



# Twentieth-Century Todmorden: A Community in the Don Valley

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Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and  
Arts Centre  
Toronto, Ontario



By the middle of the nineteenth century, the community of Todmorden Mills, located on the Don River, provided lumber, flour, paper, bricks and beer for the growing city of Toronto. While Todmorden's nineteenth-century history has been well documented, its twentieth-century stories have received less attention. Few people realize that Todmorden remained a vibrant community well into the twentieth century. At that time, much of the Don Valley surrounding Todmorden was still a wilderness. Hundreds of Torontonians enjoyed the Valley year-round for its swimming holes and densely wooded forests. In the winter, the Don River froze creating a natural skating rink, just minutes away from downtown Toronto. The Valley inspired painters, writers and members of early conservation movements. Industrial activity continued in the Valley until Hurricane Hazel struck in October 1954. In the aftermath of the flood, the Ontario government restricted future development on floodplains. The landscape of the Don Valley was further altered by the construction of the Don Valley Parkway and the Bayview Extension. Hills were leveled and the Don River was re-channeled. Many of the Valley's natural and man-made landmarks disappeared. What endured are the stories of the people who lived, worked and played in the Valley. This virtual exhibit captures some of their recollections. Twentieth Century Todmorden: A Community in the Don

**Valley is not a comprehensive record but reflects the voices of long-time residents as well as documents and photographs collected by the Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Arts Centre, now operated by the City of Toronto.**