

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

December 2010

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LAST WELLESLEY COTTAGE BEING RESTORED



Cabbagetown holds many hidden delights, but one of the most delightful is a row of tiny cottages hidden in an alley just north of Wellesley Street. Five of them are conjoined, while the one at the western end of the row is detached. All six are white stucco with blue trim, and a white picket fence runs along in front of them. Adorable they

are, but also significant: these six houses, built in 1887, are the only buildings in the Cabbagetown North Heritage Conservation district officially designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Cabbagetown was settled during the second half of the 19th century, largely by middle- and working-class immigrants, many of them Irish. It contains numerous styles of homes, one of which is the “worker’s cottage,” which tends to be one-and-a-half storeys tall with a steep central peak over the front door. The style descends from a prize-winning prototype built by Henry Roberts for the Crystal Palace industrial exhibition in London, 1851. It had running water, internal sanitation, and separate bedrooms for children. Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert, concerned himself with housing reform, and presided over such societies as the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Poor, founded in 1842. Architects working to relieve the crowded and unsanitary nature of working-class housing also felt that improved aesthetics would elevate the spirits of the hitherto unwashed.

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National Historic Site Is Home to Heritage Organizations



Modest in scale, but stately in its Beaux Arts style, the building at 10 Adelaide Street East has stood for over a century. It was built in 1908 to house the offices and headquarters of the Canadian Birkbeck Investments and Savings Company. George W. Gouinlock, its architect, was then at the top of his game. Both natural stone and “Art Stone” were used on its exterior, and it features in a period advertisement (seen at right) for that particular cast product. Designated a National Historic Site in 1986, it is now known as the Ontario Heritage Centre, headquarters of the Ontario Heritage Trust, and home to the Toronto Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Black History Society, and other non-profit heritage groups.

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Wellesley Cottage, from page 1

On his *Working-man's Model Cottage*, American architect Andrew Jackson Downing wrote: "Our object, in this design, is to give the greatest amount of accommodation and convenience, at the smallest cost, for the dwelling of a large family who live in a very simple and economical manner. While the exterior is, therefore, very plain, the least possible ornament being used, there is still an expression of symmetrical beauty, and a certain cheerfulness of external effect. It is certainly a cottage which will convey an idea of taste in the occupants, so far as the exterior is concerned."



When Christopher Dew purchased No. 7 Wellesley Cottages from the estate of a recluse, it presented very little "cheerfulness of external effect" (see above). Furthermore, while it had internal sanitation – a toilet that flushed - it had little of even the 20th century about it save the 1960s newspaper scraps that served as insulation.



In a delicate balance between building permits and heritage conservation, forty percent of the original 1887 structure, however derelict, would be preserved. This included the brick foundation, and the studs, joists and beams (with mortised joints, as seen at right) bearing the stripes of the lath that once covered them. Now invisible are the incredibly wide pine boards of the original cladding, illustrated at left. Behind and below this tiny half house, a modern home is nearing completion. Like its mirror image to the west, No. 7 is a detached house, most likely built for a foreman or supervisor of some sort. Like the entire row of cottages, all of which have been greatly enlarged to the rear, it will present a white stuccoed face with blue barge boards, door and window trim, perfectly punctuating the row. Perhaps, once the contractors' vehicles have stopped coming and going, the picket fence will be extended across the front. We will revisit this story in the spring, to show you the completed construction and highlight some of the unique architectural features designed to accommodate its immediate neighbours, and those on Alpha Avenue – a story in its own right.



Cabbagetown Heritage Conservation District Committee Launches New Website

Cabbagetown is the largest continuous area of preserved 19th-century housing in North America. A new website, www.cabbagetownhcd.ca, has been designed as a resource for residents of that downtown Toronto neighbourhood. Representing countless hours of volunteer time on the part of the HCD committee, the site provides information to advise and assist locals with heritage guidelines and procedures for exterior restoration and changes to their properties. Here can be found a glossary of architectural terms, a heritage permit process guide, heritage FAQs and much more that could be useful to anyone owning a heritage home in Toronto. And for those who can only dream of such things, there is a 60-second pictorial, with images by Wallace Immen, Kimon Korkodilos and George Rust-D'Eye.

First Parliament Site Heats Up Once More

Since an archaeological dig there in 2000 revealed the foundations and charred floorboards of Toronto's first parliament buildings, little change has actually occurred on the lot south of Front Street between Berkeley and Parliament. With the bicentennial of the War of 1812-14 looming on the horizon, the battle has been rejoined to reclaim the birthplace of Ontario and, it is hoped, restore to it the dignity and reverence it surely deserves.

One thing will happen very soon. The Porsche dealership on the western edge of the site will relocate to new quarters on the northwest corner of Front and Parliament Streets, the result of a land-swap agreement achieved in 2005. Negotiations with the car wash and rental-car business on the east side of the property, however, seem to have stalled. This has prompted community activists to go public with plans for the site that have been developed over the course of numerous consultations with local residents and concerned heritage advocates. Drawn up by local resident architect Michael Kirkland, the plans are both imaginative and feasible, given that they involve the Toronto Public Library's move across Parliament Street, ceding the location of its current distribution centre for development in the rapidly evolving West Don Lands/Pan-Am Athletes' Village context.

In addition to the new library, the proposed site would include a small interpretive centre and outdoor spaces designed to foster contemplation of the site's various histories and one-time location on the city's Lake Ontario shoreline. From our point of view, it would provide an important heritage stepping-stone between Toronto's First Post Office and its slightly distant neighbours, the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse and the Distillery Historic District. "Place is absolutely important in our history," says former Mayor David Crombie in *The Bulletin*. "Time and place are interconnected and we must have a sense of roots in a city so diverse. The collective memory is anchored and connected in place. This site was a game-changer in the civic life of Canada and it is long overdue that we have civic access to it." Make it happen. Write a letter.



The first parliament buildings, completed by 1797, were burned by the invading American forces in 1813. (3D Reconstruction of the fire courtesy of Archaeological Services Inc.) The second parliament buildings on the site were built in 1819, but succumbed to a chimney fire in 1824.



John Howard, *Jail and Proposed Courthouse* (detail), watercolour, 1837, Toronto Public Library (TRL), 938-12. The courthouse was never built, but construction of the Home District Gaol began in 1838. Mr. Gooderham's windmill can be seen to the east along the shore.



Consumers Gas Building (Station A) on the First Parliament Site, 1950



Artist's rendering of what the site would look like according to a concept developed at the community level by Michael Kirkland.

Halifax Update



Last December, we told you about a number of heritage buildings in downtown Halifax that were slated for demolition. The photographs above, taken in August of this year, attest to the fact that their facades – through which one can currently see blue sky – are to be preserved and incorporated into the Armour Group’s Waterside Centre, illustrated at right. While restored façades and the continuity of an historic streetscape are preferable to plaques in the absence of either, is this the best that we can do? It seems that much of our built heritage is destined to survive only by virtue of incorporation into yet another glass box.



Extreme Makeover

The sorry picture above is about to change. These derelict 19th-century shops are to be redeveloped into a new two-storey building that will serve as a “storefront” for Little Trinity Church’s ministry, mission and community. The historic King-Street façade will be restored, while a new administrative centre and multi-purpose hall behind it will enable the church to respond to the needs of a new neighbourhood emerging in the West Don Lands.

Little Trinity Church itself was built in 1844 and its former rectory, currently home to offices and Christian education programs, dates to 1853. The little shops on the western edge of the property make up the third structure on a sizeable lot, just east of the corner of King and Parliament Streets. While all three buildings will undergo some renewal, it is the latter – boarded up for many years – that are slated for major redevelopment.

Two rendered views of the proposed renovation appear below, courtesy of Little Trinity Church. The basement will house a dedicated youth lounge, with lockers and showers for guests and needy visitors. A reception area and administrative offices will be located on the main floor while the second floor will be given over to a large conference room with kitchen attached. Both will overlook a newly landscaped outdoor space.



St. Lawrence BIA Wins Community Heritage Award



The Heritage Toronto Community Heritage Award is open to one volunteer, community-based organization in each of the city’s four Community Council

areas. The organization must be currently active, and have either initiated or completed a significant heritage-related activity. This year, the St. Lawrence BIA was given the award in recognition of its role in the night-lighting project, launched in November, 2009, to highlight the historic buildings in old town Toronto. Above, George Millbrandt accepts the award October 5 on stage at Koerner Hall. As some of you might recall, the Town of York Historical Society was a stakeholder in this project from its inception.

New Foundation Launched to Save Clarington's Camp 30

Just outside of Bowmanville sits a cluster of abandoned buildings that were used to house high-ranking German prisoners during WWII. Two years ago they faced imminent demolition. Two weeks ago, at a standing-room-only event hosted by the Clarington Museums and Archives, better news was on offer. The site's developer owners have not only agreed to National Historic Site designation, but are willing to gift the 24-acre camp (along with 40 acres of natural wetlands) to the municipality of Clarington. A newly formed volunteer foundation will work toward the restoration of the site, considered the only intact instance of its kind in the world.



The complex of eighteen Prairie-style buildings was originally built in 1925 as a reform school, The Bowmanville Training School for Boys. It comprises – in addition to classrooms and dormitories – an indoor pool, a theatre, an infirmary and other administration buildings including its own generating station. Its isolation, with the addition of a barbed-wire perimeter fence, made it an ideal facility to house officers of the Third Reich captured by Allied Forces whom Britain wanted kept far away from the arenas of war. The school became a POW camp in 1941.

The 880 inmates of “Camp 30” lived in relative luxury. They were well fed and entertained, attended classes, engaged in sports and produced theatrics. With money from home, or earned building furniture, they could order beer, cigarettes and other sundries from the Eaton's catalogue. Nevertheless they were young men without freedom or women, whose loyalties lay elsewhere. In 1942 they took over the camp in a prolonged riot that came to be known as “The Battle of Bowmanville.” In 1943, acting on orders from Germany, they dug a 300-foot tunnel into an adjacent cornfield in an attempt to free Korvettenkapitän Otto Kretschmer, for whom a U-boat would be waiting off the coast of New Brunswick. He never made it, but a pile of dirt in the attic of “Haus IV” – where it ended up after being passed from hand to hand through the tunnel – remains as a souvenir.



After the war the camp(us) reverted to use as a reform school until 1979. It later served various educational institutions, including St. Stephen's Secondary School. Its last tenant, the Islamic university Darul Uloom, moved out in 2008. Since then it has deteriorated rapidly, aided in large part by trespassing vandals. To any developer the wrecking ball might have seemed the obvious solution, but the Kaitlin Group heeded the (international) public outcry spearheaded by local historian Lynn Philip Hodgson, co-author of *Camp 30: Word of Honour*. Hodgson's ten-year battle to save the site was joined by the Clarington branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Clarington Museums and Archives, and the Ontario Heritage Trust among others. The small municipality of Clarington (which includes Bowmanville, Courtice and Newcastle), while supportive, could ill afford to take on the camp's refurbishment on its own. It seems, however, that help is on its way. Plans for creative re-use of the salvageable buildings are already being drafted. Hodgson, who claims to have enough related artifacts to fill a small museum, must be pleased.

Top right: The boarded-up infirmary. Top left: German officers pose for a photograph to send home. The stamp indicates that it has passed Canadian censors.

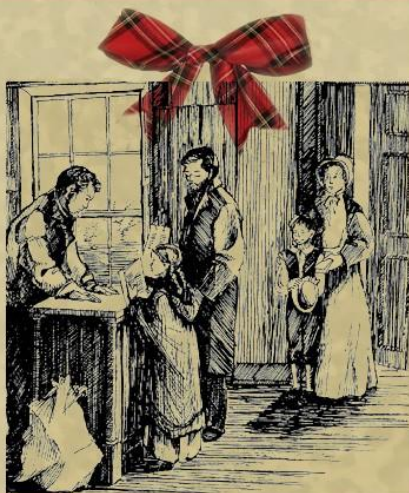
Left: A wistful Lynn Hodgson surveys the main administration building in 2002.

New Face at the Post Office



Claiming that she had “always wanted to work in a museum,” and young enough – at twenty-one – to not know any better, Deanna Walter has joined the staff of Toronto’s First Post Office in the position of Administrative Assistant. A recent graduate of McMaster University,

Deanna studied cultural anthropology and history while continuing to provide customer service at Canadian Tire. The skills listed on her resumé include skate sharpening, key-cutting and the issuing of fishing licences. As if this didn’t endear her to us entirely, she is also an avid stamp and postcard collector. Web-savvy and articulate, she is currently being trained in all aspects of the day-to-day operations of the curious hybrid that is the post office/museum. Please join us in welcoming Deanna to the TFPO team.



Got parcels to post? Need stamps for a seasonal mailing?

Toronto's First Post Office at 260 Adelaide Street East would be happy to help you!

In addition to being a National Historic Site and museum, we offer a full range of services as an authorized dealer of Canada Post.

The money earned this way is what allows us to keep our doors open

Come find us in the heart of the old town where Toronto was born

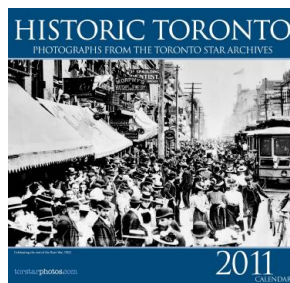
Christmas in the Gift Shop



Goose Quill Pens

\$10.00

We have been looking for a source of quill pens for some time. This pen is made of the finest quality bleached white goose pointer, the primary flight feather of the goose and the most prized feather for pens. The pen, with its hand-cut nib, is ready to use and can be re-shaped and re-sharpened as often as necessary.

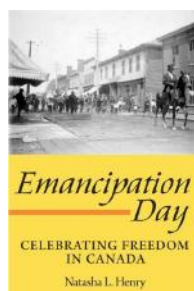


Historic Toronto Calendars

\$16.95

Here is the perfect year-end gift for the history buff on your list. In all we have five calendars to choose from including *Pages of the Past* (from the Archives of the

Toronto Star as is the one above.), *Historic Sports in Canada*, *Historic Canada*, and *Canada at War*.



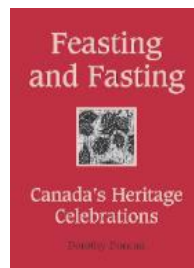
Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada

By Natasha L. Henry

Dundurn Press (2010), 288 pages, \$28.99

On August 1, 1834, the Abolition Act ended slavery throughout the British Empire. Now fugitive slaves, free black immigrants, and the few remaining enslaved Africans could

live unfettered lives in Canada. Through historical accounts and images, this new, well-researched book provides insight into the creation, development, and evolution of a distinct African-Canadian tradition.



Feasting and Fasting: Canada's Heritage Celebrations

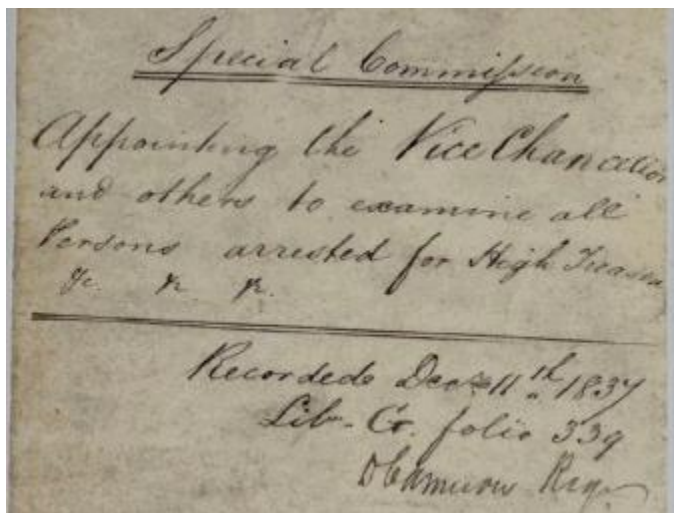
By Dorothy Duncan

Dundurn Press (2010), 256 pages, \$26.99

This book introduces us to the food and drink that were a central part of our ancestors' festivities. Food brought families and communities

together to honour, to celebrate, to mourn and to be comforted. Here is a sampling of what was on their tables at births, weddings, funerals, religious holidays, garden parties and more!

THIS JUST IN!



When the hammer went down at Waddington's last night (December 2), a private collector had bought the above document for \$10,800, or three times its catalogue estimate. The Town of York Society had spent the previous month raising pledges to prevent this very thing from happening. Represented at the auction by Janet Walters, TYHS finally dropped out of the bidding and let it go to a gentleman who later admitted he would have "stopped at nothing." At this time we would like to thank all of you who pledged your support in this endeavour, with a very special thank-you to Lionel Collier for all the fundraising he did on our behalf, and for his advice and moral support last night at Waddingtons.

Snowflakes and Ginger Cakes

Do you know what scherensnitte means?

TORONTO'S FIRST POST OFFICE wants you to rock this Christmas like it's 1837!

Come learn about pre-Victorian Christmas traditions in Upper Canada, and how to make cornucopias, "Amelias," and all sorts of crafty old-fashioned things.

December 18/19, 10:30 a.m., \$15

Ages 7 and up. Space is limited, so please pre-register by calling 416-865-1833.



Puzzles, Pinpricks and Knots of Love

Valentines were once more *complicated* in many ways than those available at the drug store today. Come hear about their history at Toronto's First Post Office, and learn how to create three kinds of paper valentines popular in the early 19th century.

Date: Sunday, February 13, 1–3 pm.

Cost: \$20, or \$15 for members, all supplies included. Ages 12 and up. Please call 416-865-1833 to register.

Toronto's Birthday Party

Mark this date on your 2011 calendar:
Sunday, March 6th.



In what has become an annual event, the Town of York Historical Society will be celebrating Toronto's birthday with style in the magnificent ballroom of St. Lawrence Hall. These events are lively, theatrical, musical and – best of all – raise funds to support the operations of Toronto's First Post Office museum. Further information will be forthcoming in the new year. If you are not a member and you wish to receive an invitation, please call 416-865-1833.

Find Us on Facebook



Yes folks, it's true.

The face of James Scott Howard, Toronto's first

postmaster, has hit the wall on the world's most popular social network. Find out who his friends are, become one yourself, and keep abreast of what's happening at the post office and around the old town neighbourhood.

Birkbeck Building, *from page 1*



The Birkbeck Building harkens to a time when the country was expanding westward, and its financial centre shifting from Montreal to Toronto. The building's location was ideal: it was on a busy streetcar line, and it was close to the post office and the courthouse, as well as other financial institutions. The formal symmetry of its Beaux Arts exterior spoke of prosperity and stability. So too did the Edwardian grandeur of its interior public spaces with their marble staircases, soaring windows, Art Nouveau stenciling and ornate cornices and capitals. Unseen was the building's modern steel and terra cotta structure, a first in the city and a response to the devastating fire of 1904 that had laid waste to much of downtown.

The Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) has made extensive restorations to the first and second-storey interiors since it purchased the building in 1985. In 2002 the former banking hall was restored to the Birkbeck period, and 2007 saw renovations to provide 21st-century amenities to rooms that are rented out as banquet and conference facilities. Meanwhile, the office spaces on the top floors – with their wood panelling, glass transoms and period



hardware, including a manually operated elevator – remain largely original, making it a commercial time warp that is popular with location scouts for film and television. All rental revenues are used to maintain not only this building into the future, but to finance other restoration projects undertaken by the Trust. The OHT is the only legislated organization in the province responsible for the “identification, protection, renewal and promotion of all types of heritage – built, cultural and natural.”

The Town of York Historical Society

WHY NOT JOIN NOW?

At the Annual General Meeting of the TYHS, held on May 17 of this year, our membership voted to increase annual dues, which had not been altered in a decade, as of January 1st. Why not take this opportunity to become a member for life?

Individual Membership	\$15, after Dec. 31	\$25
Family Membership	\$25, after Dec. 31	\$40
Lifetime Membership	\$150, after Dec. 31	\$250

Directors: Bruce Bell, Patricia Braithwaite, Richard Fiennes-Clinton, Sheldon Godfrey, Ewa Jarmicka, Cynthia Malik, Judith McEvel, 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 December 25-28 for Christmas, and January 1-3 for the New Year.

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 Tourism and Culture; our members, donors and customers; and Canada Post.