

A Community Rooted in Kinship and Culture

The Bill and Helen Norrie Library stands in the heart of the former Métis community of Rooster Town.

The panels before you reflect the true history of the vibrant neighbourhood—supportive neighbours, close-knit extended families, the train tracks that bordered the community, and homes that can still be seen in the area today.



Hazelnut Bushes

Though now more commonly known as Rooster Town, community residents called it Pakan Town. This referred to *bagaan*, an Anishinaabe word for the hazelnut bushes plentiful in the area.

Houses

Largely self-built, the houses in the community ranged from single-room dwellings to larger, multi-room homes. Many were renovated and added onto over the years. A few still stand in the area, inhabited by families of today.

Train Tracks

The sounds of train horns and the vibrations of passing train cars were constant. The community was first bordered by train tracks to the south along what became Grant Avenue. As the city expanded, Rooster Town was pushed further south, to the tracks near today's Taylor Avenue.

Community

In Métis communities, great emphasis is placed on relationships, friendships, culture, and kinship. Women and children are the foundation and heart of the community, with women being passionate advocates for their families.

Water Cart

The community only had one pump to serve many families. Water was collected, often by children or delivered on a water cart, and was shared freely with neighbours, friends, and family. In the 1950s, Rooster Town resident Frank Sais used this cart to deliver water to houses in the Ash and Oak Street cluster.

Kettle

Kettles were an important part of a Métis kitchen. With the community's emphasis on kinship and relationships, visiting was an important pastime. The kettle was always on the stove and ready to make tea for those who might drop in. Knocks on the door were often met with, "Come in, there's room!"

Rooster Town History

In the late 1800s, after being pushed out of their Red River homes, six Métis families settled on land in what is now the Grant Park area. By 1911, the community had grown to 42 families and was known as Rooster Town. In 1951, the City began encouraging suburban development in the area. To remove Rooster Town families, the City and media reported false stories rooted in racist stereotypes that were harmful and humiliating to the community. In 1960, the last few houses were bulldozed and the community was destroyed.