

# NEWSLETTER

## The Town of York Historical Society

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### CONDO DIG UNEARTHES ANOTHER TREASURE



Photo: Jennifer Yeaman / National Post

The wooden skeleton of an early 19th-century schooner was discovered by Archaeological Services Inc. (ASI) in early May of this year, on a condo development

site near Fort York Boulevard and Bathurst Street. ASI had been retained by the developer, Concord Adex, to undertake routine investigations mandated by the City during the excavation phase of construction. Earlier digs in the area have revealed portions of Queen's Wharf, a major commercial hub that jutted well out into Lake Ontario. "We suspect this ship was scuttled deliberately to provide a scaffold for the workers building the wharf," said ASI's David Robinson (*The Star*, May 7). Debris found nearby, including broken ceramic plates, helped to date the vessel from the 1830s. While this is not the only ship to have been unearthed in Toronto – a mid to late-19th-century vessel was discovered during the construction of the Sky Dome in 1986 – it is believed to be the oldest. Although the ship's remains will be impossible to preserve in perpetuity, they will be thoroughly studied and recorded, including a process of 3D scanning.

*Continued on page 8*

### Postman Exhibit at Queen's Park

The Legislative Assembly's Community Exhibits Program is an opportunity for cultural organizations from across Ontario to showcase their treasures and share their stories with a wider audience. Toronto's First Post Office has mounted several such small exhibits over the years. Currently we are featuring the life and career of Albert Jackson, Toronto's first African-Canadian postman. As the inclusion of artifacts (as opposed to just images) is strongly encouraged, this becomes an opportunity to show off the depth of our museum's collection. While the objects on display did not belong to Mr. Jackson, they would have been familiar to him, and include a cap badge identical to the one he wore.



Those of you who attended our March 6 event this year will be familiar with Appledore Production's musical drama, *The Postman*. It was recently performed as originally conceived – on a series of porches along Jackson's postal route in the Annex – as part of Panamania, the cultural component of the PanAm Games. It might interest you to know that Mirvish Productions has optioned any further development of *The Postman*.



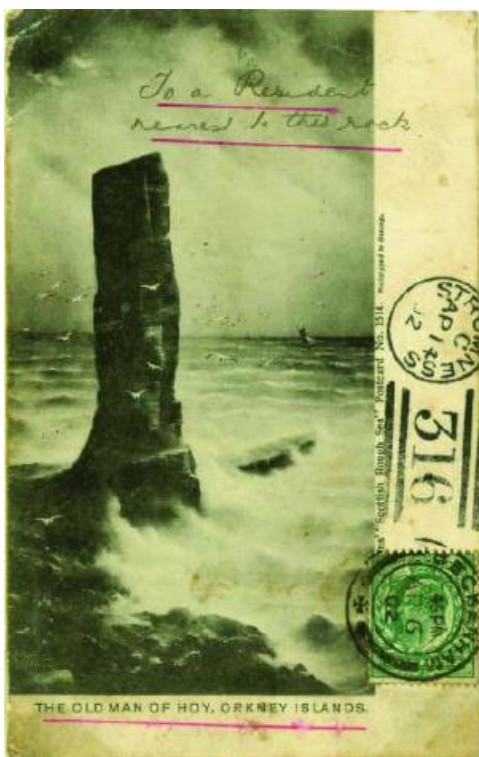
In 1903, Bray had himself delivered by registered mail to his family's home on Dovercourt Road.

## The Postal Prankster Who Mailed Himself (Among Other Things)

W. Reginald Bray was young, handsome and interested in sports. He was fond of cycling. He was also very fond of practical jokes. That year, he bought himself a copy of the *British Post Office Guide* – a massive volume comprising all the rules and regulations governing the operations of the Royal Mail. Thus informed, Bray set out to test the postal system to its very limits.

He started small. He would address unwrapped objects – a rabbit skull, a clump of dried seaweed, a half-smoked cigar – and slip them anonymously into the pillar box outside his family's suburban home. Larger things, such as a bowler hat or a frying pan, had to be taken into the post office. These were all, for the most part, addressed to himself.

The largest live animal that could be sent through the post was an elephant, the smallest a bee. Not having an elephant to hand, Bray decided to experiment with the family pet, an Irish terrier named Bob. According to the rules, a properly collared dog on a chain could be sent, collect, for a charge of three pence per mile. Bob, sent by express delivery on February 10, 1900, arrived home from the Forest Hill post office within six minutes. Bray followed that stunt by mailing himself, something he would do on more than one occasion.



"To a Resident nearest to this rock"

Another rule Bray liked to challenge was the one that dictated "letters must be delivered as addressed." He would write addresses backward, or hidden within a bit of cryptic verse. Sometimes he would give only the latitude and longitude of a destination, or send a picture postcard to the locale it illustrated. He was always careful to include his return address, as many of these missives came back to him stamped "insufficiently addressed" or marked "contrary to regulations." There was a small levy to pay on these returned items. A postman inscribed the following rhyme on one such postcard of Bray's:

*Pursuing this game  
We hope there are not many  
However, for your hobby  
You will have to pay a  
penny.*



A postcard crocheted by Bray's mother, with the stamps sewn onto it. Although the address is vague, one might assume that the local postmaster knew where to send it.



W. Reginald Bray was born in 1879 in Forest Hill, a leafy south London suburb, where he would live for all but the last year of his life. He was the son of a solicitor's clerk and would himself grow up to be an accountant. By outward appearance he was a model of respectability, a proper Edwardian husband and father [*ed: think of Mr. Banks in Mary Poppins*]. A philatelist who began collecting stamps and postmarks as a schoolboy, Bray was also an eccentric. He collected a great many things, including train tickets and, some say, girlfriends. His wife Mabel was one of three Hargreaves sisters he had courted at the same time before making up his mind.

In his later years he focused on collecting autographs and he amassed – still through the post – what is reputed to be the world's largest collection. Bray kept orderly files of his autograph requests (over 30,000 of them) and of the replies he received. Charlie Chaplin,



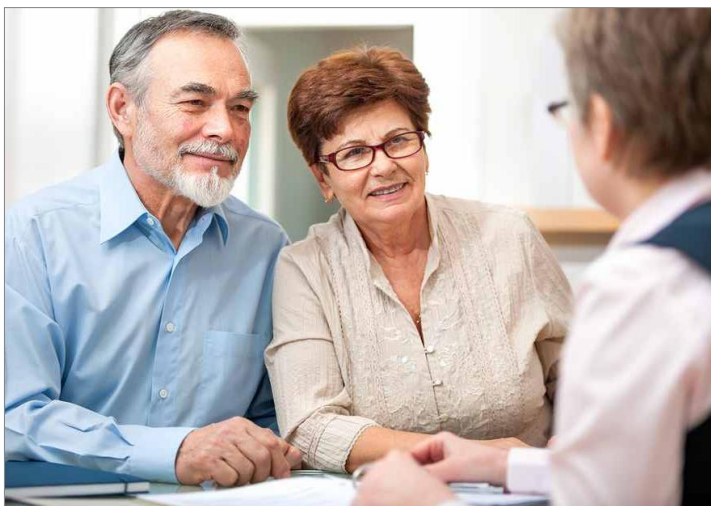
A postcard addressed "To a Resident of" and then a building in the photograph is circled. The card was returned, marked "Contrary to Regulations."



W. Reginald Bray in his office surrounded by his memorabilia.

Gary Cooper and Lawrence Olivier were among those who complied. Polite refusals came from Winston Churchill, George V, and Adolf Hitler. In the case of the latter, however, Bray did not take "no" for an answer until he had received its fourth, rather terse, iteration. He then gave up. The cost of postage to Germany was, after all, prohibitive. W. Reginald Bray, by then known as the "autograph king," died in Croydon in 1939.

## Making It Easier to Leave a Financial Gift to Charity



Many Canadians give back to their community through charitable donations or volunteer work. What you may not realize is that you can also leave a gift to your favourite charity through your legacy plans. If you're an active donor, consider planned giving when contemplating your estate plans.

Planned giving allows you to leave a gift to a charity you believe in – even after you're gone – to support its valuable endeavours for future generations. Planned giving also helps maximize your tax and estate-planning benefits. Your gift can be a one-time donation, a series of payments over a set period, or ongoing support. Many options are available to you, from a bequest in a will to more tax-efficient solutions such as life insurance.

Whether you have modest means or sizable assets, with careful planning, you can leave the legacy you want. Planned giving benefits both society and you, the donor. Large gifts should be made part of your long-term tax, financial and estate planning.

Contributed by Edvard Ryder, MBA Financial Advisor. E-mail: [edvard.ryder@sunlife.com](mailto:edvard.ryder@sunlife.com), Bus: 416-366-8771, ext. 2338.

# TORONTO'S HERITAGE IN THE NEWS

## New Face at Heritage Toronto



In February, Alexandria Pike, Chair of Heritage Toronto's Board of Directors, announced the appointment of Francisco Alvarez as the organization's new Executive Director. At the time she said, "His leadership will breathe new life into the organization, from bringing new sponsors onboard to spreading the word about Heritage Toronto's offerings." Alvarez would like heritage – including cultural heritage – to play a bigger part in the city's tourism promotion. Born in Bogota, Colombia and raised in Ottawa, Canada, Mr. Alvarez has lived in Toronto since 1974 when he came here to study at York University. Most recently he served as Managing Director for the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the ROM. He is also currently a Principal at Mr. Pink Art Consultants.

## Myseum on the Move

If you are wondering what happened to former Heritage Toronto ED Karen Carter, she's now the Executive Director of the Myseum of Toronto. Unveiled at a press conference on May 11, the Myseum is a privately run non-profit whose mission is to "bring about a deeper, more personal understanding and appreciation of all that is Toronto." Rather than being housed in a dedicated physical space, it will exist as an online presence and through pop-up events such as *Myseum on the Move*. The latter operates as a kind of library bookmobile in reverse: rather than dispense knowledge, it gathers artifacts and stories from the public who become co-curators of its digital collection and exhibits.



Photo by Jamie Bradburn/Torontoist

## Toronto Museum Network



Larry Ostola became Director of the City's Museum and Heritage Services in May of 2014. When he visited Toronto's First Post Office within weeks of his appointment, we pegged him as one who "plays well with others." Sure enough, in early June, he invited representatives from *all* museums in the city – "the tall and the small" – down to Fort York for a meeting. There he, and Marie Lalonde of the Ontario Museum Association, floated the idea of forming a citywide museum support and information network. As an added bonus, the gathering coincided with the arrival at the fort of the ruins of the scuttled schooner (p.1).



## TDSB Museum Officially Opens

The Toronto District School Board officially celebrated the grand opening of its Museum on June 18. Located at Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute (16 Phin Avenue), this is the largest public-education collection in Canada with over one million artifacts. The school board has been collecting since its foundation in the mid-19th century and has amassed a wide range of photographic and paper-based archives, natural history and archaeological objects, First and Second World War memorials, decorative arts and paintings, prints, sculpture, and drawings. The current exhibits focus on educational governance and the history of the TDSB viewed through artifacts and documents from various schools. Opportunities to visit the museum are by appointment only – please call 416-397-3682.





## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT Annual General Meeting



Over 60 people packed St. Matthews Lawn Bowling Clubhouse for the 32<sup>nd</sup> AGM of the Town of York Historical Society on May 11. The business meeting proceeded briskly, without questions or comments. This was likely due to the crowd's palpable interest in hearing what author and department-store historian



Bruce Kopytek – an American no less! – would have to say about Eaton's. Mr. Kopytek acquitted himself very well, even passing muster with a former Eaton's archivist in the audience. While most Canadians over a certain age have an Eaton's tale to tell, Mr. Kopytek shared some wonderful stories he encountered in the course of researching his book, *Eaton's: The Trans-Canada Store*.

Earlier in the evening, Richard Elliott accepted the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Sheldon Godfrey Award on behalf of his late mother, Elizabeth Elliott, a founding member of and tireless volunteer for the Town of York Historical Society. Coincidentally, Elizabeth met her husband Alan, the father of Richard and his brothers Steven and Andrew, through Timothy Eaton Memorial



Church, where they discovered a shared and enduring passion for music.

From top: TFPO's Janet Walters introduces guest speaker Bruce Kopytek; TYHS member Joyce Crook shows off her 90-year-old Eaton Beauty Doll, *Lela*; Sheldon Godfrey with Richard Elliott. Photos by Kat Akerfeldt.

## Paper Fair a Great Success



It was too crowded inside the post office to take any pictures, so Kat Akerfeldt had everyone pose on the steps at the end of a wonderful evening. More than 150 people attended our Paper Fair on June 18, many of whom were visiting the museum for the very first time. Not surprisingly (it was a

stationery crowd), we sold a lot of stamps. We also made a lot of new friends, and lined up some new products for our gift shop.

In no particular order, the participants in the fair were: Lichia Liu of **Gotamago**, Alicia Kelly and Christina Stanoulis of **Sea & Lake Paper Co.**, Carolyn Eady of **Sprouts Press Designs**, Queenie Best (**Queenie's Cards**) and Andrea Raymond-Wong of **Q&A Letterbox**, Lesley Pocklington of **Swell Made Co.**, Laura Velasquez of **Dreams on Paper** (not in picture), Jasmine Wall of **The Imagination Spot**, Chad Gendron of **Canadian Culture Thing (Valhalla Cards)** and Christina Crook, author of *Letters from a Luddite* and *The Joy of Missing Out*.

## Thank You to a Volunteer

We very much wish to thank outgoing volunteer Mark Couture for his patience (and for giving up his Sunday afternoons) over the past several months as he guided Kat Akerfeldt through the intricacies of web-page design. While still under construction, our new website is now live at [townofyork.com](http://townofyork.com).

Mark was introduced to us by his great aunt Kathleen Horiszy, a lifetime member of TYHS. Kathleen has bestowed many gifts on us over the years, but this just might have been the most valuable yet!



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Join Us for an Architectural Tour of Buffalo

See the work of America's greatest architects, learn about Buffalo's rich history, and visit places you've always wanted to go – or never knew you did! We will start with a walking tour that will include the magnificent Art Deco City Hall, from the observation deck of which one can see much of downtown. Other buildings will include Louis Sullivan's Guaranty building, Upjohn's St. Paul's Cathedral, the Ellicott Square Building and the recently renovated Lafayette Hotel where we will have lunch at the PanAmerican Grill.

After lunch we will head north to Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House along a route that will highlight Fredrick Law Olmsted's Parkway system, the Delaware Mansions and several other sights. After a guided tour of the Darwin Martin house and grounds, we will make a brief pit stop at the historic 1927 Parkside Candy store and ice-cream parlour before heading back to Toronto.



**When:** Saturday, September 12, departing at 8:00 am

**Where:** Depart from 260 Richmond Street East, by Café 260

**Pricing:** \$155 for Town of York Historical Society members, \$175 for non-members.

**Reserve** your spot by purchasing tickets no later than August 28.

**Call** 416-865-1833 for information, or go to [facebook.com/TOs1stPO](https://facebook.com/TOs1stPO)

## Fall Colours Tour of Norval and Glen Williams



Step back in time with us as we tour these pretty little hamlets near Georgetown. We will spend the morning in Norval, where author Lucy Maud Montgomery spent almost a decade (1926-1935), during which time she published six of her enduring novels. Local historian and Lucy-Maud enthusiast Kathy Gastle will show us the manse the author shared with her husband, the Rev. Ewan MacDonald, and give us a tour of the Presbyterian Church where he preached. We will then take a stroll through the L.M. Montgomery Garden, a tribute to Lucy-Maud's own garden, which is anchored by a unique sundial.

A short bus ride will then take us to Glen Williams, where lunch in the 19th-century Glen Hall will be catered by the Glen Oven Bakery. Historian Mark Rowe will then provide a brief talk on the village's history, highlighting some of its famous former residents. You will then be free to discover the town, including the artists' studios housed in Williams Mill on the Credit River. Visit Reeve and Clarke Books. This antiquarian book shop – which also sells ephemera and small antiques – is located in an 1847 general store where Timothy Eaton began his foray into the dry goods business. At 3:30 we will, perhaps somewhat wistfully, board the bus and head back to the big city.

**When:** Saturday, October 17, departing at 9:00 am

**Where:** Depart from 260 Richmond Street East, by Café 260

**Pricing:** \$99 for Town of York Historical Society members, \$120 for non-members.

**Reserve** your spot by purchasing tickets no later than September 30.

**Call** 416-865-1833 for information, or go to [facebook.com/TOs1stPO](https://facebook.com/TOs1stPO)





# THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND

## HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE: Toronto's Summer Sporting Sites Until September 26, 2015

This exhibition looks at the city's competitive summer sports from the early days of rowing and marathon swimming to cycling and baseball. Through photographs and artifacts, visitors can trace the evolution of summer sports in Toronto from the spartan conditions in the early town of York to the growth of professional sports facilities. The Toronto Industrial Exhibition (today's C.N.E.) was one of the first institutions to provide patrons with a proper viewing stand.

**The Market Gallery, 95 Front Street East, 2nd Floor, free admission.**



## SPADINA AFTER HOURS: A Speakeasy Saturday, August 15, 7:30 – 11:00 pm

Throw on some glad rags and get your wiggle on down to Spadina's speakeasy. Enjoy a jazz-era cocktail and shake a leg to live 1920s music, or nibble authentic treats and watch a silent film under the stars in the historic garden. The 1920s are yours to explore and enjoy... after hours. Don't be a "cancelled stamp" or a "drugstore cowboy" – get out and party like it's 1929!

**Spadina Museum, 285 Spadina Road. \$50 includes non-alcoholic refreshments, music, dancing and more. Cash bar. [spadinamuseum.streamintickets.com](http://spadinamuseum.streamintickets.com).**

## SUBURBAN STEAM: A Steampunk Fair Saturday, August 22, 11:00 am – 5:00 pm

Enjoy a day of historical make-believe (cosplay encouraged!) in an Edwardian Schoolhouse. Follow the lost ladies through an outdoor arcade of Steampunk vendors and demonstrations. Enjoy performances at centre stage and learn about Victorian and Edwardian-era styles and technological advances. There will be hands-on activities for all ages and, of course, tasty treats.

**Historic Zion Schoolhouse, free admission. 1091 Finch Avenue East.  
For further information call 416-395-7435.**



## DEAR SADIE: Loves, Lives and Remembrance from Ontario's First World War September 1 to November 30, 2015

This travelling exhibit from the Archives of Ontario tells the wartime stories of four Ontarians whose lives were forever changed by the conflict. There are the love letters between Sadie Arbuckle and Lieutenant Harry Mason. Then there are the Medical Corps records from Toronto surgeon Lawrence Bruce Robertson, who chronicled the stories of those men and women who tended to the injured and dying. Lastly there are the diaries of Private John Mould as he struggled to make sense of the tragedy of war.

**Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide Street East, free admission.**

## HURRICANE HAZEL REVISITED: A Heritage Toronto Walking Tour Saturday, September 19, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

In 1954 Hurricane Hazel flooded both the Don and Humber rivers. Water levels rose by over ten feet, making thousands homeless and killing 81 people. Learn how the "storm of the century" affected the landscape and residents of Weston. Visit some of the affected sites, from the bridge and homes that washed away to the little church that became a temporary morgue.

**Led by the Weston Historical Society. Free. Start at Little Avenue Memorial Park, 22 Little Ave. For more information visit [heritagetoronto.org](http://heritagetoronto.org) or call 416-338-0681.**



## Schooner, *cont'd from page 1*

Meanwhile, having been carefully packed and supported, the 15-metre-long structure was loaded onto a flatbed truck and taken to Fort York in early June, where it will be displayed outside the site's new interpretive centre. According to Wayne Reeves, chief curator for the City of Toronto Museums and Heritage Services department, the ship was likely built in the United States and used as a cargo ship. It would have been 16 metres long and weighed over 7,000 kg when it sailed Lake Ontario. "It's probably the oldest ship we've ever found in an archaeological dig anywhere on the Toronto waterfront," he told CBC News.

While excavating the schooner at the Queen's Wharf site, the ASI crew also discovered a boot! Based on the style and construction, it probably dates to between 1870 and 1895, which is when the ship was believed to be buried at the wharf. According to ASI, it has a leather upper and composite wood and leather sole and stacked heel. It has a blunt toe and four eyelets on each side. Modified



To discover a boot of this vintage in such intact condition is considered a very rare find.

### POST BOXES FOR RENT



Simply put, you're not going to find a better deal on a post-office box anywhere in downtown Toronto. The level of service is unparalleled. And what could be finer than to pick up your mail at a National Historic Site? Courier deliveries too! We take care of all your needs in a charming 19th-century location!

### Town of York Historical Society *Care to join us?*

Individual Memberships \$30  
Family Memberships \$50

Directors: Tom Arnold, Kevin Both, Shirley Farrar, Luisa Giacometti, Susan Grav, Suzanne Kavanagh, Judith McEvel, Councillor Pam McConnell and Nancy Wigston.



A wooden barrel was also discovered alongside the wreck of the ship.

after manufacture, the top edge of the leather has been crudely cut and there are 2 hooks for laces on the right side but only one on the left side. From this, and patterns of wear, it would appear to have been used as a right boot.

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

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#### Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday: 9:00 – 5:30  
Saturdays: 10:00 – 4:00  
Sundays: 12:00 – 4:00

Closed on holiday Mondays and the Sundays preceding them.

**The Post Office will be closed August 2-3 (Simcoe Day)  
and September 6-7 (Labour Day).**

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