow around the piles, where the forest reclaimed the early clearings. Who laboriously once carried those stones?

To the south, on land now owned by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, sits a remnant stump fence, separating areas of older and younger forest. White pine stumps, full of resin, can last hundreds of years. Ragged roots fan above the overturned trunks, placed by pioneer farmers as a divider or maybe even earlier by Iroquoians.

Nearby on a north-south axis are dozens of earthen mounds, perhaps remains of uprooted trees left by a powerful tornado, or are these what old timers call the Indian burial mounds?

Beyond on the unopened 7th Concession looking north, a large maple tree bends 90 degrees sideways a metre above the ground, bending up again another metre at 90 degrees. Is this a sturdy ice storm survivor or one of a few known "marker" trees, deliberately bound as a sapling by First Nation peoples long ago to make a forest signpost?

Woodland mysteries are intriguing to consider on a spring walk – perhaps one day someone will do formal research and we will learn what truth they hold.