

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

June 2010

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ARTSCAPE TO RESCUE SHAW STREET SCHOOL



The three-storey sandstone and red brick building known as the Shaw Street School has stood empty and inaccessible since it was declared surplus to the needs of the Toronto District School Board in 2001. A victim of the declining enrolment common to many established neighbourhoods, it was also undone by its own magnificent scale, which made it more

difficult to maintain than its squat, low-ceilinged neighbour, the 1957 Givins/Shaw Public School.

But Artscape, a not-for-profit organization that revitalizes buildings and communities through the arts, has come to the old school's rescue. It is to be refurbished and repurposed as the Artscape Shaw Street Centre and will offer space to arts organizations, as well as studio space to artists, both for sale and for rent at below-market levels. This is a much welcomed development in a neighbourhood well known as the hub of Toronto's independent arts scene, but one facing the pressures of creeping gentrification. The former school is located just north of a vibrant strip of Queen Street West that is home to over 50 independent galleries and anchored by two creatively redeveloped hotels, the Gladstone and the Drake. A 15-foot high lobby, with stained glass windows and a wide slate staircase boasting mahogany banisters, will enable the new arts centre to hold its own in such company.

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First Nation Wins Compensation for 1805 Toronto Purchase



Members of The Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation voted overwhelmingly in May to accept a federal offer of \$145 million for "past damages done to their ancestors." The agreement is considered modest compensation, rather than payment, for a vast tract of land – 251,000 acres – encompassing most of the present-day City of Toronto and the GTA. The new agreement awards \$20,000 to every adult band member, with the remainder to be held in trust by the community for its children and its future. The Mississaugas – who currently number 1,788 – are Ojibwe, originally an Algonkian-speaking people, most often called Anishinabe today.

On Tuesday, June 8, 2010, Mayor Miller welcomed councillors of The Mississaugas of the New Credit to meet with his councillors at City Hall in celebration of the federal compensation package. Chief Bryan LaForme acknowledged that the settlement of their land claim, launched in 1986, was a relief. "It is time," LaForme said, "to let the people know that the traditional landholders are home and we are here to stay."

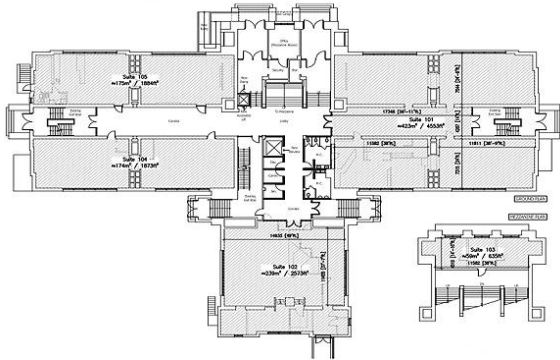
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Shaw Street School, *from page 1*

The history of a school on this site dates back to 1856 when land was purchased (for £350) on the Givins estate for the purpose of establishing an auxiliary school. It was only the third purpose-built school in the city of Toronto and it was intended to meet the needs of those living at the extreme western end of the city. At the time, this would have been almost adjacent to the recently opened Provincial Lunatic Asylum designed by architect John Howard. In 1859, J.W. Mason and W.A. Lee were contracted to build a new two-room schoolhouse – The Western Auxiliary School – in order that boys and girls could be educated separately. Although each classroom could accommodate up to 90 students, the initial enrolment was 110. The girls were taught by Mrs. Jane O’Flaherty at a salary of \$320 per annum, and the boys by Mr. James Anderson, who received \$520 for his pains. In 1860 the name of the school was changed to Givins School in honour of Colonel James Givins, on whose former estate it stood.



Ground Floor Plan



In 1876 a new two-storey brick school was constructed on the site, facing Argyle Street. Aspects of it were later incorporated into the 1914 school that faces Shaw Street and still stands. Originally known as the Shaw Junior School, it was commandeered during the Great War as headquarters and barracks for the 123rd and 208th battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Thus the soon-to-be-reopened building, that was the fourth school on the site, is part of the historical fabric of its neighbourhood and local residents have been, until now, concerned about its future.

They were therefore happy to regain access for the duration of the exhibition *Art School Dismissed*, which ran over the weekend of May 14-16. Prominent Toronto artists, all of whom are also teachers, contributed works which Murray White of *The Toronto Star* aptly described as “ranging from the elegiac to the playfully anti-authoritarian.” The school’s breezy classrooms and wide hallways served as the context for new works in the fields of site-specific installation, sculpture, video and new media, drawing, painting, performance, as well as many hybrid forms that blend and cross boundaries. Interactive installations included one that encouraged visitors to copy lines from a blackboard, another to construct a paper airplane and sail it out the window. Artscape’s hope is that the new centre to be (re)born here will focus on youth, learning and creativity. For proponents of the innovative re-use of heritage buildings, this is – quite simply – a dream come true.

Colonel James Givins was a loyalist who fought for the British in the American Revolution. For his service he was given land, including the 100 acres on which he built his estate, Pine Grove, in 1802. What is now Givins Street was once the lane to his stately home. Aeneas Shaw, another prominent early citizen, was his neighbour to the east. Shaw was also a loyalist and both men would fight again in the War of 1812. Pine Grove was demolished in 1891 but up until then, the story goes, blood-stained planks on the dining-room floor told the tale of British soldiers and their Indian allies, wounded in a pitched battle with American troops, that took place in what is now High Park.





Historic Brantford Demolished

On the evening of June 7, the city of Brantford voted to proceed with the demolition of 41 historic buildings on the south side of Colborne Street, and the dreadful work began the following morning. Almost four blocks of largely pre-confederation commercial buildings are to come down, with no clear plan of what is to replace them. Mayor Mike Hancock some months ago:

“I think the worst mistake we could make is to have a solid plan. Let’s just take it down and look at what we have got.”



Truly heroic efforts by members of the local community and organizations such as the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and the Heritage Canada Foundation failed to save these buildings. Why? Because a majority of the city council, and of the citizenry of Brantford, simply didn’t care, or saw the run-down buildings only as an eyesore. A similar fate befell many north-American cities in the latter part of the 20th century. Suburban sprawl and the growth of commuter culture, followed by the collapse of a major industrial sector (in Brantford this was farm machinery, in the 1980s) led an abandoned downtown core to deteriorate.



Above and top left: The south side of Colborne Street in happier times.

That this demolition is short-sighted is readily apparent to anyone who has read the next chapter in this classic scenario. That heritage is an asset in the new economy is a lesson not lost on dozens of Ontario cities and small towns. The buildings coming down on the south side of Brantford’s Colborne Street are irreplaceable. Their destruction ranks with that of Winnipeg’s former Eaton’s monolith as one of the most regrettable lapses of judgement, on the built heritage front, by a Canadian municipality in this century. Dumb and dumber.

Richard West House in Danger

It has been brought to our attention by a member of the Town of York Historical Society, that the 1875 building at 303 Adelaide Street West is slated for demolition. Commonly known as The Corned Beef House, this red brick structure sits on the southeast corner of Adelaide and Widmer Streets. At the eastern end of the same (otherwise vacant) block sits the Fox and Firkin. Both were built by Richard West, a significant enough personality to have been included in an 1886 publication titled *Chiefly Men of the Time*. The latter building has been designated and is to be preserved by the developers. The former, which in addition to housing the restaurant is home to several individuals including TYHS member Richard Brooks, seems to have been entirely overlooked. Mr. Brooks has started a petition, which can be signed at Toronto’s First Post Office. He has also apprised the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario of the situation and a letter has been dispatched to Councillor Adam Vaughan. Mr. Brooks’ flagging of this threat is to be commended. That he came to the TYHS, who were able to direct him to the ACO, is fortuitous. However, there are many individuals and constituencies faced with similar dilemmas who simply don’t know where to go. To this end, the ACO has launched a “crowdsourcing” website – www.thisplacematters.ca – in order to assist anyone concerned about a heritage building at risk, especially one that is not on any official list, let alone designated.



Design Chosen for New St. Lawrence Farmers' Market



On June 7, Mayor David Miller and Councillor Pam McConnell officially announced Adamson Associates Architects and Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners the winners in the St. Lawrence Market North Building Design Competition. The new building will be a four-storey structure that allows a view of life and activities on Front Street, Jarvis Street and on Market Lane Park from within its glass atrium, effectively recreating an outdoor setting for an indoor market. Shoppers will be able to see the South Market from inside the building and appreciate a dramatic view of St. Lawrence Hall to the north. Also included is an underground garage, three floors above the market space for court rooms, administrative offices for Toronto Court Services, facility amenities that fulfill the Toronto Green Standard, a new green roof, and a geo-thermal system to make the North Market a model for energy efficiency and sustainability.

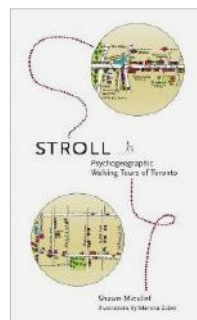
GRAND OPENING

EXCITING NEWS for the Historic Distillery District...

What: New Farmer's Market
 When: May 2nd - September 26, 2010
 Hours: 10-4, Sunday Only

Entertainment and activities available.
 Come out & see the exciting things we have to offer!

New in the Gift Shop

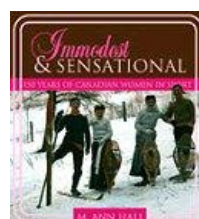


Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto

By Shawn Micallef

Coach House (2010), 302 pages, \$24.95

This wonderful book celebrates Toronto's details, taking us from well known spots to overlooked corners. It features thirty-two walks, a *flâneur* manifesto, a foreword by architecture critic John Bentley Mays, dozens of hand-drawn maps by Marlena Zuber and a full-colour fold-out orientation map of Toronto.

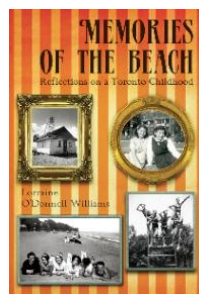


Immodest and Sensational: 150 Years of Canadian Women in Sport

By M. Ann Hall

James Lorimer (2008), 96 pages, \$19.95

Since the latter part of the 19th century, social obstacles have made the sports playing field uneven for women. Illustrated throughout, this book tells the story of pioneering female athletes, and of some of Canada's first women sportswriters who championed them every step of the way.

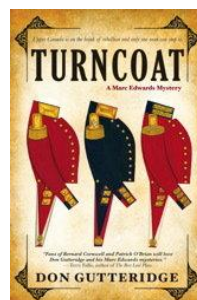


Memories of the Beach – Reflections on a Toronto Childhood

By Lorraine O'Donnell Williams

Dundurn Press (2010), 248 pages, \$26.99

In a combination of history and memoir, this book details life in this Toronto neighbourhood during the 1930s and 1940s, including stories of what was in its time one of North America's most remarkable amusement parks, the elegant dance hall, and how the area escaped becoming a railway corridor.



Turncoat

By Don Gutteridge

Simon and Shuster (July 2010), 352 pages, \$19.95

In this novel, set in 1836, Ensign Marc Edwards of His Majesty's 24th Regiment of Foot is posted to the colonial backwater of Toronto. His first glance doesn't reveal much chance for adventure, but he soon learns that the surrounding countryside is a seething hotbed of radicals, Reformers, Yankees and smugglers.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Trillium Tour of the Harbour



Toronto's much beloved ferryboat, the Trillium, celebrates her centenary this year. Join Heritage Toronto and author Mike Filey, who championed the ferry's restoration, for dinner and a cruise of the harbour in honour of the occasion. As you travel, hear Mr. Filey's stories of the harbour, Toronto Island, and how the ferry was rescued from a watery grave. The harbour will be especially scenic as the Tall Ships will be in port for the Redpath Toronto Waterfront Festival. Since the Trillium is only used for special charters and not in regular Toronto-Island ferry service, this is a rare opportunity to enjoy a cruise on this historic vessel.

Friday, July 2, boarding at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$65, or \$55 for Heritage Toronto members, and include a buffet dinner. Cash Bar.
To order tickets call Karen Czaniecki at 416-338-1338.

Walking Tours

Leslieville

Saturday, June 26, 1:30 p.m.



Heritage Toronto walk; meet at the Ashbridge Estate, 1444 Queen Street East.

In the mid 19th century, gardener George Leslie began a nursery business near the shores of Ashbridge's Bay. Hear about his contribution to Toronto's forests and gardens as well as stories of some of the other residents of this one-time postal village.

Fort York: 200 Years of Lakefront Development

Thursday, July 1, 1:00 p.m.



Heritage Toronto walk; meet outside of the canteen, which is also the gift shop (just inside western entrance).

Explore the evolution and history of Fort York and the nearby

Lake Ontario shoreline from the early British colonial era to the present day. Free admission to Historic Fort York and free parking.

Toronto's Railway Heritage

Sunday, July 11, 1:30 p.m.



Heritage Toronto walk; meet on the southwest corner of Front and Bay Streets.

The Railway lands around Union Station have undergone

several dramatic transformations since 1853, when the first passenger train steamed out of the city. Explore Toronto's railway heritage, including the John Street Roundhouse and the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre.



The Splendour That Was Sherbourne Street

Sunday, July 18, 1:30 p.m.

Heritage Toronto walk; meet in front of Trinity Lutheran Church, 619 Sherbourne Street

In the 1880s, Sherbourne was one of the most fashionable streets in Toronto. Glimpses of its noble past survive in its architecture – grand homes for wealthy businessmen and imposing churches.

HOLIDAYS WITH HISTORY

Canada Day



Strawberries on the Lawn

Campbell House Museum, 160 Queen Street West, 11– 4 p.m.

Gather on the gracious lawn of Campbell House to celebrate Canada's birthday. Enjoy strawberry shortcake and lemonade in the summer sun while listening to fiddler Alana Kline perform. Free admission to the grounds and regular tours of Campbell House will be available. 416-

**Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum and Art Centre,
67 Pottery Road, 12 – 4 p.m.**



Pack a picnic lunch and enjoy a day in the Don River Valley to celebrate Canada Day. Visit 19th-century homes, sample tasty treats prepared in historic kitchens and enjoy craft activities for children. 416- 396-2819

St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood Association, Market Lane, just west of Jarvis Street between Front and King Streets, starting at 11:30 a.m.

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association's sixth annual Canada Day celebration includes a parade and a picnic – with music, cake, a barbecue and children's activities. In case of rain, the celebration will move inside the North Market at noon.



Gibson House Museum, 5172 Yonge Street, 12 to 5 p.m.

Take a journey to the rural community of Willow Dale where costumed guides will welcome you to the home of David and Eliza Gibson and their family. Experience a taste of the past with homemade ice cream, children's activities, old fashioned games on the lawn and samples of 19th-century cookery from the historic kitchen. Admission is free! 416-395-7432.

Black Creek Pioneer Village, 1000 Murray Ross Parkway, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Celebrate Canada's past and it's future too as you witness thirty people become new Canadian citizens.. Walk on stilts, play croquet, or try your hand at a game of graces. Take a tour of the village on a horse-drawn wagon and learn about the horses. Pigs, cows, horses, sheep and more are waiting for you to come and visit. 416-736-1733



Simcoe Day



The first Monday in August is a civic holiday in much of Canada but it goes by different names in various parts of the country. In Toronto, where it originated, the holiday has been known as Simcoe day since 1968.

Fort York, 100 Garrison Road (north of Fort York Boulevard), August 2, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

An annual Toronto tradition, Simcoe Day at Fort York connects you with the place it all began, the birthplace of Toronto, founded as the town of York by Governor John Graves Simcoe in 1793. See period demonstrations of artillery and musketry. Kids can join a drill session! On

hand will be members of the 41st Regiment of Foot from Fort George National Historic Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Regular admission applies. 416-392-6907



Annual General Meeting



The Town of York Historical Society held its AGM on Monday, May 17, 2010, at the Church of the Holy Trinity. Toward the end of the proceedings, the third annual Sheldon Godfrey Award was presented to Stephen Otto, who was able to provide some little-known details about the life of the church's architect, Henry Bowyer Lane. Following a brief but prolific sojourn in Toronto (1842–47), Lane returned to England but later went to work in Australia where he eventually died and is buried. Mr. Otto, who made this discovery only *after* co-authoring the entry on Lane in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, is hoping the DCB will eventually include his research on Lane's latter years.

After the business meeting, members were treated to a performance of *A Chat With Miss Chicky*, a one-act play written by Evelyn Glover and first performed at the Rehearsal Theatre in London, England in 1912 as a production of the Actresses' Franchise league. This recent version was first produced by the Niagara Historical Society Museum. Actresses Barbara Worthy and Brigitte Robinson, Shaw Festival veterans both, were introduced by Teddy Moore, seen above adjusting a cd player hidden behind the gramophone that was the only prop used to set the tone of the era.

A Good Mail Day Is...

“...a day when, instead of just bills, catalogues and advertisements, your postal carrier delivers artful, beautiful, personal mail from friends and acquaintances all over the world.” So say the authors of *A Good Mail Day – A Primer for Making Eye-Popping Postal Art*. The term “mail art” refers to a collaborative art form, the practitioners of which include both well known artists and everyday enthusiasts. Mail artists often use inexpensive and recycled materials in their work, and their methods include collage and rubber-stamping.



For Toronto's First Post Office:
Here, Every Day is a Good Mail Day!

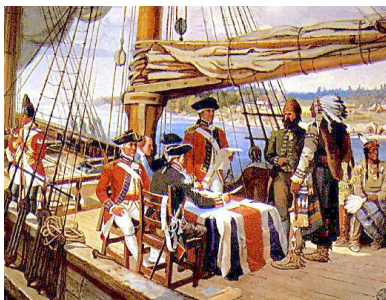
Mail artist Alice So of San Francisco arrived at Toronto's First Post Office on April 29th. She would spend a good deal of time here over the next few days, so charmed was she with the 1830s style of covers, the wax seals and the various cancels available. We, in turn, were enchanted by Alice, who presented us with a copy of *A Good Mail Day* for our library, which she inscribed using a quill pen. TFPO staffers Janet Walters and Kate McAuley, both of whom admit to being “stationery nerds,” were delighted to subsequently receive a piece of Alice's work in the mail, which included the self portrait seen here, taken at the post office.



Alice's letter itself, created almost entirely using rubber stamps, is a contemporary version of a rebus, in which pictograms are used to represent words or parts of words. The writing of correspondence in this form became popular in the 18th century and continued into the 19th. Lewis Carroll often wrote to his *Alice* in this form. The illustrated escort card (at right) dates from 1865 and was recently for sale on e-bay. Its form bears a resemblance to the shorthand used by contemporary ‘texters’ (eg. RU for “are you,” or GR8 for “great”). So, thank you Alice, for the looking-glass that reminds us it's hip to be square.



Toronto Purchase, *from page 1*



In 1787, Sir John Johnson met with chiefs Wabukanyne, Neace and Pakquan at the Bay of Quinte at the request of Governor-in-Chief Sir Guy Carleton. The purpose was to acquire, for the British, land surrounding the strategic Humber River route to what is now called Lake Simcoe. The original agreement was for £1,700, which was mostly paid in trade goods. When Alexander Aitkin arrived in 1788 to survey the land in question, however, he discovered that the chiefs differed from him in their opinions as to what land had been negotiated.

Governor John Simcoe, on his arrival in Upper Canada, was disgruntled with this state of affairs. He valued good relations with the locals, as he wanted them on-side should the Americans choose to attack. Upon personal investigation he discovered that the 1787 "deed," while it bore the totems of three chiefs, contained no description whatsoever of the land that had been surrendered. He wrote to the Colonial Office in London, who concurred that the deed was invalid. Peter Russell, head of the Indian department of Upper Canada, was instructed to "confirm" the earlier treaty, but his meeting with a number of chiefs at York was inconclusive.



In 1805, the new Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Peter Hunter, sent Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, William Claus, to negotiate for the land surrounding the new capital. In early August of that year, Claus met with the Mississaugas at the mouth of the Credit River to secure the 1787 agreement to the satisfaction of the crown. Eight Mississauga chiefs signed Treaty 13, otherwise known as the Toronto Purchase. In doing so they surrendered the land between Etobicoke Creek and Ashbridge's Bay, a tract 14 miles wide and 28 miles inland, for the amount of ten shillings.

Above: Toronto Purchase 1787, John David Kelly, 1946, oil on board, City of Toronto Art Collection, Cultural Services, gift of Confederation Life Association
Above right: "The descriptive plan of the Toronto Purchase made 23d September 1787 and Completed on the 1st day of August, 1805," City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, Item 0175

The Town of York Historical Society

Individual Membership	\$15
Family Membership	\$25
Lifetime Membership	\$150

Directors: Bruce Bell, Patricia Braithwaite, Richard Fiennes-Clinton, Sheldon Godfrey, Ewa Jarmicka, Cynthia Malik, Judith McErvel, Jennifer McIlroy, Councillor Pam McConnell, Melville Olsberg and Elaine Tipping.

Toronto's First Post Office is administered by the Town of York Historical Society

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Monday to Friday: 9-4

Weekends: 10-4

Closed on holiday Mondays and the Sundays preceding them.

The Post Office will be closed July 1st and August 1st and 2nd for the summer holidays.

Toronto's First Post Office is a museum and National Historic Site. The Town of York Historical Society is a legally incorporated non-profit organization and registered charity. Gratefully acknowledged is the support of the City of Toronto; the Ontario Ministry of Culture; our members, donors and customers; and Canada Post.