

VICTORY SOYA MILLS

In 1943, industrialist E. P. Taylor was looking for a site on which to build a new soybean processing plant to alleviate the wartime shortage of fats and oils caused by food and petroleum rationing. He had been named president of Victory Mills Ltd., a new company created from the Sunsoy Products branch of Canadian Breweries Ltd. Victory Mills soon leased a site at the southeast corner of Fleet and Parliament streets, ideally placed to receive and send shipments by rail, truck or boat. The plant built there was designed to extract and process soybean, linseed, and other vegetable oils to create products for human and animal consumption, as well as other products that would be processed further by other industries to make such goods as glue, paint, printing ink, and soap.

Despite wartime and post-war shortages of materials, construction of the new plant began almost immediately on the land, owned by the Board of Toronto Harbour Commissioners. Concrete silos were built first so that stockpiled soybeans could be available for processing as soon as the screw-press and solvent-extraction processes were ready to go into production. These silos have presided over the eastern edge of Toronto's harbour ever since.

The plant officially opened on 27 March 1946, and in 1947, Victory Mills purchased the site, as well as an adjoining parcel, from the THC. Over the years, the plant changed ownership twice: in 1954, Victory Mills was sold to Procter and Gamble Co. and renamed Victory Soya Mills, and in 1980 the company was resold to Central Soya Inc. of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The importance of this processing plant should not be underestimated: the fact that it had been built, combined with a concerted campaign to encourage farmers to grow soybeans, precipitated immediate growth in the soybean market. In 1940, Canada produced 6,000 tonnes (220,000 bushels) of soybeans; by 1953, that figure had risen to 120,000 tonnes (4.4 million bushels). Demand for soy products changed little during the 1950s and '60s, then surged again during the 1970s, when people became aware that the consumption of vegetable fats was healthier than that of animal fats. In 1990, 25,000 soybean growers in Ontario produced 1.3 million tonnes (47 million bushels) of soybeans.

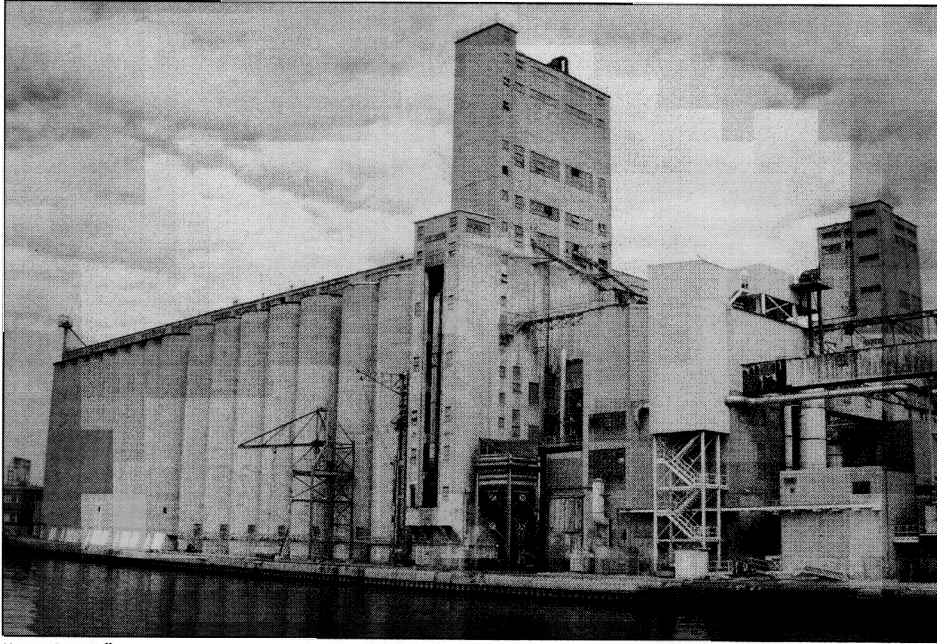
At the time it was closed in March 1991, Victory Soya Mills Ltd. was handling 400,000 to 540,000 tonnes (15 to 20 million bushels) of soybeans annually. The largest of three crushers in Canada, it processed soybeans into oil for margarine, cooking oil, and protein supplements for livestock feed.

Central Soya Inc. ceased plant operations, citing poor profits because of the Canada-United States free-trade agreement, government subsidies to a competing product (canola seed), and high municipal taxes.

Other conditions had also changed since E. P. Taylor carefully chose the plant's location: proximity to railroad and waterborne facilities is no longer advantageous in an era when road transportation dominates the movement of goods. Moreover, the Toronto waterfront was so developed that the plant was plagued with traffic problems.

To date, the site has not been sold. It is not hard to imagine what will happen when it is: now on the edge of the city core, the site will be redeveloped. The question is whether a way can be found to build for the future without razing our industrial past.

Sources: Stinson, J. and M. Moir. 1991. Built heritage of the East Bayfront. Environmental audit of the East Bayfront/ Port Industrial Area phase II, technical paper no. 7. Toronto: Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront. Draft.



Victory Soya Mills

East of Leslie Street is the Main Sewage Treatment Plant, a major employer in the area, and currently the subject of upgrading and expansion plans. The remainder of the Lower Don Lands — the lakefill parklands known as Woodbine Park and Ashbridge's Bay Park — are separated from the rest by Coatsworth Cut and the sewage treatment plant and are also disconnected from the residential neighbourhoods to the north. However, these parks, which include a marina as well as attractive landscaped areas in which to play, relax or picnic, are well linked to

the Beach farther east by a boardwalk and greenspace.

Most of the Lower Don Lands are in limbo, with many former activities gone or in decline, and many recent studies and plans, in varying stages of completion, directed towards revitalizing this strategically placed area of the City.

In September 1991, in keeping with its plans to develop housing in Ataritari, the City released its assessment of the environmental conditions in the area, along with a Part II Official Plan Proposal. The City has also addressed the Lower Don Lands in its

Cityplan '91 process and in the Gardiner Expressway East/Don Valley Sweep Civic Design Study (1990). The City of Toronto's Task Force to Bring Back the Don released its vision for the Lower Don Valley in August 1991.

Metro has made several studies of transportation in the Lower Don Lands (among them the Waterfront Transit Light Rail Extensions Feasibility Study (1990), and the Long Range Rapid Transit Network Study, which is a background study for Metro's new Official Plan); in addition, there is the *Revised Report on Metropolitan Interests in the Port Area*, development of a new Metropolitan Waterfront Plan, proposals to convert the Commissioners Street incinerator to an expanded recycling and transfer station, and Metro's environmental assessment for the Main Sewage Treatment Plant, in conjunction with a comprehensive report on the metropolitan sewage system.

The private sector is also active in planning for parts of the Lower Don Lands. For example, studies and proposals have been made for the Gooderham and Worts site, adjacent to Ataratiri; LeslieGate at the northeast corner of Lake Shore Boulevard and Leslie Street; expansion of the Lever Brothers property at the foot of the Don Valley Parkway; and several large sections of the Port Industrial Area, including St. Lawrence Park in its northwest corner, and Castlepoint at Polson Quay.

The THC prepared its Port Industrial Area Concept Plan in 1988 to foster economic development of this area, improve public access, and ensure the Port's future. A joint study of the economic impact of the Port of Toronto on the City of Toronto and surrounding jurisdictions was recently

conducted by the Province, Metro, the City of Toronto, and the THC.

The roles of the THC and the Port of Toronto have also been studied extensively by the Royal Commission. Early in its mandate, the Commission realized it was time to formulate a new vision of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area. Because of concerns about pollution in the area, in its first interim report, the Commission recommended that an environmental audit be carried out on the lands. To protect the integrity of the Commission's study, on 17 October 1989 the Government of Ontario designated the area as one of Provincial Interest under the Planning Act. The process used to undertake the environmental audit was the Commission's first attempt to put the ecosystem approach into practice; the result was a persuasive example of how effectively this approach can be applied to research, analysis, and interpretation of information.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT PROCESS

The environmental audit of the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area was conducted from November 1989 to December 1991. Its purpose was to develop the best possible description and understanding of the environmental conditions in the East Bayfront/Port Industrial Area (within the inevitable limits of time and budget). It should be emphasized that this environmental audit was done before any decisions were made about future land uses — itself a radical departure from the norm.

Most land-use planning starts with a piece of land. In time, a developer comes along with an idea for a project — a condominium, an office tower, a mall — to put on