



CREDITS

Research and Preparation

Gini Dickie (*FD resident since 1985*)

Layout and Design

Mary Traill (*FD resident*)

Current Photography

Mary Traill (*FD resident*)

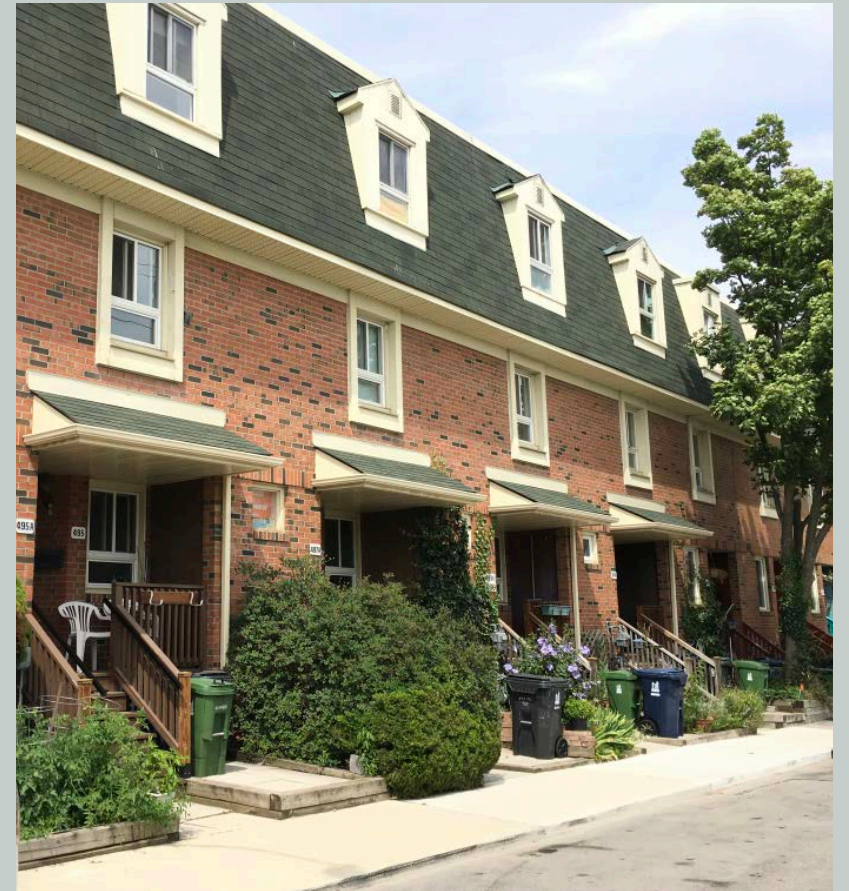
Advice and Encouragement

Isobel Warren (*Christie Gardens resident*)

PRODUCED AND PRINTED FALL 2022

How It Began

FRED DOWLING CO-OPERATIVE



Who Was Fred Dowling?

He was short, stocky, and scrappy. He was born around the turn of the last century in what used to be the “working man’s suburb” of East Toronto. Before he died some sixty years later, he had helped Canada’s thousands of meat packing and meat processing workers organize themselves into an effective country-wide union that enabled them to win record-setting trans-Canada collective bargains with their trans-Canada employers.

In his early years, Dowling had become well-known in Toronto’s east end as a semi-pro baseball player. That career ended with the Great Depression of the 1930s.



FRED DOWLING WITH CO-OP RESIDENTS JOSH GOLDHAR, LARA GOLGERTH AND CORY BANKS 1985

With no unemployment insurance, no welfare for single men and no medicare, he and thousands of his fellow young Canadians had no choice but to rely on relatives’ support or hitchhike and freight-train-hop in an unceasing search for jobs rumoured to exist elsewhere.

Unlike many others, Dowling refused to cave in and put up with social injustice uncomplainingly. He became a member of the youth wing of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), predecessor of today’s New Democrats. His organizing experience led to his appointment as a full time union organizer by the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO).

His special assignment was to help packinghouse and meat by-product workers form a union of their own and bargain collectively. The collective bargains Dowling

helped his fellow members negotiate in the years ahead eliminated the old structure of differing regional wages, hours, and working conditions and replaced them with Canada-wide standards. They also pioneered the concept of equal pay for work of equal value performed by women in industry.

Under his leadership, Canada’s Packinghouse Workers were among the first to establish autonomy for the Canadian section within a strong international union and were one of the first industrial unions to designate women as staff representatives. Dowling also played a

leading role in merging Canada’s once divided union movement into today’s united Canadian Labour Congress, in establishing today’s union-endorsed New Democratic Party, and in setting up a world-wide federation of unions in the food processing industry.

Despite all of this, it’s not surprising that few Canadians have heard about this scrappy little fellow Canadian and his many accomplishments. Too many of Canada’s academics and their students working in the new media seem incapable of believing that Canadians, particularly self-educated Canadian working men and women, could have ever accomplished anything very important.

~ Written by the late Murray Cotterill in 1991 while living in Stanley Knowles Co-op.

How It Began

Long-time Fred Dowling resident, Pat O’Hearn, was working in the Ontario office of the NDP in 1978 when Gord Cochrane arrived and asked “Who wants to live in a co-op?” People asked him, “What’s a co-op?” To learn more, several of them, including Pat, attended a meeting held by the Labour Council Development Foundation (where Gord worked), and signed up to be one of the first residents in the soon-to-be-built Fred Dowling Housing Co-operative.

The co-op was the first Foundation co-op that was sponsored by a union local. It was initiated by members of Local 114 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Although it was expected that workers in that union at the Canada Packers plant would benefit from this affordable housing

opportunity, its plant at the Stockyards was closed in 1983 and many workers found work outside Toronto. The co-op was named in honour of Fred Dowling, Canadian Director of the Canadian Food and Allied Workers.

Dave Reid was a union steward there, and he and his wife Connie, were among the first residents, along with Virtue and Bob Sears, whose mother worked at Canada Packers. Word spread among friends, family and neighbours about this new opportunity, and several people, who were renting from difficult landlords at the time, were eager to make a change.

Some of the original residents included Schon Golgerth, Wilma Kemic, Thelma and Larry Saunders, Peter and Maria Churchard, Rupinder Singh and Kulwant Kaur, Myrna and Ross Downey, Doug Oyler and Diane Bell.

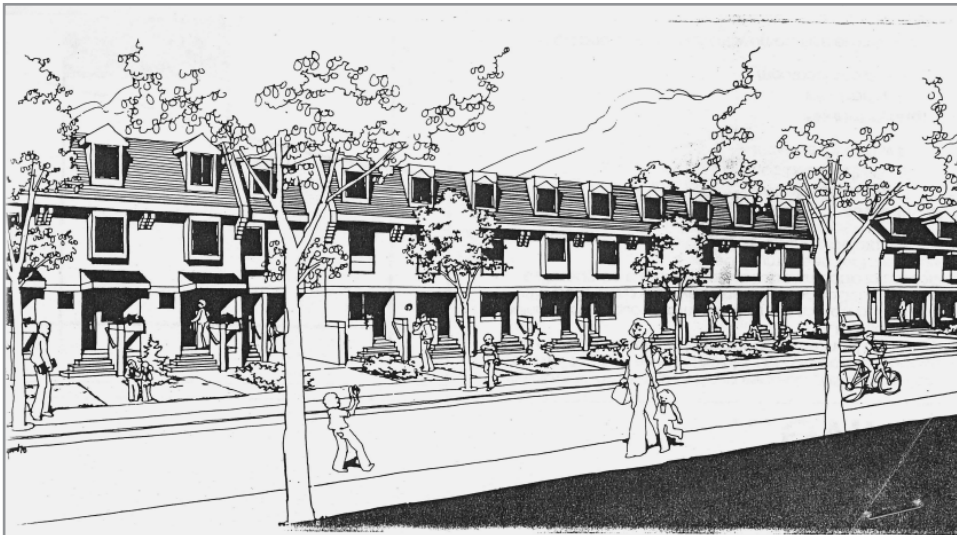
Labour Council Development Foundation

In the late 1960s the Canadian labour movement worked with others to address the creation of affordable housing. Under the leadership of David Lewis, the NDP supported the minority government formed by Pierre Trudeau’s Liberals from 1972 to 1974. One achievement was the approval of Federal community-based non-profit and co-operative housing program. From 1973 until 1995 over 100,000 social housing homes were built to provide affordable housing for more than 300,000 residents.

The Labour Council decided to make a practical contribution to this effort. In 1974, it created the Labour Council Development Foundation (LCDF)

to develop, build (with union labour) and manage non-profit housing co-operatives. The LCDF had a board of directors that included volunteer labour leaders, as well as, development professionals. The staff included experienced construction, accounting, management and development personnel.

In the 20 years of its existence, the LCDF developed over 3,600 housing units in 40 projects. Over 11,000 people in the Toronto area have affordable housing today because of this initiative. Many of the projects were named after labour leaders who worked to improve the lives of working people.



A better way to live

Most housing is priced beyond the means of ordinary workers and their families.

Rising interest rates have greatly increased the costs of mortgages for those who have managed to save a down payment for a house. In addition, the cost of land due to speculation and profiteering has caused a housing squeeze of crisis proportions...housing costs are skyrocketing.

Co-op housing can really change this. From the ground up, the needs and budgets of working people are considered and not the need to make a profit. Co-op housing enables member-residents to provide themselves with secure housing **at cost**—not **cost plus** profit to a landlord. Members of the co-op work together to serve themselves rather than to make a profit by serving others.

This is how it works:

A housing co-operative is an independent corporation run by its member-residents, much like a union local. All

members have an equal voice and share responsibility for the well-being of the co-op. They elect a board of directors to carry on the day-to-day affairs of the co-op.

Each member pays a monthly housing charge to cover the mortgage, taxes and operating expenses. Co-operative management ensures that these expenses are minimized. This means that over the long term, co-op housing becomes much less expensive than comparable privately-owned units.

The co-op corporation retains ownership of all housing units. Since individuals do not own the units they live in, there is no down payment.

Co-op members have the right to permanent residence and only a serious breach of occupancy rules established by the co-op will result in eviction. Should a member wish to move out he may do so at any time, subject to proper notice.

Fred Dowling Co-operative Inc.

A non-profit housing co-operative
Tel. 977-8152



EARLY MARKETING BROCHURE



ROSS AND MYRNA DOWNEY, DOUG OYLER

The first Board of Directors was formed while construction was underway and before anyone moved in. They met at the nearby home of Pat O'Hearn who was the only woman on the Board and says, of course they made her the secretary. Peter Churchard remembers that Maria joined the Membership Committee and he chose Maintenance. He even took a weekend workshop on parquet floor re-sanding and coating, as "we were very hands-on in those days".

Before the construction was completed, a group of the future residents visited the site every Tuesday evening. There was always a night watchman on duty. Schon remembers looking at the holes being dug to find her chosen location. One night she climbed down into the hole, but it had been raining and the ground was soggy. The walls of the hole were slimy and she couldn't get out. She had to holler for the night watchman who got a

ladder and helped her. Schon remembers being very muddy on the bus ride home and realizing that a brooch, given to her by an aunt before she left Australia, had fallen off and was probably back in the hole. Today she takes comfort in the fact that she still lives on top of that brooch.

At one point, the future residents proposed having the one-bedroom units on the first floor, but the architect vetoed the idea, saying there could be a noise issue with children upstairs. Too bad, as it could have avoided the accessibility challenges we face.

Some residents moved into their units in 1980 before the construction was completely finished. The first co-op newsletter was distributed in September, and listed the Board members (Pres. Dale Banks, Vice-Pres. David Reid, Treas. Perry Banks, Sect'y. Pat O'Hearn, Members at Large, Schon Golgerth and Chris Bell). It also listed the following committees and their plans: Child Care, Financial, Maintenance, Membership, Newsletter, Social, and Delivery (leaflets, newsletters, etc). It reiterated the responsibility of all members to contribute 3 hours per month of volunteer time to the co-op.



OFFICIAL OPENING AUGUST 1980. LEFT TO RIGHT GORD COCHRANE, FRED DOWLING, DAVID REID



PHASE 2 MELITA CRESCENT

On October 4, 1980 the grand opening ceremonies took place and it was Fred Dowling, in person, who cut the ribbon. Also in attendance were Mayor John Sewell, MPP Ross McClelland, ONDP leader Mike Cassidy, as well as the architect and the builder.

Thelma Saunders' husband was the baseball coach for Pat O'Hearn's sons. Pat welcomed them to the co-op and Thelma remembers that the happiest day of her life was when she put the key in her door. "I knew that this was my home for the rest of my life."

This first phase of the co-op included 52 units. Meanwhile, a developer building townhouses at the end of Melita Crescent facing Christie Gardens went bankrupt and the Fred Dowling members voted to purchase the development as Phase 2 with a separate operating agreement in 1982. This added 20 more units to the co-op.

Nearby, Arauco Co-op's opening took place in July, 1981, followed later by Lotus Co-op and Constance Hamilton Co-op. The community also includes two Toronto Community Housing low-rise buildings and townhouses, private townhouses, and Christie Gardens Apartments and Care, which were all developed in the early 1980s.

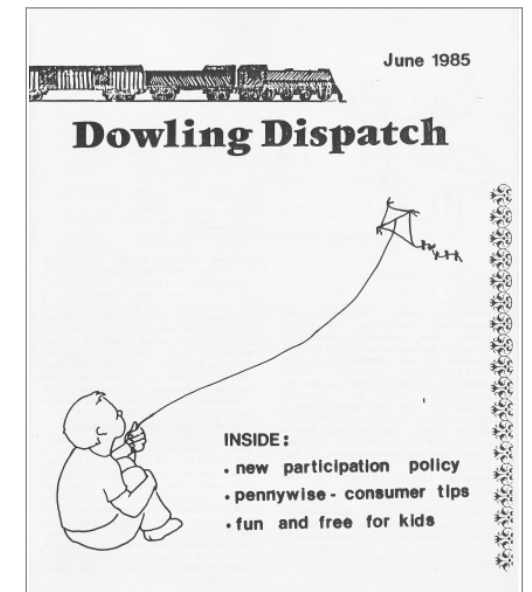
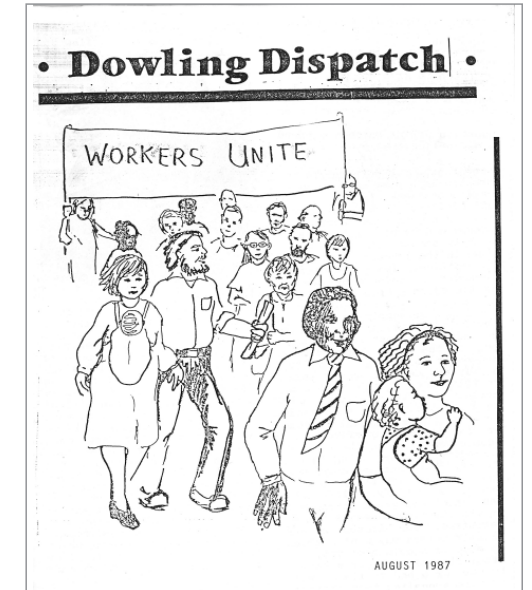
The co-op newsletter became known as the *Dowling Dispatch* and a folder of all the issues is kept in the office. They contain a wealth of information such as:

- stoop and scoop was a big problem for many years until the City started enforcing the by-law
- for several years there was a newsletter just for the kids
- there was a fire in 1982 while Lotus Co-op was being built and 12 units were lost. Our



LORETTA CRYMBLE AND GORD COCHRANE

- members hosed down the roofs of our newly acquired Phase 2 to avoid its spread
- 1983 was the start of Saturday afternoon jam sessions called *Pick'in & Grin'in* initiated by Doug Oyler and Larry Saunders
- Loretta Crymble was one of 3 workers interviewed by kids for a children's book about people who work in the city, which included photos of her family in their co-op unit.
- on a hot night in August 1983, at 2 a.m., a co-op member called the police when an unclothed male with a Mohawk haircut started to climb from the roof onto her balcony
- early newsletters included a *Meet Your Neighbour* feature which profiled members. In their profile, Suzanne Charron and Jay Drydyk enthused about enjoying "landlord-less living"





1988 GARAGE SALE



1991 CO-OP ANNIVERSARY

The co-op was a hive of social activity. There were *Spring Thaws*, *Easter Parties* (for the kids) *Junk Days*, *Fred's Birthday* (co-op anniversary) usually celebrated around July 1st with a picnic in the Frankel Lambert Park), *Thanksgiving Feasts*, *Hallowe'en Parties* (for the kids) and a big Christmas Party for all.

There were even dance contests at some of the parties, and Carole Lawrence and Peter Churchard have fond memories of being winners.

Myrna Downey remembers how much she enjoyed shopping for the children's Christmas presents at Samko with Althea Jeremie and then wrapping them all for the party. There was always a Santa Claus, and one year when Kulwant Kaur's father was visiting from India he enjoyed playing Santa - and he didn't need a fake white beard.

Dave Chilton remembers Spring and Fall Clean-up Days when often 2/3 of the members

participated. There were, of course, rumours that circulated, and one that Dave remembers was that co-op money was being siphoned off and sent to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. That was a doozy!

There was a fire in the 1980's at New Canadian Lumber and once again members hosed down the roofs, this time in Phase 1 on Melita Crescent.

Originally, there were rotating fans on the chimneys and Jules Gagne remembers that when there was a high wind, they made a noise like "the wailing of banshees". Eventually they were removed and replaced with the caps we still have today.

Of all the memories of the co-op's early years, those most often mentioned are the feeling of co-operativism, the development of deep friendships, and the tremendous love and support shown to each other in good times and bad times.

To this day, Simon Golgerth helps Rupinder dry his turban in the park. Josh Goldhar says,

"As all the million dollar condos go up along Dupont, it's good we showed that this co-op thrives, approaching its fiftieth year, with residents of unostentatious means enjoying a happy enclave."

When asked if co-op life had lived up to his expectations, Peter Churchard said,

"Expectations and needs change as you go through life and there's always periods where you feel that things could have gone better than they did. But issues, in the main, have usually been worked out over time, compromises sought in good faith and carried out in reasonable ways. The co-op has provided many people with a decent place to live unencumbered by the profit motive and I strongly believe in co-op housing as the best alternative to private rental and housing markets. Unfortunately, there are tremendous political and economic headwinds opposing the expansion of this vision. The co-op movement has matured over time. I hope that its voice can also grow loud and persuasive enough so that people in positions of power will listen and take action to meet the scale of the concerns we now face."





1990 CHRISTMAS PARTY



1992 BABY-SITTING COURSE



1992 JOSH, VIRTUE, MYRNA, JENNIFER



2000 CO-OP 20TH ANNIVERSARY



CONNIE AND KAREN



Special Thanks To:

The early residents who provided their memories