

# NEWSLETTER

## The Town of York Historical Society

April 2017

Vol. XXXIII No. 1

### HONEST ED'S SIGN TO BE SAVED, RELOCATED



The sign on Honest Ed's will be saved when the iconic discount store is demolished this year. Photo: Marcus Oleniuk/ *The Star*

By the time Toronto bid “An Honest Farewell” to Ed Mirvish’s former retail emporium – in a four-day-long party on the last weekend in February – there was not much left but the signs. The small hand-painted ones, advertising “Ladies and Misses Fancy Panties 99¢” for example, had all been sold off as souvenirs. But the large, loud exterior ones yet remained, including the 30x60-foot signs that meet at the corner of Bloor and Bathurst. One of these, it turns out, is to be fully refurbished and reinstalled above the back doors to the Ed Mirvish Theatre on Victoria Street. This seems a fitting memento to a retail business that paved the way to a theatre empire. The sign itself smacks of showbiz, of Broadway, of Vegas. As David Mirvish told *The Star* (Feb. 8, 2017), “My father used to say he was trying to make Las Vegas look like a cemetery.”

*Continued on page 2*

### Annual General Meeting: Mark Your Calendars Now!

The Town of York Historical Society will hold its Annual General Meeting on **Monday, May 8, 7 pm** at the Young People’s Theatre on Front Street at Frederick. Following the business meeting, Allan Penning, YPT’s Director of Development, will give a brief talk and lead a tour of the theatre building. Although Young People’s Theatre was formed as a production company in 1966, it did not have a permanent home until 1977 when it moved into its current location at 165 Front Street East. The building (which dates from 1887) was originally a stable for the horses that pulled the Toronto Street Railway’s trolley cars. When the horses were replaced by electric power in 1891, the building housed an electrical generating plant until 1906. The Toronto Transit Commission then used it as a warehouse for some time, but for much of the 20th century it sat empty. It was slated for demolition when it was saved and repurposed by Zeidler Partnership Architects as a theatre.

**RSVP by calling 416-865-1833 or going to [agmtownofyork.eventbrite.ca](http://agmtownofyork.eventbrite.ca).**



## Honest Ed's, *cont'd from page 1*

A neighbour of Honest Ed's for years, Dorothy Lipovenko claims the blinking lights never bothered her: "It was like living in a carnival...or you felt like you were on the CNE Midway." Bobby Sniderman, who owns the Senator Restaurant across the street from the sign's proposed new location, is supportive of the project. His father, Sam Sniderman, was Sam the Record Man, whose equally iconic sign is also slated to be installed on Victoria Street. *The Star* columnist Edward Keenan worries somewhat that a city already known for its architectural façadism might fall prey to something he has dubbed "sign-ism." Neither Sam's nor Honest Ed's were commercially sustainable or architecturally significant but their signs were Toronto landmarks. One of Honest Ed's yells: "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE THIS, ANYPLACE." It's true now. While big-box stores and street-side chains can offer cheaper and often better quality goods, they just don't have the same *personality*. We may no longer *need* Honest Ed's, but we do need to remember it and how Mirvish Productions came to be.



A rendition of what the Honest Ed's sign would look like at the Ed Mirvish Theatre, courtesy of Mirvish Productions.

## L. M. Montgomery's Norval Home to Become a Museum



Presbyterian manse, Norval, Ontario, built 1888. Photo: Richard Longley

The manse where author Lucy Maud Montgomery lived from 1926 to 1935 is to become a museum and literary centre dedicated to her legacy. The L. M. Montgomery Heritage Society has recently purchased the home with help from private donations, and a fundraising campaign has been launched in order to pay off the mortgage.

The move to Norval from Leaskdale, Ontario, coincided with a relatively happy period in Montgomery's life. Riding high on the international success of her novel *Anne of Green Gables*, she was collecting royalties and even investing in the stock market. Her two boys were still young. Her minister husband, Ewan Macdonald, who had struggled for some time to find work, was now the

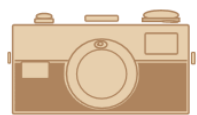
head of two parishes. His new job came with both local prestige and this stately brick home of which Montgomery was justly proud. As the minister's wife, she threw herself into community life – teaching Sunday school, organizing strawberry socials and bazaars, visiting parishioners and serving on church committees. She also established a drama club and concert series to provide both local entertainment and funds for the parish. She nevertheless still found time to write, publishing six novels and filling three of ten volumes in her journals.

The local landscape inspired her. "I love Norval as I have never loved any place since Cavendish," she wrote in 1927. She was especially fond of the pines on nearby Russell's Hill, which she could see from the windows of her house: "I always loved pines better than any tree." Of course there were dark days too. Like so many others, Montgomery lost a considerable sum in the stock-market crash of 1929. Coping with her husband's mental illness, which included hiding it from his parishioners, also took a toll. After his retirement in 1935, the family relocated to Toronto where Montgomery aptly named their house "Journey's End." She died in 1942 but her considerable legacy will endure. It will now have a new stronghold in a place she held most dear. Those of you who accompanied us on the Fall Colours Tour in October of 2015, and who peered in the windows of her then vacant former house, will have some understanding of why she loved it so.

# Meet Some *More* of Our Neighbours and Customers

## fathom story

narrative in a digital age



Ibrahim Khider considers himself to be first and foremost a storyteller. His writing, mainly in the field of music journalism, has appeared in on-line and print publications since 2000. In 2014 his first book, *Muslimgauze: Chasing the Shadow of Bryn Jones* (a biography of the British experimental musician) was published by Vinyl on Demand.

There are many tools to deliver narrative: pencil and paper, camera and microphone and computer software among them. Khider began as a writer, but has since expanded his vocabulary to encompass digital and analog photo stills, audio/video production, as well as nascent web development and graphic design. In 2013 he went back to school, graduating from Humber College's Multimedia Design and Development program in 2015. He now makes videos for businesses and non-profits: "Video for websites. When you need to look and sound good online." (Take a look at **fathomstory.com**).

Although trained in the proprietary software, such as Adobe Creative Cloud, Khider has always been a bit of an iconoclast and prefers to use free software, by which he means not simply "gratis." He also surrounds himself with mentors, both older and younger, in order to hone his crafts ongoing, and considers himself a lifelong student. While he carries a camera and microphone with him at all times in order to capture the "decisive moment," he's also got pencils in his pocket and he picks up his mail at Toronto's First Post Office.



Dwight E. Murray, founder of the Fade Master Academy and owner of Miami Fades Inc.

Although it is right around the corner from us on Frederick Street, we might not have known anything about the Fade Master Academy had the two sartorially splendid gentlemen below not shown up at Toronto's First Post Office. Founded in 2010 (but new to the neighbourhood!), this is a modern barber academy started by Dwight Murray – a talented and highly motivated young man who believes a good haircut can change your outlook on life.

The syllabus for the academy, which Mr. Murray penned himself, is designed to provide both theoretical and hands-on training, and also familiarizes students with all the health and safety regulations particular to the field. Since its foundation, the school has graduated over 400 students, almost all of whom are self-employed and many of whom are some of the best barbers in the industry today.

Not just an educator, Mr. Murray is also an entrepreneur, with three barbershops in the GTA, and a role model who encourages his staff to volunteer in the community to help build a better society.



## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT Old Toronto Kept Christmas Well



Author and walking-tour operator Richard Fiennes-Clinton was on hand December 1st to give a talk about Christmas traditions in Muddy York and early Toronto. In the early 19th century, as we know from Charles Dickens, Christmas wasn't much more than a day off – if you were lucky – and a good meal. How far from there to the Eaton's Santa Claus Parade!



Towards the end of December, Toronto's First Post Office hosted its very first wedding. It was a low-key but high-class affair that called for champagne – and champagne answered the call. Kimia and Max wanted to be quoted as saying: "Toronto's first post office feels like home...If you want to get married in a beautiful and cozy place, you should definitely consider this lovely place."

## THINGS STATIONERY Old Card Workshop



When the dust of Christmas at the post office had settled, it was time to face those stacks of used greeting cards many of us can't bear to part with. We keep them because they are beautiful, even if not particularly useful. So, on January 22, we set about to repurpose them into notebooks, new cards, wallets and sundry other useful items. Our second annual old card workshop was a sold-out event, attracting origamists, amateur bookbinders and all those kinds of people who just like to fold, cut, paste and stitch paper together.

## Valentine Paper Fair

Nothing – not flowers, not chocolate, not diamonds (okay, maybe diamonds) – says "I love you" quite as well as a handwritten note. And, if one is going to go to all that effort, it had best be done on some of the smashing stationery produced right here in the 6ix. Toronto's First Post Office had you covered with this seasonal fair that brought together some of Toronto's best makers in the paper-goods business. The first fifty people to arrive even got a sweet little swag bag with gifts from every participating vendor.



# Important Correspondence Gets Delivered



Long-time P.O. Box renter and member Harry Adamidis is seen here with Director/Curator Janet Walters in a staged photo op to acknowledge his donation, last year, of three “covers” related to Toronto’s First Post Office. One of them contains a complete letter written by Postmaster J. S. Howard. Of the others, one is addressed to Howard and the other is signed by his successor, Charles Berczy.



## Toronto 1867 / 1967 / 2017

Once again the Town of York Historical Society marked Toronto’s birthday in style at St. Lawrence Hall. This year, in a nod to Canada’s 150th, Bruce Bell told of the Hall’s role in both confederation and centennial year. Then, for dessert, veteran musician

Ian Bell and Toronto songstress Michelle Rumball (supported by Tom Leighton and Conrad Kipping) went toe-to-toe with tunes from two centuries.

TYHS would very much like to thank presenting sponsors Semple Gooder Roofing, Rockwerk Craft Stonemasonry, Taylor Hazell Architects, Ellington Real Estate and Straw Construction Group for making this event possible. Thanks also to Scheffler's Deli, Sweetgrass Brewing, Carousel Bakery and Aroma Espresso Bar for making intermission so delicious. Last but not least, thanks to all the neighbours and friends who donated goods and services to our successful silent auction – we couldn’t have done it without you!

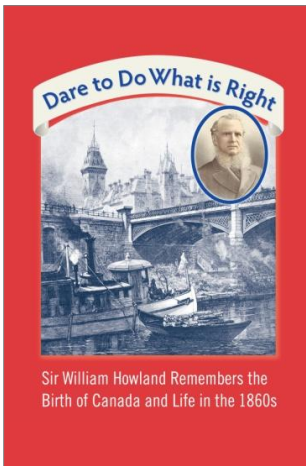


Above: Local raconteur, Bruce Bell. Below right: Our incredibly talented musicians – Tom Leighton, Ian Bell, Michelle Rumball and Conrad Kipping.



# COMING UP AT TORONTO'S FIRST POST OFFICE...

## Dare to Do What Is Right: What if Canada Never Existed?



In 1906, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier urged Sir William Howland to record his memories of the founding of Canada. The champion of Confederation's memoir was preserved by Howland's family for 50 years and languished in archives for a further half century. Now, the York Pioneer and Historical Society and Heritage York have jointly published this eye-witness account of the birth of Canada to celebrate our 150th birthday. The book includes colourful portraits of George Brown, William Lyon Mackenzie and other contemporaries in its lively description of business and political life in 1860s Toronto. On Thursday, April 20, at 7 pm David Raymont will read from *Dare to Do What Is Right*, and copies of the book will be available for \$20.



Toronto's First Post Office, free. RSVP at 416-865-1833 or [howlandbooklaunch.eventbrite.ca](http://howlandbooklaunch.eventbrite.ca).

## "Postgraphy" Exhibition Celebrates Philatelic Art



*Migrate*, Linda Ward Selbie, 2016, collage on paper with philatelic elements, 53 x 64 cm

Two new technological innovations, photography and the first postage stamp (England's Penny Black), were introduced within one year of each other in 1839–40. Inexpensive printed postage quickly caught on, as did sending penny postcards with personal photos, tourist scenes, and illustrations on them. While communication on paper is fast fading into the past, photographic images are everywhere. Linda Ward Selbie is a photographer who continues to communicate on paper. Her artwork is informed by a passion for adventure, travel and cultural exploration.



Toronto's First Post Office, April 21 to May 31.

Opening reception May 6, 2-4 pm. This exhibition is part of the Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival.

## Third Annual Paper Fair Coming Your Way in June



**Paper** / pā-per / n. a material manufactured in thin sheets from the pulp of wood or other vegetable fibres used for writing, drawing, or printing on, or as wrapping material.

If you are a lover of local and handmade stationery and have not yet attended one of these events, there's no need to admit that to anyone! Just show up in last year's t-shirt and nobody will ever need to know. 😊

Toronto's First Post Office, Saturday, June 10, 12-7.

# THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND



## **SETTLING IN TORONTO: The Quest for Freedom, Opportunity and Identity** **Until July 15, 2017**

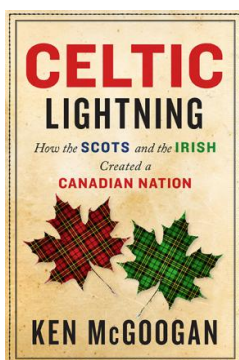
Through videos, oral histories, artifacts and historic documents, this exhibit reveals the evolution of Toronto from the 1700s to the present in personal stories of struggle, triumph, and celebration. This event is presented as part of *TO Canada with Love*, the City's year-long program of celebrations, commemorations and exhibitions in recognition of Canada's 150th birthday.

**The Market Gallery, 95 Front St. E., Tuesday to Friday 10–4, Saturday 9–4.**

## **ACO Toronto Presents: 150+**

### **Saturday, April 22, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Join the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario for a *Canada 150* celebration. This day-long symposium will feature talks on Pre- and Post-Confederation architecture in Toronto, as well as Centennial architectural projects in the City. The “keynote” video will be a special interview with Ontario Science Centre architect Raymond Moriyama. A catered lunch will be provided. **Ontario Science Centre, 770 Don Mills Road. Admission is PWYC. For more information go to [ACOToronto.ca](http://ACOToronto.ca). Register at: [acoto150.eventbrite.ca](http://acoto150.eventbrite.ca).**



## **ENOCH TURNER SCHOOLHOUSE FOUNDATION: Annual General Meeting** **Tuesday, April 25, 6:00 – 8:00 pm**

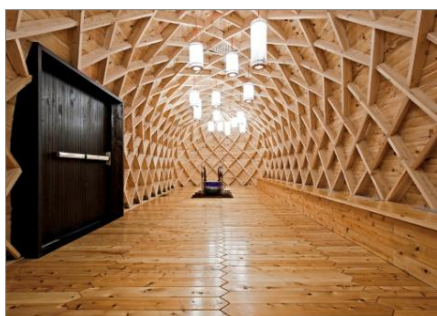
Following the AGM, join bestselling author and arctic explorer Ken McGoogan (*Fatal Passage*, *Lady Franklin's Revenge*, and *Race to the Polar Sea*) as he posits how the Scots and the Irish forged a Canadian identity out of five foundational values: independence, audacity, democracy, pluralism and perseverance. According to McGoogan, Celtic lightning struck when these two charged traditions came together, and gave rise to a Canadian nation.

**Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity Street. Free for Foundation members, \$12 for guests. More information: [info@enochturnerschoolhouse.ca](mailto:info@enochturnerschoolhouse.ca) or 416-327-6997.**

## **COPTIC-STITCH BOOKBINDING WORKSHOP**

### **Thursday, May 25, 6:00 – 9:00 pm**

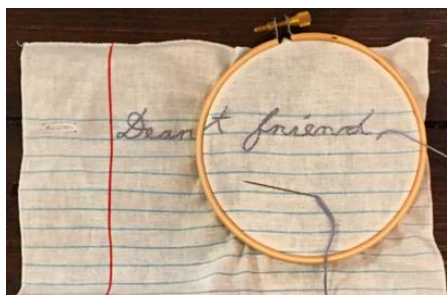
Learn how to make your own hard-cover Coptic journal with Carolyn Eady of Sprouts Press Designs. We'll cover the basics of bookbinding, go over the tools of the trade and then learn how to put it all together into a beautiful handcrafted journal. This is a hands-on class and participants will leave with a finished project. **Presented by Sprouts Press at Toronto's First Post Office. \$60; to register call 416-865-1833 or go to [sproutspressworkshop.eventbrite.ca](http://sproutspressworkshop.eventbrite.ca).**



## **DOORS OPEN TORONTO: 200 Years of Building Toronto** **Saturday and Sunday, May 27-28, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm**

The 18th annual Doors Open Toronto offers an opportunity to see inside more than 150 architecturally, historically, culturally and socially significant buildings across the city. The theme for 2017 is *Fifteen Decades of Canadian Architecture*, and the lineup features buildings from each decade since the 1860s, as well as a pre-Confederation cluster, of which TFPO is a part.

**Produced by the City of Toronto in partnership with the broader community. Admission is free. Info at [toronto.ca/doorsopen](http://toronto.ca/doorsopen).**



## New in the Gift Shop

There are whimsical things – jewelry from Here and Now that mimics folded paper and embroidery kits from Leafcutter that mimic loose-leaf. New notecards have arrived (Made in Brockton Village says “Hello!”) and the assortment on hand for Mothers’ Day runs



the gamut from sweet and sentimental to...well, that pretty much covers it. The mid-century designs from Flakes Paperie, on the other hand, convey greetings that are just as crisp and clean as the objects they depict. Speaking of clean, the bath salts from Gold Apothecary are rumoured to be highly addictive. Lastly, if suspenders have you thinking *Murdoch Mysteries*, it’s time to open your mind. We find this picture of Dustin Milligan and Warren Brown from *X Company* so



bracing. Kit yourself out in similar style with our handsome offerings from Cursor and Thread.



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

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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 close May 21 – 22 for Victoria Day and  
July 1 – 3 for Canada 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, Culture and Sport; our members, donors and customers; and Canada Post.

## 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 *Why not join us?*

Individual Memberships      \$30  
Family Memberships              \$50

Directors: Tom Arnold, Kevin Both, Adriana Ernter,  
Shirley Farrar, Suzanne Kavanagh, Geoffrey Milos,  
Councillor Pam McConnell and Nancy Wigston.