

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

September 2011

Vol. XXVII No. 3

HERITAGE COACH HOUSE TO BE DEMOLISHED



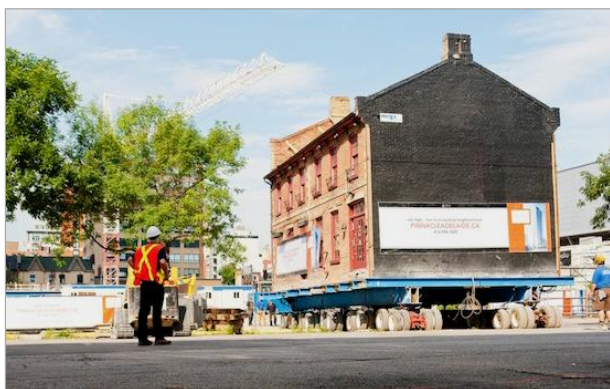
In the dappled sunlight of a late summer afternoon, it is not hard to imagine the sound of horse hooves clattering on the cobblestones in this courtyard at Isabella and Huntley. The steep-roofed stable that surrounds it on two sides once belonged to the large house at the other end of the block, facing Jarvis

Street. Currently, the two properties are once again in the same hands, having been acquired separately by Casey House, which provides health care and outreach programs to people living with HIV/AIDS. A proposed development will see the 1875 house restored and incorporated into a five-storey state-of-the-art medical facility at its back. The stable, which sits in the way of a planned entrance to underground parking, is slated for demolition.

Both buildings originally belonged to William R. Johnston, a native of Dundas, Ontario, who entered the clothing trade in Montreal before moving to Toronto in the 1860s. Johnston was co-owner of Livingston Johnston and Company, manufacturers of men and boys' clothing for the wholesale market. Business must have been good. Back when Jarvis Street was the city's most coveted address, Johnston and his partner Livingston purchased adjoining lots and built identical houses on its east side. These were based on a design by the architectural firm of Langley, Langley and Burke, although the plans were not entirely adhered to as construction went forward.

Continued on page 2

Former Fox and Fiddle Picked Up and Parked by Pinnacle



On Saturday, August 13, two row houses built in 1869 were transported from one side of John Street to the other. It was done to place them out of harm's way during the construction of a 43-storey condominium tower in their place. The move, while not as dramatic as that of Campbell House to its current location in 1972, nevertheless required the building to be winched up a three-foot incline to the parking lot where it now sits, a process that took four hours. When the "Pinnacle on Adelaide" condominium nears completion, the houses will be resituated further south on their own side of John Street and a retail tenant sought for them.

Continued on page 8

Coach House, *from page 1*



Incorporating a blend of styles popular in the late 19th century, the Johnston house is described by Patricia McHugh in *Toronto Architecture, A City Guide* as, “Neither Italianate villa nor French chateau nor Scottish manor,” but nevertheless having “enough of an historicizing air to qualify it for this fashionable Victorian Street.” Johnston – with his wife Elsie, his six children, and his billiard room – lived here until 1916.

In 1898 Johnston commissioned architect George Martell Miller to build him a coach house/stable at the rear of his property. [*ed. – To put this in perspective, imagine hiring Arthur Erickson to design your garage.*] Born in Port Hope in 1855, Miller arrived in Toronto in the 1880s where he taught at the Mechanics’ Institute before beginning his architectural practice in 1885. He had built the Gladstone Hotel in 1889 and overseen the construction of Massey Hall (1894), which had been drawn up by Sidney Bagdley, a Canadian architect based in Cleveland. A favourite

of Lillian Massey, Miller would later build for her the neoclassical Household Science building (1908-12) at the University of Toronto. This now houses, in addition to UT and government offices, the flagship of the Club Monaco retail chain at Bloor and Queen’s Park. The original Havergal Ladies’ College, which he also designed, has survived – from 1945 as home to the executive offices for CBC radio, and now to the Margaret McCain Academic Building of the National Ballet School of Canada – as part of the evolving fabric of Jarvis Street.

The grandeur that was Jarvis would, following the Second World War, fall prey to the rising prominence of the automobile. In 1947 the street was widened considerably, eliminating the trees that had lent it much of its residential appeal. Early in the war, William Johnston’s former home at 571 Jarvis was converted by architect Gordon West for use as offices by the National Council of the YWCA. Much of the original craftsmanship, however, including elaborate decorative plasterwork, was retained. In 1983 Grey Lady Corporation took over the residence, and it has been known locally as the “Grey Lady” ever since. Peeling grey paint and overgrown plantings conceal much of its former glory but, even with its identical twin long demolished, it retains visual prominence in the neighbourhood, sitting as it does on a corner, surrounded by a sandstone and ironwork fence.

A dusty parking lot separates the house from its former stables to the east. Their current owner, Casey House – funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – was Canada’s first freestanding AIDS hospice, opened in 1988. Founders of the organization no doubt hoped it would be redundant by now. Instead, having outgrown its facility at 9 Huntley Street, it requires a new home and new programs to attend to the physical, emotional, psychological and social needs of the thousands of HIV-positive adults living in Toronto. The Casey House Foundation has initiated a \$10 million capital redevelopment campaign under the slogan, “It’s Time to Dream Again.” As recently as a year ago, the plan was to insert a new building between the coach house on Isabella and the “Grey Lady” on Jarvis. Somehow, in the interim, the proposed building has both risen from three to five stories *and* come to require that the coach house be demolished. While even “plan A” would mean the westering sun could no longer reach the cobblestoned courtyard, surely a trip back to the drawing board is in order.





Wellesley Cottage Update

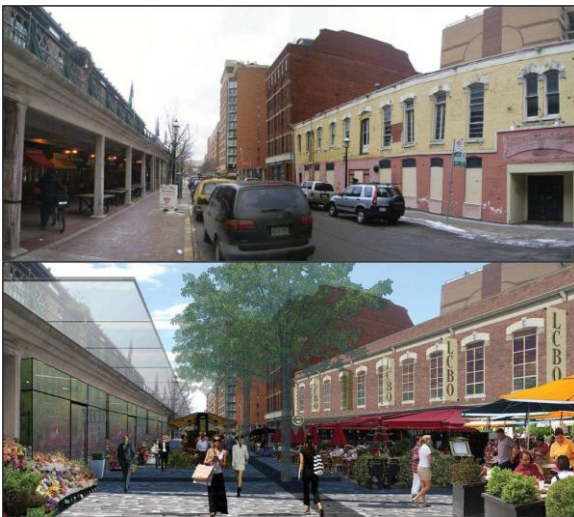
In last December's newsletter, we promised to follow up on the restoration of number 7 Wellesley Cottages. During a recent visit to the site, we were astonished at the degree to which No. 7 has blended in with its neighbours. It now forms the free-standing bookend on the eastern end of a row of workers' cottages from the confederation era. Behind this tiny, perfect dollhouse, however, lies a fully contemporary 3,000-square-foot residence – if one includes the 200 feet taken up by a utility room on the basement level.



Beyond the restoration of 40% of the original structure, the owner has sought to honour a number of sightlines. The cottage's original roofline has been iterated in outline on each side of the house. Furthermore, in deference to the inhabitants of Alpha Avenue, customized double-hung windows were installed on the western side of the home in perfect alignment with those of its eastern neighbours. In the photo at right you can see some of these details above the fence at the west end of Alpha. The visible step-up in the roof height occurs at the point where it cannot be seen from the front of the house. As punctuation, a picket fence has been installed across the front of the property. All is well in the world, or at least in this corner of Cabbagetown.



Paul Oberman Legacy Sought for Market Street



Woodcliffe Landmark Properties, the company founded by the late Paul Oberman, is currently working on a redevelopment project for the west side of Market Street, across from the south St. Lawrence Market building. Three existing heritage buildings are to be repurposed and blended with new construction where the street meets The Esplanade. The LCBO will remain in situ as a tenant, while tucked beneath it will be a row of restaurants with patios at street level. The fully realized vision, pictured at left, involves the installation of a flower market under the market's west mezzanine opposite, and turning the entire strip into a pedestrian-only walkway. If this sounds like heaven to you, you are encouraged to express your support by signing a petition at pauloberman.ca, where you can also vote for renaming the block "Paul Oberman Way."

To see how successful this blending of old and new might be, one needs look no further than King James Place (right), which Woodbridge completed with Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects in 1992. This strip of King Street East, across from the Cathedral Church of St. James, includes some of Toronto's oldest standing structures. A few of the shops in this row date from the 1830s, having miraculously survived the great fire of 1849. Oberman and KPMB knitted them together beautifully with new buildings to create a seamless streetscape.



Guild Inn Once Again in Jeopardy

Just when everyone thought the Guild Inn was safe, it has appeared on Heritage Canada Foundation's "top ten most endangered buildings in the country" list, released September 2. The partnership brokered in 2008 between the City of Toronto and Centennial College appears to be foundering. As recently as January, the College – which planned to rehabilitate the inn as an Institute of Cultural and Heritage Management – was close to signing a lease. Now it seems, having failed to find a hotelier willing to invest in the site, Centennial would prefer to purchase the 6.3 acre footprint of the inn in order to facilitate the development of a 100-unit seniors' condominium. This would require approvals from no less than three government bodies and embroil the project in enough red tape that the white stucco mansion, boarded up since 2001, is likely to suffer demolition by neglect before any plan can come to fruition.



Once upon a time, this pseudo-Georgian villa was a private residence, built by Colonel Harold Child Bickford in 1914. The Colonel had fought in the Boer War and would rise to the rank of Brigadier-General in World War One. Fond of polo ponies and automobiles, Bickford built his estate – then called Ranleigh Park – atop the Scarborough bluffs with a fine view of the lake, roughly where Eglinton Avenue now runs into it. In 1921, Bickford moved to Buffalo and sold the property to the China Mission College, a Roman Catholic home for missionaries destined for China. Five years later it was again sold to wealthy businessman Richard Look, who left it empty when his offices moved to Montreal. Then, in 1932, the deepest, darkest year of the Great Depression, the house and 88 acres surrounding it were purchased by Rosa Breithaupt Hewetson, the heiress to the Hewetson Shoes Company of Brantford.

Young, impossibly rich, and in love with an idealistic young man, Rosa conceived of an arts and crafts community modelled after the Roycroft Campus and Inn in East Aurora, New York. In the belief that artistic production was necessary to the fulfillment of life, Rosa and her husband, Herbert Spencer Clark, transformed the estate and its former polo grounds into the Guild of All Arts. Bickford's stables and garages – even the 1795 Osterhout log cabin – were converted into studios, workshops and living space for artists. Some of the acreage was ploughed into vegetable gardens in order to produce food on site. The 33-bed mansion became the Guild Inn. Artists got free room and board in exchange for sharing their work with the Guild and its visitors. In addition to fabricating much of its furniture, they also made work to sell in the gift shop and offered courses to guests. While the colony struggled at first, visitors eventually came in such numbers that by 1934 the Clarks moved out to make room for them. Throughout the 1930s they continued to invest in the Guild Inn, extending the



original Bickford home on both sides to accommodate greater numbers of guests. Meanwhile, they also began to buy up more and more of the land surrounding the Inn until they had accumulated roughly five hundred acres between Lake Ontario and Kingston Road.

During the Second World War, the Inn was requisitioned by the government for use as a training centre by the Womens' Royal Navy Service (WRENS). It was later used as a hospital for veterans with what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder, then referred to as shell shock. The studios and workshops of the Guild of All Arts became rehabilitation and training facilities for these men.



The property was restored to the Clarks in 1947, and they threw themselves into postwar suburban development with the same fervour, idealism and attention to detail they had given to the arts and crafts movement. What is now a classic 1950s suburb, Guildwood Village, would take over 400 acres of their property. Spencer Clark, as President of Guildwood Developments, ensured that the homes were designed by architects in the latest modern style. In 1965, a new six-storey, 96-room concrete hotel was added to the Inn, with curved balconies overlooking the lake. It would famously host artistic luminaries such as Sir Ernest MacMillan, A.J. Carson, Glenn Gould and Laurence Olivier, in addition to both provincial and federal cabinet retreats.

Modern and progressive though they were, the Clarks never abandoned their passion for handcrafted beauty. During the early 1960s, when Toronto was busy eradicating much of its built heritage, Spencer Clark set about salvaging fragments from soon-to-be demolished buildings. Over seventy of these large-scale 'souvenirs' were relocated to the Guild Inn property where stonemasons and other craftspeople were hired to reconstruct them. It is these architectural remnants that make the Guild Inn gardens famous for wedding photography.



In the late 1970s, the aging Clarks sought to preserve their legacy by placing it in public hands. They sold the property to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in 1978 for \$8 million. The agreement was that TRCA would maintain the grounds as a public park, while the Clarks would continue to manage the Inn and hotel, pro bono, for the next five years. Rosa Clark died in 1981, and Spencer – having retired in 1983 when his tenure ended – passed away in 1986. The Guild Inn limped on, managed variously by Delta and CN Hotels, until it was closed and boarded up by the City of Toronto in 2001. The City has since maintained the gardens, but at

one time contemplated rescinding the historical designation of the building in order to demolish. This latter move was in line with a proposed condo/hotel project by Windmill Development Group that fell through in 2007.

In 2008 the new deal was struck with Centennial College. That same year, the 1965 hotel addition was torn down and, sadly, a fire destroyed the studio building on Christmas morning. Nevertheless, hope was on the horizon for the Guild Inn as a boutique hotel and training centre for the College's School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culture. The city had allocated \$4.2 million in funds for the development and interpretation of the park. And now? The future of the Guild Inn, which embodies so much of our 20th-century history, hangs in the balance.



Opposite page, from top: The derelict Guild Inn as it appeared in January of 2010. Photo: Jeremy Burgin, Wikimedia Commons.

The former Bickford House prior to expansion as the Guild Inn, and Spencer and Rosa Clark in the 1930s, courtesy of the Guildwood Village Residents Association. Aerial-view postcard images of the Inn from the 1950s.

This page: Postcard view of the Guild Inn in the 1960s.

Remnants of the façade of the former Bank of Toronto at King and Bay Streets, reconstructed at the Guild Inn. Photo: Dan Pearce, Inside Toronto.

The studio building at the Guild Inn on Christmas Day, 2008, following a devastating fire earlier that morning. Photo: Chris Doucette, Sun Media.

PAL-SAC: Post-a-Letter Social Activity Club

On a Monday night in Toronto, if you pass by the Naco Gallery Café on Dundas West, or The Avro on Queen East, you might see something unusual: young people gathered in social groups to write letters. We're talking about *real* letters, on stationery provided – on a pwyc basis – by the creative founder of the organization, Angel Chen. A graphic designer and illustrator, Chen has lived many places in her few years and has long been a pen pal. She came up with the pal-sac idea in 2009 as a way to finesse letter writing into her own busy schedule, and those of others she knew. With branches in Copenhagen and Melbourne, we think she might be onto something. For more information, find the group on line, or drop them one at P.O. Box 83, 1117 Queen Street West, Toronto, M6J 1J0.



Owney the Postal Dog



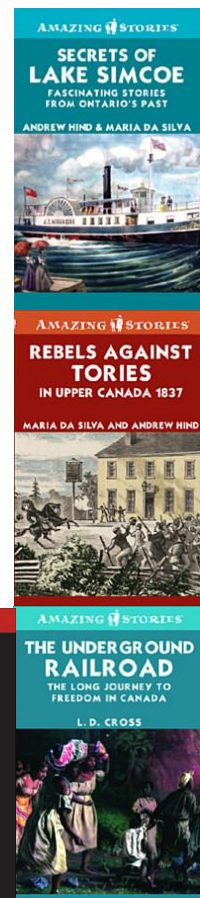
With this *Owney the Postal Dog* stamp, the United States Postal Service commemorates the canine mascot of the U.S. Railway Mail

Service. Owney was a terrier mix who became a regular fixture at the Albany, New York, post office in 1888. He soon began to follow mailbags onto wagons and then onto trains. The dog was considered a good luck charm; at a time when train wrecks were all too common, no train he rode was ever in a wreck. In 1895, Owney made an around-the-world trip, traveling with mailbags on trains and steamships to Asia and across Europe, before returning to Albany. Owney died in Toledo of a bullet wound in 1897, and is preserved at the National Postal Museum.

New in the Gift Shop

Amazing Stories

James Lorimer, c.200 pages, \$9.95 each. *Amazing Stories* is a series of short monographs on Canadian history and biography written for a general adult audience and young adult readers. Robert Martin of the *Nova Scotia Chronicle Herald* describes them as "...the non-fiction response to Harlequin romances: easy to consume and potentially addictive." Pamela Klafke of the *Calgary Herald* says that their "...heightened sense of drama and intrigue, combined with a good dose of human interest, is what sets *Amazing Stories* apart." Toronto's First Post Office museum is offering the four titles illustrated here for sale in its gift shop. At this price, we are hoping they turn out to be the "gateway drug" to a lifelong interest in our history.



Buttons, buttons and more buttons...

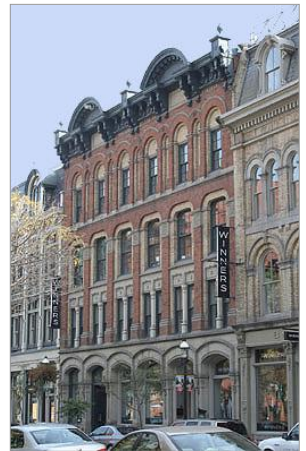
Toronto's First Post Office now has some fabulous pin-back buttons for sale. Show your love for all things philatelic by sporting beautiful badges made using cancelled commemoratives. No two are alike. Souvenir buttons for the post office and other historical sites in the area are also available on an ongoing basis.

In addition, should you need buttons to mark a special occasion, or would like something unique to sell in *your* shop, Toronto's First Post Office can now make custom pin-back buttons for you! All it takes is a minimum order of twenty. The finished size of our buttons is 1¼ inches in diameter. For information on pricing and how to submit your artwork, please call Deanna at 416-865-1833, or e-mail tfpo-deanna@uniserve.com.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND

ARCHITECTURE: ALL AROUND US, a course taught by Marta O'Brien Tuesdays, September 20 – November 8, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Architecture is everywhere and affects our daily experience of a street, a neighbourhood and a city – often unconsciously. This course will help you to really see the architecture around you, and to express why you love or loathe a structure. You'll examine the use of ornament, materials, scale and other elements. How and why have their uses changed? You'll discuss and compare reactions to these components and the resulting buildings. One class will be a walking tour. Non-credit course; no assignments or tests. University of Toronto, School of Continuing Studies, #2591, eight sessions, \$290.



GLASS IN ARCHITECTURE

Tuesday, September 20, 7:00 pm

John Wilcox will lead an illustrated talk on the history and development of window glass and architectural glass treatments. This virtual tour will include examples of prismatic cast glass, vitrolite and stained glass. Wilcox is an experienced craftsman whose deft window and glass restorations can be seen throughout Ontario from the Sharon Temple to the Royal Ontario Museum.

Arts and Letters Club, 14 Elm Street, free, presented by the Toronto Architectural Conservancy.



HISTORIC COOKS OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, September 25, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Love cooking? Enjoy history? Fascinated by historic recipes? Then you would be a great addition to the historic cook volunteers at Fort York. Come and talk with them and find out all about the fun you can have and the food you can cook in this authentic historic setting. Free admission to the fort.

Fort York, 250 Fort York Blvd., 416-392-6907 or email fortyork@toronto.ca.



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE WORKSHOP AND BALL

Saturday, October 15

This ball takes its theme from the Battle of Trafalgar, and military historian Peter Twist will be on hand to enlighten participants as to the significance of that British Naval victory. Afternoon workshops will provide instruction in both dance and how to assemble an elegant Regency costume using articles from your own wardrobe. Spend an evening in Jane Austen's world. Sample period treats, play parlour games and – best of all – dance at the ball!

Danforth Avenue near Chester, \$50 for full package of workshops and ball. For complete schedule and pricing go to <http://www.torontoenglishdance.ca/janeausten.html>, or call Karen Millyard at 416-578-1031.



WESTON VILLAGE HERITAGE HOUSE TOUR

Sunday, October 16, 12:00 – 4:30 pm

Enjoy strolling the beautiful tree-lined streets of historical Weston. Visit seven majestic homes, and then stop for afternoon tea at the historic Masonic Hall. One of the lost villages of Toronto, Weston

nevertheless retains its small-town flavour and atmosphere. Advance tickets are available at the Weston Farmer's Market (Saturdays) and Squibb's Stationers (1974 Weston Road).

Weston Historical Society, \$15 advance/\$20 day of tour. \$5 for tea. Contact Cherri at bobbackland@ica.net.

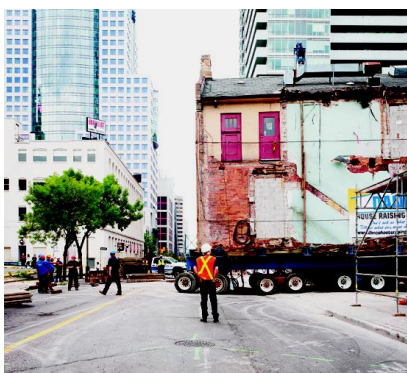


Richard West Houses, *from page 1*



When Richard West built these semi-detached homes on the northwest corner of Newgate (now Adelaide) and John Streets, the city was expanding westward from its original town site east of Yonge. The block bounded by Adelaide, John, King and Peter Streets had once been the site of a hospital, built in 1820 on the outskirts of town where such things then belonged. Once the hospital and its auxiliary buildings were razed in 1862, the land was subdivided into housing lots. It is thought that West, as a contractor, built these homes himself, residing in the north unit until the south portion was completed and occupied by his family. He may have been responsible for many homes in the area; by 1874 he was living in one he had built at Adelaide and Widmer. Known during its last days as The Corned Beef House, this structure stood until last fall when a petition failed to save it from demolition.

Neighbourhoods change. Following the Great Fire of 1904, the city's industrial centre shifted to the King and Spadina area. By the time of World War I, Richard West's former houses were occupied by the N.B. Schipper Company, dealers in raw and dressed furs. Most recently, the building was home to the Fox and Fiddle pub, at the heart of an entertainment district – albeit a neighbourhood still dotted with furriers. When the TIFF Bell Lightbox was under construction at the southeast corner of the old hospital block, the site underwent archaeological scrutiny that revealed remnants of the hospital's foundations and artifacts from the typhus fever sheds constructed during the 1847 Irish famine immigration. In late 19th-century urban sprawl, this block had become part of "New Town," and Richard West's dichromatic brick houses were just two among row upon row of similar buildings. Now, by virtue of having endured one hundred and forty years, having been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and shepherded through this recent development by heritage architect



Christopher Borgal, they are unique and valuable souvenirs of a bygone era.

Above: The one-time *Fox and Fiddle* in its original location in late June. The hoarding reads: "TAKING HISTORY TO NEW PLACES."

Left and cover: The building makes its slow progress across John Street to the sales-office parking lot where it will sit for the next few years. Photos: Michael Crisman

The Town of York Historical Society

Individual Membership	\$25
Family Membership	\$40
Lifetime Membership	\$250

Directors: Patricia Braithwaite, Sheldon Godfrey, Meredith Hogan, Ewa Jarmicka, Judith McErvell, Jennifer McIlroy, Councillor Pam McConnell, and Melville Olsberg.

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

**260 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, ON M5A 1N1**

Telephone: 416-865-1833
Facsimile: 416-865-9414
e-mail: tfpo@total.net
Charitable Reg. No. 108101627RT0001
Newsletter Editor: Janet Walters
ISSN 1481-8922

Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday: 9-4

Weekends: 10-4

Closed on holiday Mondays and the Sundays preceding them.

The Post Office will be closed October 9-10 for Thanksgiving, and November 11 for Remembrance Day.

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.