

The Gore

The Forgotten Mansion of Northumberland Street

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The Gore. The name itself brought to mind such curiosity that I had to know what its story was. A great mansion once stood proudly just down Northumberland Street and today as we somberly stroll past have no knowledge of it ever existing. Hoping to know more about the mysterious mansion I decided to search through some historical files to see what I could possibly get my hands on for information.

Eventually I came upon a rather thick collection of papers, stapled rather crudely, with the words, "The Goldie Saga, by Theresa Goldie Falkner". Flipping the page over, I found that Theresa Goldie Falkner was the granddaughter of John Goldie the great botanist and founder of Greenfield Village. At the age of 83 years old Theresa, his youngest granddaughter, documented her memories of the dear home and family. The words written in the black typewriter font soon turned into a collage of scenes, sights and smells, and I was soon transported to a different place in time. I began quickly flipping through the pages.

On the second page of the collection was a photocopied picture of a grand home. A picket fence framed the front border of the picture forcing the viewer to peer into the private grounds. A road led to the front entrance where family and friends would have been warmly greeted. The architecture was unusual; upon a seven acre right triangle of land stood a building with filigree iron railings and Canadian gothic windows, its stylish windows and ornamentation of the time gave the home an elegant appearance

Theresa explains that her father, David Goldie, had built the home in 1884. With the help of a man named William Wellish, her father had spent 18,000-20,000 dollars on the construction of the home, which was a great fortune at the time.

Through further research in files, I found that David Goldie arrived in Canada when he was eleven with his father. He was a well respected man, part of several societies and committees and well acknowledged in business. In 1883, David decided to move from his home in Greenfield Village. He bought land from James Robson in Ayr and began to construct his new home.

The home was completed the following year and the landscape was aided by the planning of John Goldie and his excellent taste in flora. David moved in with his wife Isabella and children. It was here that Theresa was born and so she describes in her saga the memories of the place she knew as home.

The mansion was well-equipped with the latest luxuries. One feature was an indoor bathroom with a toilet and an enormous metal tub which was enclosed in dark panelled wood. She describes the comfort of having running hot and cold water which ran into fine hand-painted china basins.

The water was heated by a gigantic furnace in the basement. The warmth it would expel would heat up the home. However, there were still fireplaces in five downstairs rooms and four bedrooms due to Isabella his wife, a charming Scotch woman, who believed "a room [is] dead without a fire".

A drawing room, front hall and back hall, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, pantry, scullery, library were on the ground floor alone. In total there were thirteen bedrooms. The home consisted of four rooms on each of the three floors and three large high ceiling living rooms and a wide hall through wide arches with sliding oak doors. There she says she "remembers the doors between the two right-hand rooms being used only as their 'curtains' when mother put on tableaux for our amusement".

Theresa explains her life with her brothers, their secret hideouts, games they would play around the house. She recalls a memory in winter where they would gather in the sitting room in front of the warm fire on a blistery night where "the romantic characters of the Idylls of the King, such as Pelleas and Estaree, Guinevere and Lancelot, Gareth and Lynette were burned into [their] memories". She mentions that the fireplace where they would sit was "bordered by tiles picturing stories by the poets".

All meals in the early days were served in the Back Hall; the kitchen was always busy baking pies and roasts 'enough for an army'. The pantry was where the maids had a mid-morning break around ten o'clock. They would sit down at their own dining table and discuss gossip in the town and such to which Isabella, Theresa's mother, was fond to join.

The kitchen had a refrigerator as well as the scullery that was just off of the kitchen. Here great blocks of ice were taken from the ice house that was said to have been located under the stable. There, meat and milk would be stored from the Greenfield farm. There were also large flat pans that held the cream which was skimmed using a "shell-shaped metal spoon dotted with holes". This was so the skim milk would run through.

The maids' quarters consisted of a sitting room and two bedrooms. Apparently the room next to the bathroom, in Theresa's opinion, was

haunted by the ghost of old Aunt Betsy who had the room arranged for her where she spent her last days. Her brothers would tease her with "hair-raising stories of her shrieks and groans". The attic as Theresa typed contained two windowless storerooms and a photographer's black room. There, Theresa explains her brothers' hideout in a corner where the boys would gather butternuts and Canadian walnuts and later in the fall and winter the boys would crack them against the bricks and munch on them while avoiding parents' scolding.

Eventually Isabella, Theresa's mother, was widowed and continued to take care of the home. She became interested in Women's rights and went to Ottawa to fight for Women's right to vote. Later the house was given to Esther Goldie Kilgour and in 1937 the mansion was reduced to a cottage size leaving the home partial of its grandeur.

After reading Theresa's personal tour of the home I became greatly inclined to visit. And so on a rather warm day in July I entered what was once the great mansion. Enclosed in an addition were the front doors and the old door bell worn from years of use. Donald Engel, the owner of the Gore, kindly took me through his home. "Only three rooms remain" said Donald. Today only three rooms of the home exist, from a mansion that once was a home of twenty-one rooms and three stories high including an attic.

The high ceilings, the beautiful trim and fireplaces were breath taking. I could only imagine the wealth that the Goldies once held. I sat with Donald for a while discussing the home and he pulled out for me some old pictures and information. He showed the blueprints made by William Wellish, his named printed neatly at the bottom of the coloured paper.

Eventually he pulled out a picture of Theresa Goldie Falkner. It was a picture of a painting of her called The Green Cape. There she stood swooned in an expanse of delicate green fabric her arms crossed beneath, her eyes stern. She had an intelligent air to her as well as a sense of gentleness that hid beneath her rigid posture.

As I glanced at the picture for a moment in almost a trance, Donald told me that when he bought the home there was nothing there, "just empty halls" he said. He had one story passed down to him that a woman once performed dance classes in a dance hall that was situated on the third floor.

I then stepped into one of the rooms its high ceilings towering beside me. And there it was. The fireplace just as Theresa had described. Along the fireplace tiles were placed. My eyes followed them around taking in the illustration on each one classically drawn with a whimsical and mythical air to each one. I can only imagine the stories told here on cold nights as the fire glittered off the glazed pictures fused with legends told through generations.

When I left the home I gazed out at the landscape, the Douglas trees that John Goldie planted. I thought of how beautiful the home would have looked in its full glory. As I, many might ask themselves, why tear down such a beautiful home? Some stories say there was a lack of funds, that Isabella, David's wife was unable to keep the house up so they downsized. However, I feel like some things just don't match up. So, it is up for history to know the real answer. For now, I am left nostalgic for something that in my waking life never existed.

As for the name the Gore, I was quite interested in the reason why it was named so. There are a few explanations, one being the relevance the nearby Gore District which existed until 1849 in the Niagara and York region. Others relate it to the Gore stream that runs behind the house and the simple popularity of the name. However, it remains a state of opinion until further proof proves otherwise.

It's hard to believe that there are such places in the area rich in history, stories, architecture and grandeur. However, it is up to us to recognize these and cherish our past.

As I ventured through the grave yard recognizing the various names and tying them to stories and homes I came upon a rather tall pinnacle of a grave stone with the letters G-O-L-D-I-E. Interested and inclined to find the names etched on the rather polished marble, I peered down at the incised epigraphs. Almost missing it, with my eyes pierced by the rays of the sun I could make out the name Theresa Goldie Falkner. And there she rested. I found myself pondering about how special this woman is to me and the history of the area and although she laid there beneath my very feet she still lives in the simple words that she typed in that bold typewriter font.

