

# NEWSLETTER

## The Town of York Historical Society

October 2017

Vol. XXXIII No. 3

### WE WELCOME WE



Photo courtesy of Blog TO.

After a facelift and restoration by Kohn Architects, a Chicago Style building on the southwest corner of Queen and Parliament Streets will now serve as the global headquarters of WE, the charity formerly known as Free the Children. Founded by a then twelve-year-old Craig Kielburger in 1995, the organization has since established over 1,000 schools worldwide. In addition to development projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America, WE operates domestic school programs aimed at empowering youth to become socially engaged. The architectural style of its new Learning Centre – its steel beams and concrete slabs allowing for unobstructed

interiors – is well suited to the open-concept education facilities and office space WE was looking for. The style, championed by Louis Sullivan, arose from the reconstruction of commercial Chicago following the great fire of 1871. As exterior walls were no longer necessary for a building's support, its facades could be hung with "curtain walls." That, and the introduction of the electric elevator, allowed for the eventual development of the modern skyscraper. Meanwhile, by allowing for large glazed openings on the lower levels, it was well suited to newly emerging large-scale department stores.

*Continued on page 7*

### Albert Jackson Honoured with a Plaque

The staff of Toronto's First Post Office was there on July 21 when Heritage Toronto unveiled a plaque honouring one of our heroes – Albert Calvin Jackson. Many of the crowd gathered were descendants of the man who escaped slavery and overcame racial discrimination to become Toronto's first black postman. The new plaque is on Lombard Street, adjacent to an architectural remnant of the post office where Jackson would have collected mail for delivery. Toronto's First Post Office has been proud to work with the journalists, historians, playwrights and politicians who have shown an interest in Jackson's story. In 2015, TFPO presented a preview of David Ferry's play about Jackson, *The Postman*, at Toronto's 181st birthday. Most exciting of all has been meeting members of his family and sharing with them such pride in his legacy. We shall not rest, however, until this man's face appears on a Canadian postage stamp.



## FOND FAREWELLS

Two long-serving members of Toronto's First Post Office's staff have recently moved on.



Vanessa Bell, *The Last Minute Posters*, (1935)

Many have expressed their shock and disbelief upon learning that **Janet Walters** has retired from service at Toronto's First Post Office. Janet was Director/Curator for more than 15 years, and left her indelible mark on the museum, on the Old Town community, and on the preservation of Toronto history. Many of our members, customers, and box-holders have never known the museum or postal counter without Janet at the helm. Janet is leaving not only TFPO, but Toronto itself. She and Mr. Darcy are headed for new adventures in Prince Edward County. We will miss her terribly, but hope to visit soon!



Janet Walters and Janet Baptista in 2003.

**Janet Baptista** has also left her post. Janet was the public face of Toronto's First Post Office for many years as our weekday morning Postal Clerk. We wish Janet all the best in her future endeavours.

## NEW STAFF IN THE POST OFFICE



Frequent visitors to Toronto's First Post Office have already met our new full-time Postal Clerk, **Farnaz Hai**. Farnaz comes to us with an exceptionally high commitment to customer service, and a degree in International Relations and Political Science from the University of Toronto.

So far, all our regular customers and box-holders have given her a grand welcome.

## OTHER STAFF CHANGES

**Kat Akerfeldt** began at Toronto's First Post Office in 2003. As Assistant Curator, she has been the voice of TFPO's social media, the facilitator of education programs, and the wrangler of special events. Kat is now taking on the role of Executive Director.

**Zoé Delguste-Cincotta** has been with us since 2015 as a much-respected Postal Clerk. What her customers may not realize is that Zoé holds a Masters of Museum Studies, and we are very happy that she will be putting it to use as TFPO's new Curator.



## END-OF-YEAR GIVING

Thinking about your 2017 charitable giving? A donation of any amount to the Town of York Historical Society/Toronto's First Post Office makes a huge difference in our mission to preserve, interpret, and share the history of early Toronto and the old Town of York. Financial donations are eligible for tax receipts, too! Cheques may be sent to Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide St. East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1N1. Many other ways to send support, including by credit card or PayPal, can be found at [townofyork.com/support.html](http://townofyork.com/support.html).

**WHAT'S HOT IN THE SHOP?**  
**Treat Yourself to a Made-in-Toronto Soak**

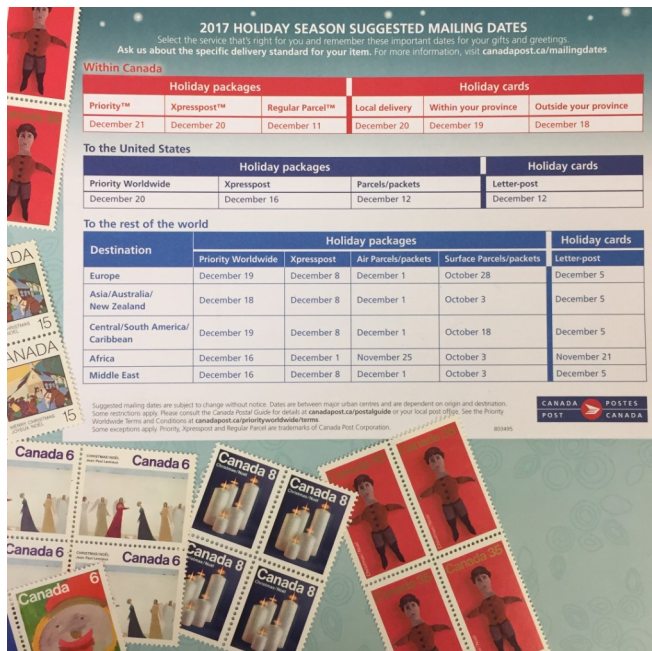


Gold Apothecary hand-produces luxurious bath salts, in delicious scents such as Sweet Bergamot and Citrus Eucalyptus. For thoughtful gifting, add a pouch of Neroli Woods incense cones.



Corktown Soap is now stocked in the TFPO Shop, and customers are already fans! Pro-tip: pick up a bar for yourself when you buy one to give. These make a wonderful hostess gift!

## MAIL EARLY FOR CHRISTMAS!



It seems to be forever summer outside, but the holidays are approaching! And Canada Post has issued their suggested mailing dates.

### International Cards and Letters:

Africa	November 21
Other international destinations	December 5

## To the United States

December 12

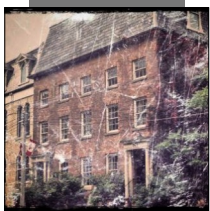
### Within Canada:

Outside of Ontario	December 18
Within Ontario	December 19
For local delivery	December 20

The schedule also includes dates for Priority, Xpresspost, and regular parcels, so pick up a copy at the P.O. if you plan to post larger happy mail.

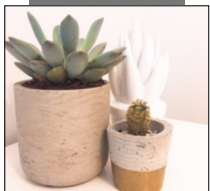
## COMING UP

At Toronto's First Post Office



### Paranormal Investigations with The Searcher Group

Friday, October 27, 7:00 pm  
[paranormalsearchers.eventbrite.ca](http://paranormalsearchers.eventbrite.ca)  
*Don't delay! This event will sell out!*



### Concrete Planters

Thursday, November 16, 6-8 pm  
 Mold and set a beautiful planter, and then paint, detail, and even plant a tiny succulent. \$20  
[concreteplanter.eventbrite.ca](http://concreteplanter.eventbrite.ca)



### December Open House

Thursday, December 14, 4-7 pm  
 Amble into the PO for our annual year-end social! We'd love to see you and catch up on the neighbourhood news. Free, please drop in!



### Post-a-Letter/Fans-of-Plans

Letter-writers, journalers, and writers of all sorts drop-in monthly.  
 October 15, 1-4pm  
 November 19, 1-4pm  
 December 10, 1-4pm  
 Free, donations welcomed.



### Planning on Paper

Thursday, January 18, 6:30-9:00 pm  
 Learn 3 proven notebook-based systems to organize and succeed in your New Year's resolutions. \$20  
[planningonpaper.eventbrite.ca](http://planningonpaper.eventbrite.ca)



### Old Card Workshop

Sunday, January 28, 2-4 pm  
 Give your best-loved greeting cards new life as you transform them into notebooks, wallets, and more. \$20  
[oldcards.eventbrite.ca](http://oldcards.eventbrite.ca)

## RECENTLY

Spotted at TFPO and Around Town

### #TFPOBookSale

We are very happy to report that the book sale held Sept. 22-25 raised over a thousand dollars! Proceeds were to go toward shelves for the research library, but we so overshot that goal that we were also able to make some much-needed updates to office equipment. Thank you to all who donated their gently-read books, and to our **Volunteer Nyka** who helped us process the initial donation of books that prompted the need for new shelves.



### Culture Days

Four sessions of quill-writing workshops sold out months in advance of this year's Culture Days festival, held Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. Let's do this more often!



### Harvest Fest

Meanwhile, TFPO staff and volunteers were also busy, helping enthusiastic visitors to Harvest Fest at Colborne Lodge in High Park to try writing 1830s-style, with quill and ink.



## WISH YOU WERE HERE?

Join our email list and have details on our upcoming events delivered to your inbox every month. Subscribe at <http://eepurl.com/bBFeu1>, or at [townofyork.com](http://townofyork.com). Of course, you may unsubscribe at any time.

You can also get up-to-the-minute news from Toronto's First Post Office via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Follow us @TOs1stPO.

# COMING EVENTS & BEST BETS

## In The Old Town and Beyond

### **Walking with Our Sisters Toronto Memorial and Art Installation**

October 15-29, 16 Phin Ave.

Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS) is a commemorative art installation that honours the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people. The installation consists of more than 1,900 beaded moccasin vamps made by community members across the country, representing the unfinished lives of the 1,181+ missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people.

#### **See also: Drop-in Beading Workshop**

Textile Museum of Canada, 55 Centre Ave., October 14, 1-4pm

By donation, RSVP [arichard@textilemuseum.ca](mailto:arichard@textilemuseum.ca)

To benefit Walking With Our Sisters Toronto. Participants will create a five petal Métis rose design.



### **Eaton's Goes to War: Family, Memory & Meaning**

Mackenzie House Museum, 82 Bond St., until January 31, 2018

Included with regular admission

During the First World War, 3,327 Eaton's employees enlisted to fight. Each time one of them was shipped overseas, a photo was displayed in the Toronto store. In commemoration of Canada's 150th birthday, Mackenzie House staff have been searching out accounts of the lives of these men. Who were these men and their families?

#### **See also: Sacred Stories—Toronto & The Great War**

Mackenzie House Museum, November 12, 2-3pm

\$10, register at [mackenziehouse.streamintickets.com](http://mackenziehouse.streamintickets.com)

Richard-Fiennes Clinton presents the contributions and stories of three Toronto soldiers who left behind diary entries, letters, and photographs chronicling their personal experiences of war.



### **Values and Visions in Public Schooling: What is Schooling For?**

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, November 14, 6:30pm, Free

This first in a series of four panel sessions is an in-depth discussion of public schooling. Historian Paul Axelrod sets the context by recalling the origins of public schooling in Canada. The panel: Annie Kidder, People for Education, former Deputy Minister of Education Charles Pascal, and Jonathan Kakegamic, Principal of First Nations Junior and Senior School of Toronto.

### **The Postal Museum, Clerkenwell, London, U.K.**

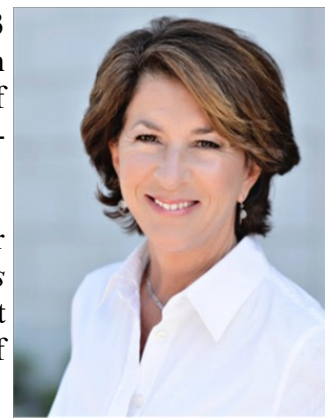
From our correspondent Nancy Wigston: "London's new Postal Museum is getting raves from visitors—from its Royal Mail Coaches to its 21m deep "rail mail" train, once used to transport millions of pieces of mail beneath London's streets. Insiders say it's a must-see in the English capitol and tickets are sold out through October. Pictured: the Mail Rail, about to board for its 20 minute loop through history."



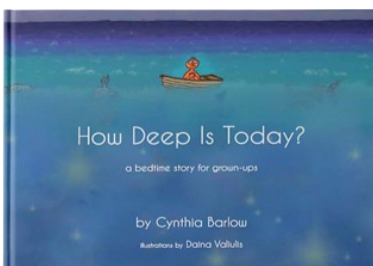
# MEET OUR NEIGHBOURS AND CUSTOMERS

## A Regular Series on the People who Help Support Toronto's First Post Office.

**Cynthia Barlow** is a facilitator, author, and executive coach, and President of C3 Conversations, a boutique training company providing leadership and facilitation development. She is a popular and experienced speaker who has inspired thousands of people to look a little deeper and reach a little higher with her thought-provoking, no-nonsense style.



Through a delightful metaphor of diving headfirst into the "deep sea of life," rather than playing it safe by snorkeling on the surface, Cynthia Barlow's *How Deep Is Today?* offers refreshing insights, humour and sage advice for all the grown-ups out there who are simply doing their best to navigate the increasingly turbulent tides of daily life.



Lighthearted yet deeply moving, Cynthia's wisdom and sass combine with stunning original illustrations to bring this awe-inspiring poem to life. Think of it as a bedtime story for grown-ups. Because we all deserve to have sweet dreams at the end of a long day.

*A few copies of How Deep Is Today? are available in The Shop at Toronto's First Post Office.*



**Nelly Villegas** was born and raised in Mexico, but grew roots in Canada long ago. An architect by profession, she became impatient to see the things she imagined become reality. She has thus decided to design and craft with fabric, drawing inspiration from the vibrant colour and intricate detail of textiles from her native Mexico.

"It all started with my grandmother's creative genes and talent. My *abuelita* was an accomplished seamstress. As a child, I enjoyed going with her to the fabric store and playing hide-and-seek with my brother among bolts and bolts of beautiful fabrics. My abuelita made my *quinceañera* and wedding dresses. She was always excited to see and hear about my creations, and just before passing, she was teaching me how to cut a circle skirt on a napkin."

For over six years now, Villegas has operated an Etsy shop, NellywithWings. On its virtual shelves are colourful Mexican fabrics by the yard as well as unique purses, wallets, fashion accessories and home décor. For your Mexican-themed wedding or party there are banners, coasters, tortilla warmers and beautiful little ring pillow in bold, bright colours. And, for the proactive Christmas shopper, the shop has begun to restock a colourful collection of fabric cactus ornaments. We love that so many of the reviews on NellywithWings comment that "shipping was faster than expected!"



# FROM THE COLLECTION: WAX JACK

by TFPO Curator, Zoé Delguste-Cincotta



As any visitor to Toronto's First Post Office knows, letter writing in the 1800s involved a lot of equipment. One of the most important parts of these historical correspondence was sealing wax. This device, pictured left, is called a wax jack. Its sole purpose: sealing letters with wax.

An 18th century invention, the wax jack gained popularity in Europe in the early 19th century, though they would remain quite rare in Upper Canada. What once took two steps with a candle and a stick of sealing wax was now simplified, saving the letter writer time. To use, the wax taper is lit, and the melted wax is poured directly on the envelope for sealing. This example from our collection dates from the 1830s and features a decorative wheel with a coiled beeswax taper, and a crank on a silver stand with a copper base.

## WE WELCOME WE, *from page 1*

The building at Queen and Parliament served as a furniture store for almost 110 years. It was built by John Francis Brown for the Home Furniture Carpet Co. Ltd. in 1907 and designed by the architect Henry Simpson. Interestingly, an eight-storey (!) building, also designed by Henry Simpson for Brown's previous location, still stands on Yonge Street with its two lower floors currently occupied by the discount home-furnishing chain HomeSense. Greatly enlarged in 1925-26, the store on Queen Street was operated by J.F. Brown and Co. until 1977. The following year it was sold to Marty Nefsky of Marty Millionaire Ltd., who too sold furniture, as well as offering rentals to the film industry.



What has been uncovered in the restoration is the former entrance to the Home Bowling Club (later Riverdale Bowling Alleys), also operated by J.F. Brown and Co. There were ten wooden lanes on each of the second and third floors of the building. According to Norm Nefsky, when his family took over, there were thoughts of operating a bowling alley. On learning that 30 lanes were, by then, necessary to make a go of it, Marty Millionaire filled in the gutters and used the space for storage. The remains of a snack bar was rented out to Roger Edwards, a well known designer of licensed sports apparel.

The new tenants will use the upper floors as office space to support their global efforts, while the main floor will house the learning centre. For WE, the location of the building is as important as its architecture. WE has been working with children in Regent Park since 2014. Furthermore, the vast majority of WE's employees (average age 26) live in the downtown core and welcome the opportunity to walk, cycle, or streetcar to the office. Over 300 strong, their presence will no doubt be welcomed by local Corktown business owners. Toronto's First Post Office welcomes them too. Jane Jacobs is oft-quoted as saying that new ideas need old buildings, but the opposite is also true: old buildings in Toronto need new thinking if they are to survive and thrive.



Photo courtesy of Toronto Archives.

## POST BOXES FOR RENT

Get Your Mail in a Museum!

- Unparalleled value and security
- Outstanding customer service
- Courier deliveries
- All within a National Historic Site!

All this, and you'll be supporting Toronto's First Post Office and the Town of York Historical Society.



## Why not join us?

Individual Memberships \$30  
Family Memberships \$50

Membership forms can be found at  
[townofyork.com/membership.html](http://townofyork.com/membership.html)  
or pop by the P.O.

**Directors:** Tom Arnold, Kevin Both, Adriana Ernter, Shirley Farrar, Michael Kasprow, Suzanne Kavanagh, Geoffrey Milos, Martin Rainbow and Nancy Wigston.

## Please note

Our email address has changed!  
[info@tos1stpo.com](mailto:info@tos1stpo.com)

Our website is still: [www.TownOfYork.com](http://www.TownOfYork.com)



@TOs1stPO

## Toronto's First Post Office

is administered by the

## Town of York Historical Society

260 Adelaide Street East  
Toronto, ON M5A 1N1

The Post Office will be closed November 11 in honour of Remembrance Day,

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# Town of York

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# TORONTO'S FIRST

## Post Office