

## FORMER MAYOR'S MOUNTAIN ANCESTORS

By Robert Williamson

In December a plan was announced to recognize Bob Morrow, Hamilton's longest serving mayor (1982-2000). The proposed tribute would be naming the City Hall forecourt in his honour. I thought, "What a great subject for Mountain Memories"! I recalled that Morrow could trace his Mountain ancestry to his great great-grandfather, John William Kerr. Little did I realize that this background story would become part of our former mayor's obituary as we mourn his sudden passing.

Bob Morrow's Mountain heritage began when John William Kerr arrived in Hamilton from Ireland in 1850. He eventually found work with the Great Western Railway. Then in 1854 he received a crown grant of 100 acres on the Mountain brow between today's Upper Gage and Upper Ottawa. In 1855 he built a beautiful regency style cottage and became a productive mixed farmer (livestock/fruit).



*Kerr Cottage still stands today where Concession Street becomes Mountain Brow Blvd. at the eastern end of Mountain Drive Park. The distinguishing feature of the cottage is its big wall-mounted brackets supporting the large flared eaves.*  
R. Williamson photo

When I visited the site last month, I discovered that the city's Tourism and Culture Division had installed a heritage plaque (Nov. 2017) recognizing John Kerr's appointment as the first Fisheries Overseer of Upper Canada in 1864.

The plaque marks the site where in 1860 John Kerr built the first east mountain access road with the help of three labourers. It ran from his farm lane down the escarpment, past the Hamilton Water Works reservoir to Ottawa Street. Despite its Kerr heritage, this mountain neighbourhood is called Sunninghill, a developer's promotional choice.



*Kerr's mountain access road pre-dates Confederation and still shows up well after a snow fall has outlined the long gap in the trees beside Mountain Brow Blvd.*

R. Williamson photo

It may not be the forecourt at city hall, but this recognition of Bob Morrow's Mountain background and ancestral plaque will serve as our tribute to one of Hamilton's favourite sons.



*A new plaque in Mountain Drive Park looking west to Upper Gage along Concession Street.* R. Williamson photo

This Mountain Memories column appears monthly for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society. See their Website: [Hamiltonheritage.ca](http://Hamiltonheritage.ca) or call (905) 575-9326

Next meeting @ 7:30, Thursday Mar. 15, 2018.

**The South Gate Presbyterian Church,**

120 Clarendon Ave. Plenty of free parking.

**Speaker: Robert Williamson, HMHS Executive**

**Subject: Making Mountain Medical History**

**Memorable**