

**A WALK ALONG ALVIN AVENUE  
OR  
THE STRANGE TALE OF THE PRINCE AND FORT ALVIN**

After receiving a copy of the Applicant's drawings for the proposed development at 20 Alvin Avenue, I decided to take a walk along the street in order to picture what it would be like if the development were to proceed as proposed.

**Part 1 Alvin East**

Starting at the corner of Alvin, I proceeded south along the east side of the street. First into view was the nice brick and stucco house at the corner of Alvin and Heath, called Attaché, destined to become an orphan once the development wraps around it and smothers it. Looking down the east side of the street is the wonderful vista of well-proportioned houses built with pitched roofs and complimentary fronts. Various builders were careful to preserve the style of the street. Recent alterations to permit professional offices have respected what was already there. It is a visual gem of which the city can be proud. The one standout is the green and white Montessori schoolhouse for small children; it adds a whimsical note to the scene and is not offensive but should not be duplicated. The building at the south end, just north of the Library, was recently enlarged and renovated. It is a good example of respect for what was already on the street.

Here I crossed the street in front of the Weston Tower. This was quite easy for the traffic was gridlocked, as is so often the case. Little needs to be said about the Tower. It has been a landmark for our Neighbourhood for 30 years and a great building.

**Part 2 Alvin West**

Turning north on the west side of the street, I now had to rely on the images formed from the Applicant's drawings.

First there is the truck delivery driveway into the project. Not nice but understandable and inevitable.

Looking further up the street, I could see a long monotonous, continuous, flat facade of two stone clad structures with flat roofs and dominant parapets, thumbing their noses at Attaché and the smaller buildings across the street. I could see a resemblance to no building other than a fort. Between the two buildings was a roadway with cars, delivery trucks or moving vans blocking what was once a sidewalk, as they attempted to exit on to Alvin.

At this point I must have fallen into a trance and started to dream of the tale of Prince Witt and his fort, Fort Alvin.

### Part 3 The Prince and the Fort

Prince Witt was born in 1207. As a well liked subject of King Omb, the King of Ontario, he was granted a King's Warrant to build a castle and protective fort wherever he liked. In those days King's Warrants were not encumbered with such things as Master Plans, Zoning By-laws or any suggestion that consideration needed to be given to the peasants living in the Neighbourhood. Prince Witt was given free reign to do as he liked.

800 years passed before the Prince was ready to move. He decided to build at Alvin and Heath because it was on the edge of Deer Park, a name implying that there must be good hunting about. Besides the nearby subway would provide good transportation to the gaming clubs downtown when the Prince need something faster than his carriages which could become stuck in traffic, just as they used to be stuck in mud in the old days.

In 800 years the Prince's Court had grown to a considerable size and his Planners informed him that he would need two castles plus sundry out dwellings to house everybody. There would be need for one castle of 39-storeys, another of 33-storeys, a third of 14-storeys and lodges for the lesser nobles. The horseless carriages would go underground. There would be a narrow moat with a wrought iron fence beyond the lodges and trees planted in the public sidewalk to hide everything and to obstruct the sidewalk used by the peasants.

The local peasants who lived in the Park, whose life would be negatively affected by the monstrous development, did not of course matter. But they could become restless and so the King's Planners and Architect came up with the bright idea of building the lodges into fortified exterior walls for what was to become Fort Alvin. It would save money and those flat roofs would be excellent locations at which to station archers to intimidate the peasants and keep them at bay. So the great plan for the project was born.

The peasants did become restless. William who lived across the street on Alvin began to search for a way to let the Prince know how he and his neighbours felt about the Castles and Fort. Having a trusty steed, he decided that he could ride quickly in and out of the castle square. He would, in the manner of the times, snatch one of the Ladies-in Waiting, who were always hanging about, and hold her as a hostage. The Prince would have to negotiate.

William did not count on the foresight of the King's Architect. What had appeared to him as a mere grill across the roadway covering the air intake to the stables below, was really a cleverly disguised drawbridge. One of

the brighter young knights, up on the 39-storey, saw William charging and quickly pulled on the stout rope that had been attached to the front of the grillwork and instantly the drawbridge was up. William and his steed smashed into the metal and fell to the ground.

Mark and Bruce lived to the north of the Fort. They had decided to launch a diversionary raid in support of William. The plan was to enter the complex through the carriage entrances on Heath and capture a second hostage. Even if seen, they felt they could get in and out before the gatekeeper could muster enough men to man the capstan that lowered the portcullis. But the Architect had thought of everything. There was no capstan. The gatekeeper had a remote control and closed the portcullis in an instance. They were still outside.

In the meantime, Prince Witt witnessing the commotion came to the drawbridge with the intention of running his sword through William who still lay on the ground. He offered William one dying wish, if it were reasonable. William, feeling that he was as good as dead anyway, asked the Prince to take a look at the beautiful streetscape across the street because it meant so much to him and all he had wanted to do was to show the Prince that the Fort now dominated everything and had brought nothing of artistic merit or any increase to the quality of life of the Neighbourhood.

For the first time since coming to the Neighbourhood, the Prince really saw what William and his fellow peasants felt for their Neighbourhood. Prince Witt had had an Epiphany. He listened sympathetically as William explained all the things that the Neighbours found wrong with the Castles and the Fort. The Prince agreed. He would make changes and still have his Palace but would have gained the respect of the Neighbourhood. He would be a modern rather than a medieval Prince.

The Prince immediately summoned his Planners, Architect and Traffic Consultants. He commanded them to make all changes necessary to make the Fort compliment the buildings across the street and to reduce the heights of the towers to a scale compatible with the homes in the Neighbourhood. He immediately felt better than he had in years. The lesser knights, who lived in the lodges and had grown to envy the peasants living in the nice houses across the street, fully agreed. Besides they had become tired of all those archers trampling about on their flat roofs. To placate his Planners and Architect, the Prince ordered them to build a fine office for themselves, in the form of those across the street of course. It was to be built where the hidden drawn bridge stood. Carriages would henceforth enter from Yonge Street. The Prince ordered Alvin widened to alleviate the gridlock.

When all was done, the delighted Prince invited everyone to a party to celebrate his new happy relationship with the peasants in the Park. It was held at Attaché, the nice house at the corner of Alvin and Heath that had become a restaurant. It was run by Prince Witt's brother, Prince Lawlob, who was renowned throughout the country for his knowledge of foods and drinks. The food was the very best and the wine vintage. A very merry time was had by all.

The Neighbours agreed that, from that day forth, Fort Alvin would be no more. The Prince's home would now be known simply as the Palace. They would also show the Prince the best places to hunt deer in the Park. William, Mark and Bruce said: "Three cheers for the Princes" and everyone else said: "Hip, Hip, Hurrah".

And then I awoke from my trance!

I was lying on the ground with a bloody nose for I had walked into one of the trees that the Architect had had planted in the middle of the public sidewalk.

At present, there is no good Prince Witt. The struggle must go on at the 30 Alvin Working Group and elsewhere. But would it not be really nice if, at the end of the our final meeting, the Group was able to say unanimously: "Three Cheers for the Applicant"?

*Anonymous.*