

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

April 2019

Vol. XXXV No. 2

THE SHOW MUST GO ON AT THE CLASSIC THEATRE



The Classic Theatre, 1955.

The historic Redwood Theatre at 1300 Gerrard Street East was built in 1914 as The Classic, a vaudeville theatre, and one of the first public buildings in the newly developed area. The main building incorporated a smaller space, known as 1302 Gerrard East, which operated as a confectioner. For many years this

small space continued on as a convenience store as the theatre around it adapted with the changing needs of the community.



The Centre of Gravity, 2013.
Credit: Google Images

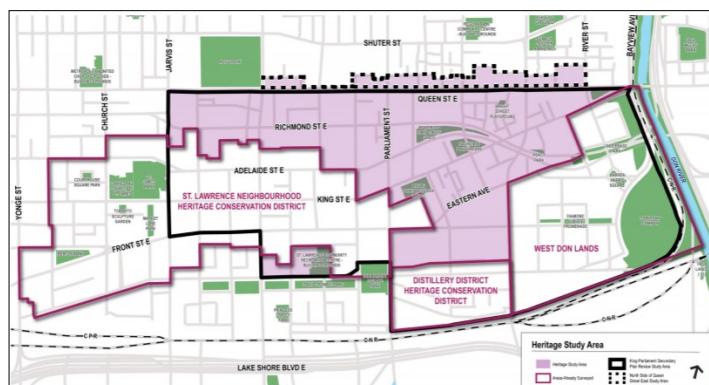
Although it only opened in 1914, the days of vaudeville were already coming to an end. The theatre followed the trend of many Toronto theatres of the time and renovated to be able to show moving pictures, though live acts such as “Curtis and Dawson, winners of the Sunnyside Female Impersonation Contest” still often accompanied the on-screen entertainment. In the 1940s and 50s, the theatre again went through technological renovations in order to screen “talkies”. Meanwhile, the theatre’s owners used the space in a variety of ways, including renting space to a local Presbyterian congregation, and installing pool and billiard tables.

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CITY SEEKS INPUT ON BUILT HERITAGE

In May of 2018, the City of Toronto’s Planning Department began a review of the “King-Parliament” area, King and Parliament being the central intersection of this area. This area includes Corktown, Queen Street East, the West Don Lands, Gooderham & Worts, Jarvis -Parliament, the Triangle Lands, and the Don River. In addition, the north side of Queen St. East between Jarvis and River St was included as part of the review as it had not been previously surveyed.

Planners were directed to focus on built form, the public realm, and heritage. Staff from Toronto’s First Post Office, along with other neighbourhood heritage experts, have been participating in a focus group to inform this review. There have also been workshops and meetings open to the public.



Continued on page 4

TORONTO'S 185th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



Lynne prints a souvenir using Mackenzie House's proof press.



Historian Bruce Beaton as William Lyon Mackenzie



The Interpreters: Victoria, Nathan, and Jared

Members and guests of the Town of York Historical Society spent this past March 6th in the Ballroom at St. Lawrence Hall, celebrating the 185th anniversary of Toronto's incorporation. The audience was roused with lively music from The Interpreters, while the Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society led the dancing. Then came a rare appearance by Toronto's first mayor, remarkably portrayed by historian Bruce Beaton. William Lyon Mackenzie had planned to speak at the centenary of the poet Robert Burns, held in the very same room in 1859. Unfortunately, ill-health kept him away. On March 6, 2019, only 160 years late, Mackenzie finally took to the lectern and rhapsodized on Toronto's first 25 years.

During the intermission, there was hands-on entertainment courtesy of Mackenzie House and Transit Bricks. Food was provided by the enthusiastic generosity of Scheffler's Deli, Olympic Cheese, Henderson Brewing Co. and Sparkplug Coffee. The Old Town Silent Auction, with fabulous lots provided by many local businesses, was the source of good-natured competition among the assembled. We must also thank Straw Construction and Hazell/Taylor Architects for their assistance in mounting this year's celebration.

The Town of York Historical Society first marked Toronto's anniversary 35 years ago, and we'll do it again next year. Mark Friday, March 6, 2020 on your calendar for Toronto's 186th birthday!



NEW FACE IN THE POST OFFICE

Toronto's First Post Office recently welcomed Natalia Rishchynski as Postal Clerk. Natalia took over the reigns from Farnaz, who departed with our best wishes in February, and has already been impressing our regulars.

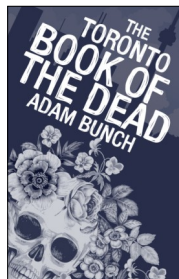
Natalia comes to us as a recent graduate from the University of Toronto, where she received an Honours Bachelor of Arts in History and completed a double minor in Political Science and Women and Gender Studies. She enjoys creative writing, baking, playing video games, and listening to podcasts. Along with learning the idiosyncrasies of the Canadian postal system, she has been exploring the neighbourhood and has been collecting food recommendations from our regular visitors. Of course, as we share the neighbourhood with St. Lawrence Market, she's already got a long list!

COMING UP at Toronto's First Post Office

INTRO TO brush lettering WORKSHOP

Join us for our
AGM with author
Adam Bunch!

May 8, 6:30pm
adam.bunch.eventbrite.ca
See page 5 for details.



Introduction to Brush Lettering Workshop

Thursday, April 25, 6:30—9:00 pm

In this 2.5-hour workshop, you'll learn how to use Brush Pens to master each brush stroke, write the upper and lower case alphabet, and connect letters to form words. Lots of tips and tricks will be shared, and each student will get individual attention in a small class setting. The Brush Lettering Toolkit comes with every ticket and includes brush pens, vellum tracing paper, worksheets and personalized name cards.

Members: \$95, Non-members: \$110.

Register at brushletteringtfpo.eventbrite.ca

Music at the P.O.: Christina Martin

Friday, May 24, Doors 6:30 pm

Rolling Stone Germany calls Martin “a superior singer songwriter”. Join award winning singer-songwriter Christina Martin for a very special evening at Toronto's First Post Office, accompanied by guitarist and producer Dale Murray. *Impossible To Hold* won the 2018 Music Nova Scotia Award Pop Recording of the Year and is Martin's sixth and strongest studio album, achieving a perfect balance between organic ambience and impeccable production.

Tickets: \$25, available at bit.ly/musicatthePO



NEW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT OPENS SOON

Artist Linda Ward Selbie will be mounting a new exhibit in Toronto's First Post Office this May.

The women (*damas* in Spanish) of Ecuador, will be displayed through the medium of postcards. Globally, women demand education, respect for work and contributions to community. In Ecuador, the care of family has moved outside of the female sphere, and so have the women themselves. The postcards will highlight the contrast in the lives of girls and women, including contrasting images of the rural and urban experience.

Damas is part of the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, and will be on display at Toronto's First Post Office from April 25 to May 31, 2019. Admission to the exhibit and the museum is by donation.

Image: Linda Ward Selbie, *Forest*, 2018.



KING-PARLIAMENT SECONDARY PLAN, *from page 1*

The Jarvis-Parliament area, also known as the Old Town neighbourhood, contains a concentration of properties with considerable cultural and built heritage value. Of course, a number of sites date from the city's early history, including the original 10 blocks of the Town of York, the South St. Lawrence Market/First City Hall, Toronto's First Post Office, and the Bank of Upper Canada, but many industrial buildings in use from 1850-1945 also survive to tell the story of that era of Toronto's history.

This review will be used to update Toronto's King-Parliament Secondary Plan, which was last updated in 1996. Since that time, the neighbourhood has transformed from an area used primarily for industry to a diverse mixed-use neighbourhood, a cultural hub, with more and more residential development. The King-Parliament Secondary Plan will provide direction to City Planners, ensuring that the special character of this neighbourhood is retained, and that the neighbourhood remains liveable.

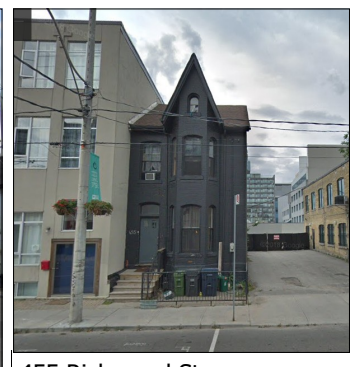
Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to participate and follow along with these consultations. Sign up for updates at bit.ly/KingParliamentPlan.



187 Queen St. East. Credit: Google Maps



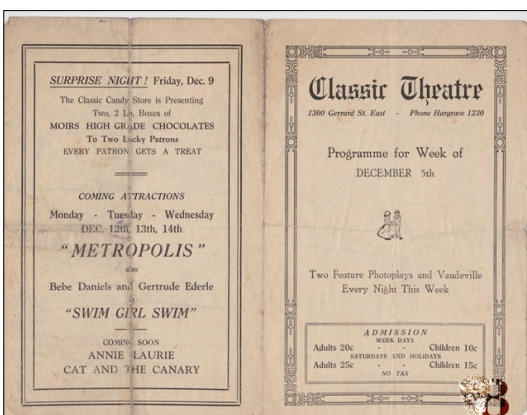
Bright St. Credit: Urban Toronto



455 Richmond St.
Credit: Google Maps

As part of the King-Parliament Secondary Plan, the City is creating a list of properties with potential cultural heritage value. Properties on the list may be recommended for inclusion on the Heritage Registrar.

THE CLASSIC THEATRE, *from page 1*



A Classic Theatre program for the week of December 5, 1927. Credit: Cinematreaasures.org

In 1956, it was taken over by Pennyworth's Department Store, and remained a retail space until 1998, when it once again became a performance venue. As The Centre of Gravity, a resident theatre troupe offered cabarets and circus skills classes, and operated The Sideshow Café in the smaller space.

Current owners Maria Karam and Rob Indrigo took over ownership in December 2017, and the history of using the building for a variety of uses goes on. The theatre now houses a farmers market, film screenings, dance parties, and, of course, live performances.

Maria will be our guide to the historic theatre on May 8th as part of the Town of York Historical Society's Annual General Meeting. Adam Bunch, author of *The Toronto Book of the Dead*, will also be speaking.

Plan to join us! More information can be found on page 5. RSVP at adambunch.eventbrite.ca or by calling Toronto's First Post Office at 416-865-1833.

AGM

Town of York Historical Society

Join us at the historic Redwood Theater for the TYHS Annual General Meeting. Following the business meeting, there will be a special talk by guest speaker Adam Bunch and light refreshments.

The Redwood Theater
1300 Gerrard St. E
Toronto, ON M4L 1Y7

TYHS Members: FREE
Non-members: \$10

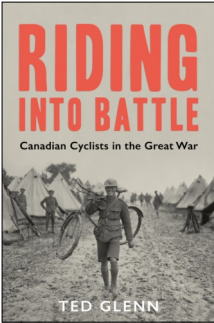


Author and filmmaker Adam Bunch.

6:30 PM
MAY 8TH

RSVP at adambunch.eventbrite.ca
or call Toronto's First Post Office at
(416) 865-1833
www.townofyork.com

ELSEWHERE



Battle of the Humber: Canadian Cyclists and Basic Training in Toronto, 1914-1916

Thursday, April 18, 7:30 pm, Montgomery's Inn, 4709 Dundas St. W.

The Etobicoke Historical Society hosts author and professor Ted Glenn, who will speak on the little-known story of Canadian Cyclists and how they prepared for their unique role in the Great War. Glenn will draw on diaries, memoirs, and newspaper accounts, as well as an amazing collection of photographs.

Exclusive event for members of the Etobicoke Historical Society. Memberships can be had at etobicokehistorical.com/become-a-member.html

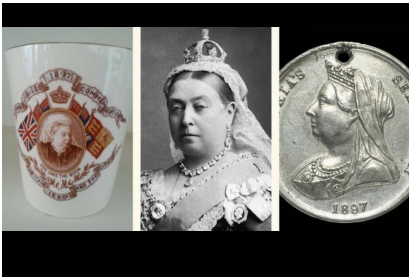


Battle of York Weekend

Saturday and Sunday, April 27-28, 10:00 am—5:00 pm, Fort York

Honour the 206th anniversary of the Battle of York. Fort York will come alive with musket firing demonstrations, Georgian cooking in the Officers' Quarters kitchen, guided site tours and special Battle of York walking tours.

\$6-\$14 admission.



She Wrought Her People Lasting Good: Queen Victoria in the Hearts and Schools of Ontario 1819-1901

Tuesday, April 30, 6:00 pm, Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity St.

To mark the 200th anniversary of Queen Victoria's birth, James A.S. Thompson presents an illustrated talk on this fascinating and complex monarch. The talk follows the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse Foundations AGM.

Admission: \$10 guests, members free.



Tarontos Lac: Putting Toronto On The Map

Wednesday, May 8, 7:00 pm, Metro Hall, 55 John St., Room 310

Hosted by La Société d'histoire de Toronto. Rich Laprairie, geographer and researcher of early Great Lakes mapping, will speak about his discovery of an 1678 map of New France. This map features the first appearance of Toronto's name.

Free admission. (Image credit: CBC News)

TORONTO LETTER WRITERS SOCIETY

Post-a-Letter Sundays are now the home of the Toronto Letter Writers Society! Hosts Jess and Andrea supply space and inspiration for writers, correspondents, journalers, and anyone seeking dedicated writing time. The Society meets one Sunday each month at Toronto's First Post Office.

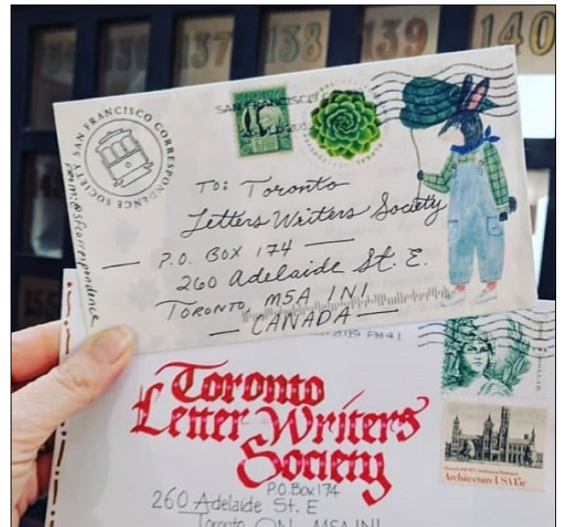
Upcoming dates:

April 14, May 5, June 9. 1:00-4:00 pm.

Free! Please drop in!

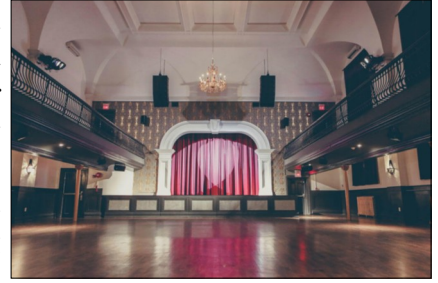
At a distance? A solitary scribbler? You are also welcome! Write to the Toronto Letter Writers Society at:

Box 174
260 Adelaide St. East,
Toronto, ON, M5A 1N1



HERITAGE NEWS IN BRIEF

GREAT HALL FOR SALE: The Great Hall at Queen St. West and Dovercourt was built in 1889 as the West End YMCA, and featured a basement swimming pool and a raised running track. World-record runner Tom Longboat trained here, and it is widely believed that it was the venue for the first basketball games. The Great Hall received substantial restoration work in 2016, and is now a popular event venue in the heart of “the coolest neighbourhood in the world.” Late last month, the four-storey corner building was listed for \$17,100,000.



OLDEST MAP REFERENCE TO TORONTO: In March, 2017, geographer Rick Laprairie ordered a high resolution copy of a 17th century map of Ontario from the Bibliothèque nationale de France. When he received the copy, he spied the label “Tarontos Lac” on today’s Lake Simcoe. It has long been known that Toronto’s name derives from the Mohawk word Tkaronto, meaning “the place where there are trees in the water.” Over the centuries, the name also referred to the portage route from the mouth of the Humber River to Lake Simcoe, where indigenous fishers created fishing weirs by driving stakes into base of the river at the narrows. The map is two years older than the previously known oldest reference to “Toronto.”

CENSUS OF TORONTO’S BLACK POPULATION: According to John Lorinc, reporting in the *Toronto Star* this past February, Anglican Bishop John Strachan hired Peter Gallego, a Black theology student, to take a census of the Black population in Toronto in 1840. Gallego presented Strachan with a list of 525 Black Torontonians, along with a list of their professions. It is unknown why Strachan requested this census, or what, if anything, he did with the data.

GLAMS GET SOCIAL: In April, the Archives of Ontario organized and hosted a symposium about how social media is changing the ways that the GLAM sector (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) connects with audiences. Curator Zoé Delguste-Cincotta presented the ways in which Toronto’s First Post Office creates and manages their social media content. This event was a wonderful opportunity for social media practitioners at various GLAM institutions to share their successes and challenges.



The Arrival, by Rowan Gillespie, in Ireland Park, Toronto

NEW SPACE WILL COMMEMORATE IRISH EMIGRANTS: The Ireland Park Foundation recently signed a five-year lease on the former Administrative Building for the Canada Malting Company. The Foundation plans to establish a new home in the three-storey building for the Ireland Park Foundation’s events and exhibits, dedicated to the Irish experience in Canada. Between May and October of 1847, Toronto, then population 20,000, became home to 38,560 Irish emigrants during the height of the Irish famine and typhus epidemic.

HEMINGWAY’S TORONTO APARTMENT FOR SALE: 1597-1599 Bathurst St., Unit 19, is where the *Farewell To Arms* author lived as a reporter for the *Toronto Star* in 1923-24. He then moved to Paris to work as a novelist. Hemingway paid \$85 per month to stay here. It is now listed at \$733,000, plus condo fees.



The Hemingway, 1597-1599 Bathurst St. (Photo: TOBuilt/Bob Krawczyk)

GET INVOLVED

Become a Member.

Show your support for history in Old Town Toronto, get 10% off in the shop, and receive the Newsletter right in your mailbox.

Individual Memberships: \$30 Family Memberships: \$50

Mail-in membership forms can be found at townofyork.com/membership.html

Donate.

All donations and memberships come with a tax receipt!

Cheques may be sent to Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide St. East, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 1N1. Many other ways to donate, including by credit card or PayPal, can be found at townofyork.com/support.html.

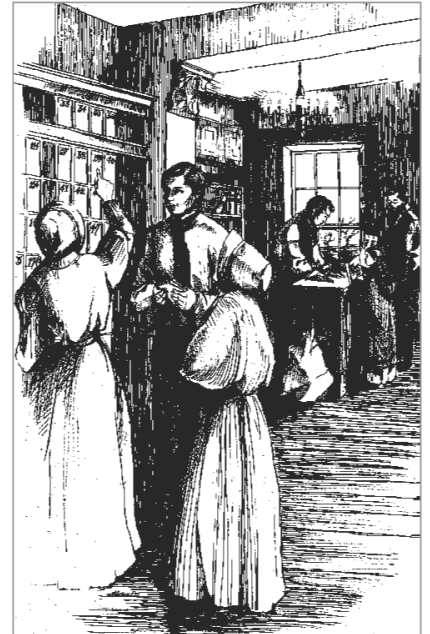
Get Your Mail at a Museum.

A limited number of P.O. boxes have become available!

Only \$185 per year, tax and membership included. Enjoy value and security, outstanding and responsive customer service, and courier deliveries. All within a National Historic Site. And yes, we're open on weekends!

Be Social.

We post regularly on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @TOs1stPO. Join us!



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 April 19, 21, and 22nd for the Easter long weekend,
May 19-20 for Victoria Day, and June 30-July 1 for Canada Day.

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Charitable Reg. No. 10810 1627 RT 0001
Newsletter Editor: Kat Akerfeldt
ISSN 1481-8922

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 Sundays preceding.

The Town of York Historical Society Board of Directors: Valerie Bayers, Kevin Both, Anthony Colvin, Katherine Dennis, Shirley Farrar, Geoffrey Milos, Corinna Prior, and Martin Rainbow.

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 Canada Post outlet.

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.

Town of York
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



TORONTO'S FIRST
Post Office