

# Scotsdale Farm: A Hidden Treasure

By Gloria Hildebrandt  
OLDER PHOTOS COURTESY  
EMERSON CLARKE  
CONTEMPORARY PHOTOS  
BY MIKE DAVIS

## Scotsdale as Film Set

Scotsdale Farm has been used as a film set for various projects over the years. Cosmetic changes were made to some of the outbuildings for filming, and remain visible today. Here are some of the projects that have used Scotsdale as a location:

*The Recruit* starring Al Pacino & Colin Farrell, 2003

*The Long Kiss Goodnight* starring Geena Davis & Samuel L. Jackson, 1996

*Psi Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal* with Dan Aykroyd, 1996

*The Campbells* TV series, 1986

Scotsdale Farm is one of the hidden treasures along the Niagara Escarpment. Its 531 acres of rolling farmland, forests, swamps and Escarpment outcroppings are freely open for the public to enjoy.

Long driveways and parts of the Bruce Trail, the wonderful footpath that travels the length of the Escarpment, invite hikers, dog walkers, horse riders, birders and amateur botanists.

The well-used door to the tack room of Scotsdale's stables.



The main Bruce Trail runs through some of the southern portion of Scotsdale Farm, and there are a few Blue Side Trails that offer access to an interesting variety of terrain.



Worth its weight: this Shorthorn, named Scotsdale Bullion, was sold for \$8,000.



The Scotsdale barn complex in perfect repair in 1962, photographed from the east. Note the open verandah.

Scotsdale is located on the north edge of the Escarpment about eight km north of Georgetown on Trafalgar Rd. The main entrance to Scotsdale is roughly halfway between the hamlets of Silvercreek and Ballinafad.

South of the rolling farm fields is the original cinder driveway, now part of the Bennett Heritage Trail, a side trail off the main Bruce Trail. The driveway used to join Trafalgar Rd. until the steep hill was flattened during recent road changes.

Both driveways lead to the farmstead where a modest house sits within a low stonewall garden. On the north side are two small cabins, one a former guest house and the second, a former car garage. Underground heating pipes used to warm the guest house in chilly seasons, although it would be closed off each winter.

Further to the north is a separate, two-storey farmhouse where Emerson Clarke, who was farm manager of Scotsdale for decades, lived with his family.

Two big gable-roofed barn, of the style called early Central Ontario, are situated just east of the main house. Don't be fooled by the big front porch that was added for a film shoot. The space that this takes up used to be the farm's machinery shed.

The barns were very much working buildings in their prime. No expense seems to have been spared in their construction. The barn close to the house was built for six or seven Arabian horses which were mainly used for riding, although some were bred and sold. Finely constructed horse stalls, now with paint peeling off the iron bars, were the work of Beattie of Fergus, a company that had a reputation for excellent craftsmanship.

The barn further from the house was dedicated to Shorthorn cattle, the Bennetts' specialty. The two barns are connected by a covered walk-



Stewart in October 1972.

way that used to be open to the air, but has been permanently enclosed by a film production company. It could be argued that the barns were built to a more lavish standard than the farmhouse, which is very modest given its owners.

### The Bennetts

Stewart and Violet Bennett created Scotsdale Farm beginning in 1938 when they bought a 200-acre farm. Millionaires when a million really meant something, they gradually acquired neighbouring farms and land until they had 540 beautiful, varied acres skirting the edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

This was not their only residence, however. They maintained a penthouse apartment on Prince Arthur Ave. in Toronto, although they rarely stayed there.

In 1944 Bennett became president of Ac-ton's Beardmore & Co. In 1946, he was hired by

Canada Packers Inc. as vice president, a position he held until his retirement in 1965. In 1953 Bennett was appointed president of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

The Bennetts worked their farm for breeding livestock. Their Arabian horses were descended from Sussex, England, and in particular, Lady Wentworth's Crabbet Stud.

### Internationally Famous Shorthorns

Their Shorthorn cattle originally came from Scotland, and over the years, won prizes in international competitions. In 1970 they made history by shipping the first Canadian-born Shorthorn bulls to Scotland, their country of origin, as breeding stock.

Clarke, who accompanied the young bulls on the airplane to Scotland, explains "the Scottish Shorthorns didn't die out entirely, they wanted new blood. It was time. Our Shorthorns had

### A Trail Runs Through It





Violet and Stewart in front of the Scotsdale house in 1967.



The pond was home to a family of swans for many years.



Violet and Stewart Bennett in 1970 with the two young bulls that were sent to Scotland.

some Canadian genetics, which is what they wanted. They went to a woman near Perth who wanted to bring some into her herd.”

Clarke remembers that the bulls were enclosed in dark crates but that they showed no stress or anxiety during or after the flight to Scotland.

## Ontario Heritage

In 1982, by which time Violet and Stewart Bennett had both died without children or relatives interested in taking over the farm, the property was given to the Ontario Heritage Foundation, now called the Ontario Heritage Trust. Since then, it has been open at no charge for the public to enjoy. A parking lot has been created on the west side of the main farmhouse and some interpretive signs have been added to the property. ■

## Emmerson Springs

Scotsdale Farm holds treasures from as long as 500 years ago. In 1984, archaeologist William Fox discovered several middens, or refuse dumps, that were part of an Iroquoian village from the 1500s. Without doing more than clearing away branches and leaves from a likely spot, Fox discovered several important artifacts, including stone tool fragments, a bone splinter awl, a bone bead fragment and a worked antler fragment.

These remains were found at the village site in a field overlooking Owl Creek in the eastern portion of the farm, but Fox also found some artifacts in other parts of Scotsdale, suggesting widespread Native hunting, butchering and gathering activities. Fox named the village site Emmerson Springs after Emerson Clarke, although he provided a misspelling.

In 1994, the Ontario Heritage Foundation had another archaeological assessment done. Further studies were done by university students in 2002 and 2003. Finds include a clay pipe with a face carved onto the bowl, and evidence of a hearth inside a longhouse.

Laurentian University students learn excavation techniques at an archaeological field school at Scotsdale Farm in 2003. Photo courtesy of Laurentian University.



Maureen Smith Side Trail, with one end close to the 8th Line, was named in honour of Maureen Smith of Georgetown, left, who has worked tirelessly to promote the Halton Hills chapter of the Toronto Bruce Trail Club.