

“The Friendly Corner”

Ray Townley’s Tobacco Store, Queen Street East and Waverley Road, 1941-1952

by Clyde Robinson, Vice-President, Beach and East Toronto Historical Society

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Ray Townley at his store, Queen Street East, southwest corner of Waverley Road, about 1950

In November 2018, a member of the Townley family emailed me an electronic copy of the September 1943 issue of *The Canadian Cigar and Tobacco Journal*, suggesting that the trade magazine contained an article that might be of interest to The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society, of which I am a director.



Masthead of *The Canadian Cigar and Tobacco Journal*, v. 49, no. 9, September 1943

The 2 ½-page piece, “[Toronto “Vet” Builds Successful Retail Business with \\$68 Capital](#)” certainly was of interest! It told the courageous story of Ray Townley, a veteran of the First World War, who started a tobacco store in 1941 on the southwest corner of Queen Street East and Waverley Road, which became known as “The Friendly Corner.”



Further research by Barbara Myrvold revealed that David Raymond Townley was born in Toronto on November 11, 1893, and was the second youngest of eight children of William Townley and Martha Smith. When he was 13, his father was killed in a train accident. Shortly thereafter his mother purchased the south half of a double house at 40 Elmer Avenue in the Beach where family members lived for the next 30 years.

40 Elmer Avenue, c.2013

By 1911, Ray was an office clerk living at 40 Elmer with his mother and two of his sisters. On September 24, 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war, Ray enlisted. He was seriously wounded at Passchendaele in October 1917 and was unconscious for several months; his injuries would require years of treatment. He returned home in April 1918.



Ray in uniform, 1914

After 32 months of active fighting with the Canadian Artillery in France, Roy **Townley**, of 40 Elmer avenue, nephew of Fire Chief Smith and ex-District Chief Frank Smith, was welcomed home by his family. It was a wild scene as the husky young gunner shot into view of his family, uncles and aunts. Gunner **Townley** has been away since the first call back in August, 1914. He is one of the originals who went away with the famous 9th Toronto Battery three years and nine months ago and who has served with this famous unit 32 long months in France, fighting everywhere from Neuve Chapelle to the Somme and back to Vimy, and Passchendaele. It was at Passchendaele last August that Gunner **Townley** was wounded for the first time, and this battle will be forever in his memory. He was in a dugout with three other comrades when a shell burst in, killing his three pals outright. Townley was wounded in the head and chest and suffered a severe concussion.

Toronto Star, April 12, 1918: 5.

Ray was married on June 1, 1918 to Janet (Nettie) Harris Harvey, whose sister lived with her family next door at 42 Elmer Avenue. The couple had five sons: Robert, John, Gordon, Harvey and William. The eldest four served in the Second World War, and are pictured in uniform in the magazine article.



Ray and Janet in 1918.



Bob, Gord, Jack, Harvey, Bill Townley, 1930

For a time, Ray and his family lived behind the store at 96 ½ Waverley Road, and continued to be there in 1953 after Ray had retired. He died of a heart attack on August 12, 1953 at age 59.

His old business is now a convenience store.



Queen and Waverley, southwest corner, 2019?
Google image

Thank you to the Townley family for sharing this valuable piece of Beach history. Images of Ray and his family were posted by Catherine Townley on Ancestry.ca

40 and 42 Elmer Avenue
Postscript by Uwe Sehmrau, President of The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society



40 and 42 Elmer Avenue, April 29, 2020
Photo by Clyde Robinson

In April 2018, the owners of 40 and 42 Elmer Avenue submitted joint applications for 'consent' to sever and create three residential lots from the original two lots; in addition, applications were submitted to permit one detached and two semi-detached three-storey residential homes.

In October of the same year, the Committee of Adjustment refused the variance applications needed to by-pass existing zoning by-laws, citing excessive massing for the proposed three lots.

This ruling was appealed by the owners to the Toronto Local Appeal Body. On September 30, 2019, a Decision and Order made by the Appeal Body allowed the creation of the three lots, but concluded that the proposed additional massing of the residential space was out of character with the physical attributes of the neighbourhood, and prescribed modifications to the plans to eliminate any 3rd floor space, as well as other changes.

At time of posting, the applicants had not acted on proceeding with the modified plans.