

Albert William AUSTIN was born on March 27, 1857 in Toronto. He was the son of James AUSTIN the founder of the Dominion Bank in Toronto. Albert was educated at Upper Canada College. He became a junior clerk in the Dominion Bank in 1874. In 1880 his father gave Albert funds to invest in mortgages when the young man went to Winnipeg in 1880 to make his fortune.

In 1881 Albert founded the Winnipeg Street Railway Company, opening the line with horse-drawn cars in 1882. The cars were operated on runners in the winter. In 1882, with the backing of his father and E. B. OSLER, Albert incorporated the Winnipeg Street Railway Company. In 1891 part of the system was electrified, thus becoming one of the first commercial electric transit systems in North America.

In 1890 the Winnipeg Street Railway Company created Elm Park, a trolley park with picnic grounds and a few rides, next to the Red River. By creating Elm Park the transportation company was able to use the street cars during off-peak times and holidays. The streetcars would stop at the entrance to River Park, also owned by AUSTIN, and Elm Park patrons would then walk to the shore and cross a pontoon bridge, apparently built at AUSTIN's expense, where they paid admission to enter Elm Park.

Albert AUSTIN is commemorated by AUSTIN Street in Winnipeg.

While in Winnipeg Albert and his wife had two sons: James Percival (born March 1885) and Albert Edison (born November 1, 1888).

In 1894 Albert sold the company to rival interests for \$175,000 and Albert and his family returned to Toronto.

On February 27, 1897 Albert's father James died in Toronto. James was 84 years old and had been born in Ireland. James AUSTIN had purchased Spadina House in 1866 from Dr. William Warren BALDWIN. Although the property had become just 80 acres in size, James gave his son, Albert, the house and twenty acres in 1889.

After returning from Winnipeg, Albert and his family moved into Spadina House. He would enlarge the house during numerous restorations and added a third floor in 1912. He would sell most of the land to the city in 1913 for construction of the St. Clair Reservoir. From 1942 until 1982, his daughter Anna Kathleen lived in the house and although it could have been sold off, she donated it to the City of Toronto. Today, the historic Spadina House has been converted into a museum operated by the city and is known as the Spadina Museum. The museum has preserved this beautiful manor as it once looked, although somewhat developed historically.

Albert was an avid golfer and both he and his son Albert Edison were affiliated with the Lambton Golf and Country Club of Toronto, which had been founded by the elder AUSTIN. Albert W. AUSTIN was in his late 40s when he and his son Albert Edison competed for Canada in the 1904 Olympic Games held in St. Louis. The sport of golf was only held twice in the Olympics, 1900 and 1904. There were three Canadian and 72 American golfers competing. The other Canadian was eventual gold medal-winner George LYON. Albert Sr.'s score of 230, was nearly 50 more strokes than was acceptable to qualify, he finished in 73rd place out of the 75 competitors.

On April 3, 1911 George Richard HICKS and his wife Elizabeth sold Albert William AUSTIN their fruit farm of approximately 75 acres in Port Dalhousie. The lands were located in Part of Lot 19, Broken Front and First Concessions and Part of Lot 20, Broken Front and First Concessions Grantham Township. The farm extended along the Lake Ontario shoreline immediately east of “the turning basin” of the Second Welland Canal and bordered the Grand Trunk Railway lands.

Evidence of members of the AUSTIN family living upon these lands can be found in the 1911 Census of Port Dalhousie which shows the following: AUSTIN, James Percival – east of G.T.R., male, single, born March 1885. Also listed in the same household are a housekeeper and a domestic.

The Port Dalhousie Directory also contains entries as follows:

1913 – AUSTIN, A.W. – fruit grower, east of harbour

1914-15 – AUSTIN, A.W. – fruit grower, east harbour

1914-15 – AUSTIN, Jas. P. – farmer, east harbour

1916 – AUSTIN, A.W. – fruit farmer grower – house east harbour

1916 – AUSTIN, Jas. P. – farmer – boards east harbour

1917 – AUSTIN, Jas. P. – soldier – boards east harbour

The 1917 directory entry shows James Percival AUSTIN (1885-1954) as a soldier and during World War One he suffered shell shock. After the war he spent time on the farm, likely as

therapy and Albert would travel from Toronto to visit his son and the farm. Fruit from the farm was shipped to Toronto. According to Albert's obituary, he still owned the farm when he passed away in 1934. In the late 1930's the farm house burnt down and was not rebuilt. The farm I believe was eventually owned by the BOESE family.

In 1919 Albert became vice-president and six years later he would become president of the Dominion Bank which his father had founded in 1871. He was also chair of its board of directors. He also succeeded his father as president of the Consumers' Gas Company.

After suffering from illness for nearly two and a half years, Albert William AUSTIN died on July 5, 1934 at the age of 77 years, at his home at 285 Spadina Road, Toronto. He is buried in St. James's (Anglican) Cemetery, Toronto.

His obituary notes that he was President of the Consumer's Gas Company and of the Canada North-West Land Company and Chairman of the Board of the Dominion Bank, having resigned as President the previous year. He was survived by his son J. Percival who was then living in Barrie; and three daughters: Miss. Adele AUSTIN; Mrs. Stanley Seton THOMPSON; and Miss. Margaret AUSTIN. The obituary goes on to say that "His recreation was fruit farming and his farm in Port Dalhousie is considered one of the finest in the country."