

58 Mtn. Memories for June (Gilkison Park)

THE GILKSON NEIGHBOURHOOD ANOMALY

by **Robert Williamson**

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Mountain Heritage Society research by member, Dave Lindeman, turned up an old Spectator newspaper clipping that initiated the writing of this fascinating mountain neighbourhood story.

**Stock Car Track
Meets Opposition
From Warrender**

**Says Area Concerned
May Soon Be City**

Controller William K. Warrender today voiced his opposition to the stock car racing track now being built in Barton Township, between the Lime Ridge and Stone Church Roads west of Garth Street.

Apart from his personal feelings in the matter, the controller said he was against the project because it would hamper the urban development of the area. He pointed out that the area could soon be within the city limits.

Take All Township?

Controller Warrender explained that the Ontario Municipal Board would be meeting September 5 to consider the city's application to annex the part of Barton Township north of the Mohawk Road. Because of the unsettled condition in Barton he stated, there was a possibility the board might order the city to take over the entire township.

In his opinion, stock car racing would not only discourage prospective home-builders in the area, but would lessen the property value of existing homes.

"Besides that," he said, "it will be a source of constant annoyance to the people already living in the area."

A. W. Broughton, township clerk, said this morning that some residents had already inquired about the track at his office, and all of them so far were opposed.

Today the hub of the neighbourhood is a large playground-sports complex adjoining a community centre and R.A. Riddell Elementary School. It is called GILKSON PARK, and therein lays an anomaly. The City Planning Department assigned each neighbourhood a name to help identify a locale and personalize it for local residents. Names were chosen from a list of people associated with the founding and early growth of Hamilton or Upper Canada. I could find no qualifying reference for the name Gilkson in local history records. However, the name **Jasper T. Gilkinson** with an "i" does exist in

the **Dictionary of Hamilton Biography, Vol. 1**. Also, Historian, Marjorie Freeman Campbell, author of "A Mountain and a City" ranks Jasper T. Gilkinson in the same league of city builders as Allan MacNab and Isaac Buchanan.



Jasper Tough Gilkinson came to Hamilton in 1831 to work for Colin Ferrie. Gilkinson served in the militia during the 1837 Rebellion, eventually achieving the rank of Colonel. While Ferrie became Hamilton's first Mayor in 1846, Gilkinson worked his way up to become Crown Land Agent for the Gore District by 1848. Gilkinson was a stockholder in MacNab's London and Gore Railway and became the first Secretary of the newly built Great Western Railway 1853-62. He was also active in municipal politics, elected as alderman for four terms and in 1856 was put in charge of purchasing land at MacNab and Merrick Streets to build our city market. He played an active role in having the Crystal Palace (the Copps coliseum of its day) built where Victoria Park is today to host the 15th Provincial Exposition for 1860. In 1862 he was appointed superintendent of the Six Nations Reserve, a post he held for 25 years. It appears that by 1875 J.T. Gilkinson had a longstanding footprint in the north end of the city. He owned the Gilkison Survey in Ward 7 on the north side of Barton Street and a large chunk of the bay shore, the future home of International Harvester. He supported the placement of Queen Victoria's statue in Gore Park. He died in Brantford in 1906.

The spelling variations of Gilkinson's name, based on its Scottish origin are confusing. However, consultation with Jeremy Parsons, Hamilton's Planning & Economic Development and Christopher Redford, Coordinator, Heritage Presentation, Tourism & Culture Department helped to confirm this story information.