

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

December 2007

Vol. XXIII No. 3

LITTLE TRINITY CHURCH LOVINGLY RESTORED



Photo: Stephen Pearson

Completed in early 1844, Little Trinity Church – located on the south side of King just east of Parliament – is the oldest surviving church building in Toronto. With the exception of a fourteen-month period following a devastating fire in 1961, it has

served the people of its parish and beyond since the city was barely ten years old. Beginning in January of this year, the windows and other mouldings of this Gothic Revival building were painstakingly restored and, with proper maintenance, should weather another 165 years. With Christmas upon us it seemed appropriate that we offer this “good news” story to counter all the built-heritage doom and gloom of late.

Little Trinity was designed by Henry Bowyer Lane, then only 25 years of age and a recent British immigrant. The strong vertical lines and arches of his windows required that their wooden mouldings contain many joints and seams. In time, due to the natural movement of wood, these had opened up exposing unprotected surfaces and causing their deterioration. This was particularly true on the east side of the church where tree shade prevented the sun from drying the wet wood. Interestingly, however, it was the disintegration of a much newer window, installed after the 1961 fire, which prompted the restoration of others that had lasted over a century and a half.

Continued on page 4

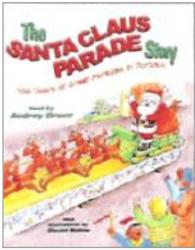
Paul Bishop’s Houses Once Again Homes

In our July 2004 newsletter it was reported that these Georgian houses at Adelaide and Sherbourne Streets, built by blacksmith and wheelwright Paul Bishop in 1842, were soon to be restored. While only the two walls visible in this photograph remained intact during this process, the end result is nevertheless a happy one. Hemmed in by taller condominiums in all directions, these mementos of early Toronto appear very much as they did in the earliest photograph taken of them – the major difference being that the entrances have been lowered to street level as the narrow sidewalk could not accommodate the steps that once led up to them.

Transom windows above the doors extend up to the original lintels, making for a graceful integration, and decks installed for the comfort of the new owners have been discreetly hidden at the rear of the cedar shake roof.



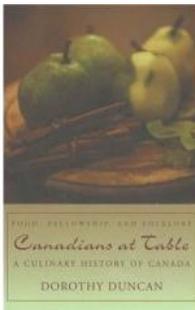
Great Gift Ideas...Books from the Gift Shop



The Santa Claus Parade Story
By Audrey Greer with illustrations by David Noble

J. B. Greer Publishers, 60 pages, \$15.95
Toronto's Santa-Claus Parade is the longest running children's parade in the world. Starting in 1905 and

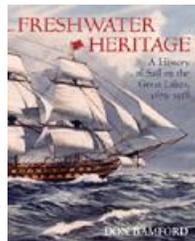
covering every decade into the 21st century, this delightful book for children of all ages captures the flavour and character of each era.



Canadians at Table, Food, Fellowship and Folklore: A Culinary History of Canada

By Dorothy Duncan
The Dundurn Group, 248 pages, \$35.00
This book provides a fascinating overview of our unique food and beverage history – including well known traditions that survive to

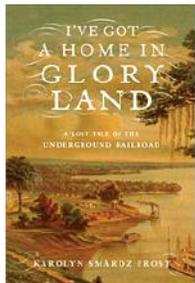
this day – and how it continues to change to serve all Canadians. It won for its author a Gold Canadian Culinary Book Award in 2007.



Freshwater Heritage, A History of Sail on the Great Lakes, 1670–1918

By Don Bamford
The Dundurn Group, 320 pages, \$34.95
Beginning with the first sailboat on the lakes through the naval battles of the War of 1812 to the

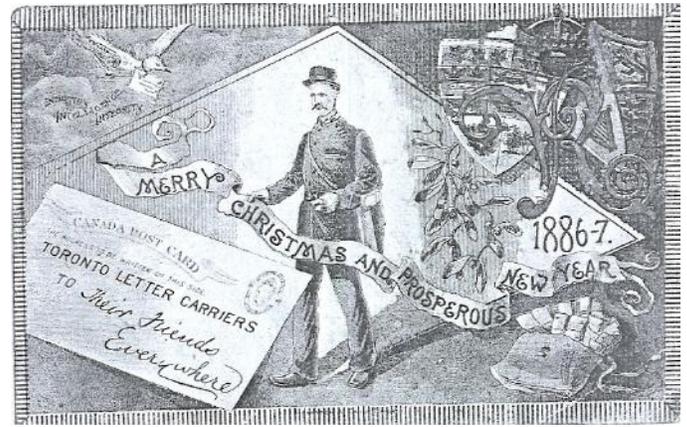
demise of commercial sail, the author combines a lifelong passion for sailing with a love of history to create this richly illustrated and comprehensive account.



I've Got a Home in Glory Land, A Lost Tale of the Underground

By Karolyn Smardz Frost
Thomas Allen, 480 pages, \$36.95
The fruit of more than twenty years of historical detective work into a fugitive slave couple's dramatic escape to Canada, this book tells the story of

Thornton and Lucie Blackburn who made successful lives for themselves in Toronto. It has just won the Governor-General's Award for non-fiction.



A Rare Find

One of our box holders at Toronto's First Post Office recently acquired this postcard and wondered if we knew anything of its history. We did not, but an e-mail to Peter Butler, President of the Greater Toronto Philatelic Alliance, put us in touch with Tony Shaman, editor of *The Canadian Philatelist*. According to Mr. Shaman's information, these cards were first issued in 1884 and continued in use until the 1892-93 season. Printed by Alexander and Cable of Toronto, they were chromolithographed and their design varied from year to year with a similar version in red produced for use by the Hamilton letter carriers. Free letter carrier service was established in Toronto in 1875.

Although there is nothing in the archives to confirm it, the current theory is that the production of these postcards was subsidized by the letter carriers themselves. This corroborates our initial supposition: the cards were a subtle reminder that a small token of appreciation at Christmas would not go amiss. The once-common practice of tipping the postman at this time of year has all but fallen by the wayside.

None of the known examples of these postcards are franked with postage. It is therefore a practice that our letter carriers today could not get away with.

POST BOXES FOR RENT

The postal boxes at 260 Adelaide Street East are historical reconstructions of the originals built by James Scott Howard in 1833 and once held by such notables as Mayor William Lyon Mackenzie. At the time of this printing, two of these boxes had become available for rent. Anyone interested should contact the post office at 416-865-1833.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tea at the Post Office

Come out and celebrate the new year in old-world style. We'll talk a wee bit about Scottish new-year traditions, and also learn about the profound impact the Scots have had on our national landscape. Most people think the battle on the Plains of Abraham was fought between the English and the French but, at the end of the day, one Scotsman surrendered to another. You'll also learn about a handful of men who came from Scotland's shores to build this city.

Dates: Sundays, January 6 (Twelfth Night) and January 26 (Robbie Burns Day weekend). Please arrive at Toronto's First Post Office by 3:45 p.m.



Cost: \$35 per person or \$50 for one adult and one child. Please be advised that reservations are essential as space is limited.

Menu: Tea sandwiches, scones with butter and jam, and an assortment of cakes, pastries and tarts served with your choice of tee, coffee or apple cider.

Call **Muddy York Tours** at 416-487-9017 for further information or to make reservations. Private parties and children welcome.

Authors at the School House

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse presents a lecture series on various aspects of Toronto history Wednesday evenings in February. Admission is \$10 or \$8 for ETS members.



Each lecture begins at 7:30 with light refreshments at 7 p.m.

February 6: Ron Fletcher, *Over the Don: An Anecdotal History of the Don River*

February 13: Carl Benn, *Creating the Urban: Toronto 1793-1914*

February 20: Sally Gibson, *Inside Toronto: Urban Interiors 1880s to 1920s*

February 27: Margaret McBurney, *The Great Adventure: 100 Years at the Arts and Letters Club*

"Yours to Discover" Tourism in Ontario Through Time



Ontario is one of the most popular travel destinations in the world. Niagara Falls has been attracting tourists since the French explorer, Etienne Brûlé, first came upon it in the early 1600s. Today visitors come to enjoy the natural beauty of the province's parks and countryside and to partake of the vibrant life of its cities. The Government of Ontario has long recognized the importance of the province's wilderness and recreational areas for tourism.

This exhibit, organized and circulated by the Archives of Ontario, looks back on tourism in Ontario through time, from the early settlers in Upper Canada to the travellers of the current day. It will be on display at Toronto's First Post Office from May 2 to June 26.



Little Trinity Church, *from page 1*



Photo: Stephen Pearson

During the restoration, all of the mouldings were stripped of paint to better determine their condition. Seven of the twelve lateral windows needed wooden parts replaced and some of the curved pieces required were discovered in church storage. For the rest, hardeners were applied and epoxy fillers used for holes and gaps (the originals had been hand-carved to fit the uneven brickwork). Surprisingly, only 23 pieces of glass had to be replaced. In addition, the mouldings and “eyebrows” on the 60-foot bell tower – not seen since the 1940s – were reinstated. Primed with a product containing linseed oil, the whole was caulked and cured before finishing coats of paint were applied.

When Little Trinity Church was originally constructed, local craftsmen donated both the labour and the bricks, which were of Don Valley clay. At the time, 3,000 people (out of a total Toronto population of 17,000) inhabited crowded quarters in this small section of town with hitherto no church of its own. Known as the “poor man’s church,” Little Trinity was largely attended by industrial workers – many of them Irish Protestants – living in what was then the east end of Toronto. The church’s founders, however, included Anglican Bishop John Strachan, Alexander Dixon (a wealthy merchant), William Gooderham and brewer Enoch Turner.

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

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Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday: 9-4
Weekends: 10-4
Closed on holiday Mondays and the Sundays preceding them.

The Post Office will be closed for Christmas December 23–26 and again on New Year’s Day, January 1, 2008.

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 Culture; our members, donors and customers; and Canada Post.

The church was enlarged in 1889 to seat 600, but the early 20th century saw the increasing industrialization of the neighbourhood and fewer local parishioners – albeit the congregation drew from a wider area with the advent of the automobile. Always a church with a strong social conscience, Little Trinity operated a soup kitchen in the 1930s and other hungry times.

The fire in 1961, which largely affected the newer addition, prompted a restoration of the church’s original proportions, although the floor was raised four feet to create a new church hall downstairs. Meanwhile the bell, pulpit and communion table are all original. The baptismal font was donated early on by the boys of Upper Canada College and the pews date from the 1850s. (The organ, a much later acquisition, was once owned by R.Y. Eaton.) The kind of continuity witnessed at Little Trinity is rare and valuable in our rapidly changing metropolis.

The Town of York Historical Society

Individual Membership	\$15
Family Membership	\$25
Lifetime Membership	\$150

Directors: Bruce Bell, Patricia Braithwaite, Richard Fiennes-Clinton, Gerald Doyle, Sheldon Godfrey, Cynthia Malik, Judith McErvel, Jennifer McIlroy (President), Councillor Pam McConnell, Melville Olsberg.