

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

October 2014

Vol. XXX No. 3

HESPELER POST OFFICE TO BECOME A MUSEUM



Hespeler Post Office, Cambridge, Ontario. Photo: Sean Marshall

The Fashion History Museum (FHM), whose address has always been a Cambridge post-office box, is soon to have a real bricks-and-mortar home – and it’s an entire post office! Since its inception in 2004, the FHM has operated, much like Theatre Museum Canada, as a “museum without walls.” That hasn’t stopped

co-founders Kenn Norman and Jonathan Walford from amassing a collection of over 10,000 garments, building a substantial library and archives of fashion-related publications and documents, and creating exhibitions that have been displayed locally, across Canada and internationally. Now, however, they are set to occupy the former Hespeler post office, built in 1922 and decommissioned in 1993.

This country’s post offices were once the proudest buildings in many a small town or city. Prominently located on major downtown intersections, they typically incorporated clock towers and other arresting architectural features. Canada Post continues to divest itself of these valuable real-estate properties in an effort to counteract the losses incurred by decreasing volumes of letter mail. Those of us in the built-heritage community fear the loss of these iconic buildings to development. We are cheered by news of any of these former community anchors being re-purposed – especially for public use. We are especially happy in this case to see a fellow museum inhabit a space that, after all, once belonged to all of us.

Continued on page 2

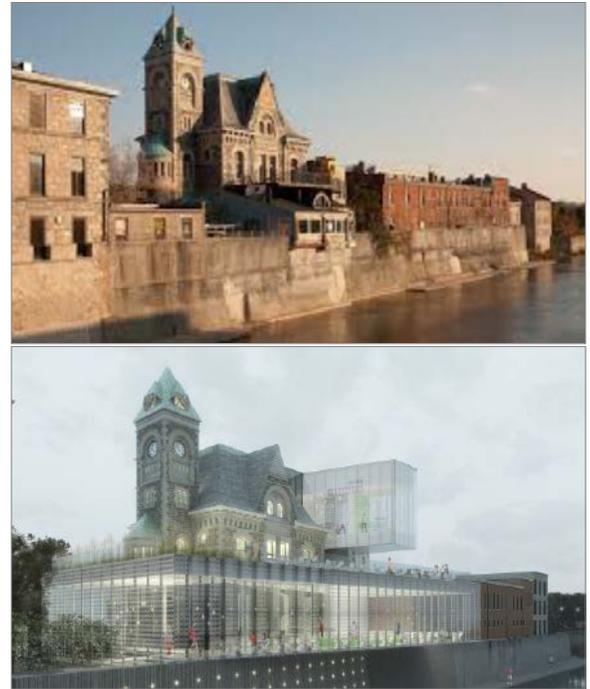
New Stamp Features Iconic Photograph



On October 1, 1940, photographer Claude Dettloff was taking a picture of the British Columbia Regiment marching down Eighth Street in New Westminster, when little Whitey Bernard escaped his mother’s grasp and ran towards his dad, Jack. The photograph was published in *The Vancouver Daily Province* the next day, over the caption: *WAIT, DADDY, I’M COMING WITH YOU!* Then, in today’s parlance, it went viral. It appeared in *Life*, *Liberty*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Reader’s Digest* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook*. It hung in every BC school during the course of the war. Whitey himself was recruited to sell war bonds, travelling for weeks at a time with a show that included ventriloquist Edgar Bergen. Whitey later recalled, “I’d come out at the end in front of a big blowup of the picture...asking everyone to buy war bonds to help bring my daddy home.” It worked like a charm. On October 4, Canada Post released a stamp featuring the famous photo now known as *Wait for me, Daddy*.

Post Office, *from page 1*

We are less sanguine, however, about plans for the former Galt post office, also located in the amalgamated city of Cambridge. Completed in 1887 under the direction of Thomas Fuller, Canada's Dominion Architect, the building was recognized as a National Historic Site in 1983. Its striking design includes elements of Romanesque, Gothic and Second Empire styles and it is finished in Guelph limestone. It is unique in that it has symmetrical twin façades; it shows the same face to both Water Street and the Grand River. Although the post office moved to new facilities in 1936, this building continued to serve as a customs house until 1963, after which it was threatened with demolition. Saved through the efforts of concerned citizens, it was used by various city departments until it was sold off in 1979. For decades it housed a series of restaurants and nightclubs – the last one being the Fiddlers' Green Irish Pub – but it had been mothballed for five years when the city repurchased it in 2012 for close to \$1 million. The plan is a laudable one: to convert the building into a contemporary library facility with a ground-floor restaurant, a family discovery centre and digital learning labs. The problem is with the hastily approved proposal. While we are getting used to glass boxes stuck on any heritage buildings lucky enough to survive, I'm afraid we might have to concur with Cambridge resident John Mitchell who told CBC news in July: "This design, quite frankly, is one of the ugliest I've ever seen."



The former Galt Post Office and Customs House as seen from the river side, as it is and as envisioned.

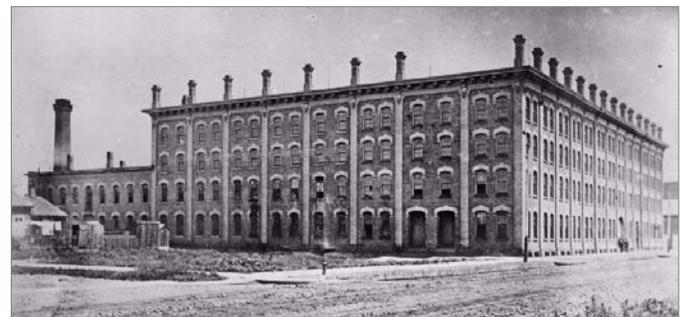


The former Spadina Hotel. Photo courtesy of alliedreit.com

Spadina Hotel Update: Good News for Adaptive Re-use!

The cover story of our April 2014 newsletter asked, "What's to become of the Spadina Hotel?" Staffers at Toronto's First Post Office have just learned that their own landlord, Allied Properties Real Estate Investment Trust, acquired the venerable hotel property at the end of August. According to Allied CEO Michael Emory, the company has every intention of "restoring the building to its former glory with full attention to the architectural detail of the exterior," and they "envisage high-end (non-national) retail use at grade and office use in the storeys above grade."

The garish blue paint on the brick cladding – that served as a beacon to backpackers during the hotel's incarnation as a hostel – will be removed with a wet sandblasting technique. Once restored, the building will echo some of the detailing, including buff-brick window heads, of 520-522 King Street west, which Allied also owns and where their corporate offices are located. That building, at the western end of the block, was built in 1872 as the Gurney Stove Factory. Samuel Richardson opened the doors of his hotel three years later. We only hope – for the sake of his guests – that the factory did not have a night shift!



The Gurney (E. & C.) Stove Factory when it was new. Photo courtesy Toronto Public Library. The hotel would soon be built to the extreme right (east), beyond a vacant lot.

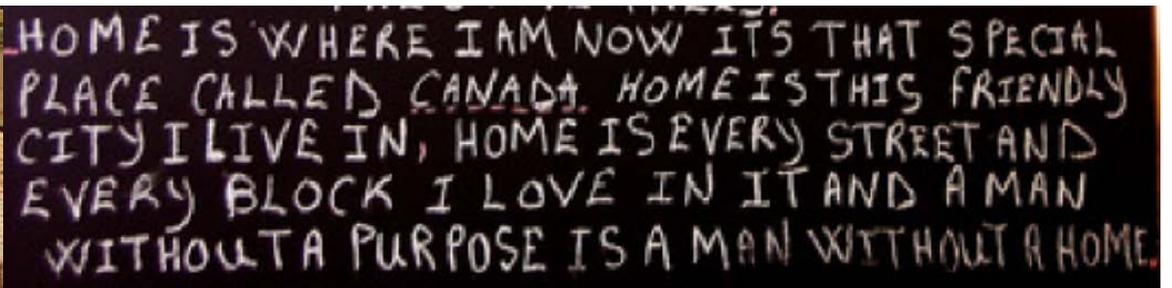
Meet Some *More* of Our Neighbours and Customers



PARK & PROVINCE, the Toronto-based online retailer, launched this spring with a brand list of domestic and international designers offering a timeless and contemporary aesthetic. Included are both up-and-coming and established brands such as General Assembly, Industry of All Nations, Portland General Store and even Levis. Co-founders Chris Naidu and Gray Butler each spent time in the menswear and fashion industries before teaming up to lay the foundation for their shop in early 2013. Born and raised in Vancouver, Naidu had established himself as a photographer when his eye for detail and design steered him into fashion. Toronto-bred Butler has been focused on men's style and dedicated to the local retail scene for many years. Together the two realized that, in a cluttered market, it's the essentials and quality that stand out – and that's what they're bringing to the table. According to *Toronto Life* magazine, the “overall look is equal parts preppy, geeky and whimsically retro – like the style lovechild of a J. Crew outlet and a cool consignment shop.” Having worked closely with the very people who seek these items, they understand that service is every bit as important as product. Chris and Gray make it their mission to follow through with their customers to make every shopping experience as seamless as possible. And they do it at Toronto's First Post Office!



Elias Makhoul has been feeding people fresh, delicious and homemade food from his emporium on the southeast corner of Jarvis and Richmond Streets for over 20 years. Yes there are muffins, but there are also falafels and other wraps, bagels, salads and his famous V-9 lentil soup that's guaranteed to make you break out in a case of health. First-timers are offered a piece of the “world famous” (and habit-forming) apple cake for free. Don't be intimidated by the overwhelming blackboard menu – Elias will make you any combination of what's on offer. And what's on offer is more than just food; it's one of the warmest welcomes you're likely to find in this town. A cash-only establishment, on-the-spot credit is offered to customers caught short by this fact – even to those he's never laid eyes on. Originally from Lebanon, Elias returned from a visit to his home country two Christmases ago with a bride, Annie. On September 13, the two welcomed all comers to a first-birthday party for their adorable daughter Stella. Stella is on hand most days, her chief duty (according to dad) being to sell banana bread – which comes in walnut, blueberry and chocolate-chip varieties.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Photo: Marcus Mitanis. urbantoronto.ca

Fort York Interpretive Centre

On September 19, Fort York officially opened its impressive new visitors' centre. The understated weathered steel palisade, designed by Vancouver's Patkau Architects and Kearns Mancini, hunkers under the Gardiner Expressway facing Fort York Boulevard and the newly developed neighbourhood of condo towers which, through the Section 37 program, provided a fifth of its \$25 million construction budget. Toronto's First Post Office was proud to participate in the ensuing celebratory Common Ground cultural festival that weekend by hosting an information table in the Fort's venerable "blue" barracks.

TFPO at Nuit Blanche



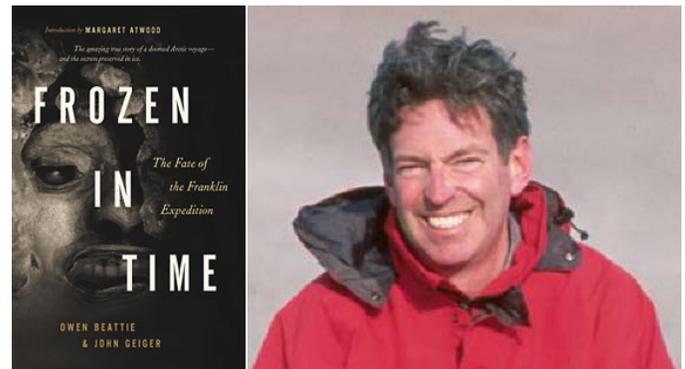
Part of the *Landmark* installation in St. James Park by the Exhibit Change collective. Photo: Taku Kumabe

Thanks to photographer Taku Kumabe, Toronto's First Post Office featured in a larger-than-life photo essay in St. James Park the night of October 4. Kumabe's work was part of a larger collective project to "uncover our city's unsung heroes and reveal the many layers of our history all around us."



On October 7, *1000 Dinners TO* invited Torontonians to be a part of a citywide discussion about our future. Small-scale dinners took place in homes, restaurants and community centres all over town where guests shared ideas about what could make Toronto an even better place. Your editor was invited to a potluck supper held in the day room at Mackenzie House, where talk focused on what role museums might play in building and transforming communities. The event's overall organizers, public relations firm Navigator Ltd., compiled and analyzed feedback from all participants, which was then shared publicly and also presented to the mayoral candidates at a CBC-hosted debate on October 16.

You Won't Want to Miss...



John Geiger is CEO of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and the author of five books of non-fiction, including *Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition*. This fall, he was a key participant in the expedition that discovered one of Sir John Franklin's lost ships, the HMS Erebus. With this discovery, one of Canada's oldest mysteries came a little closer to being solved and within a week it had spawned more than 500 news articles in 33 languages in 61 countries, according to Marc-André Bernier of Parks Canada. Come hear John Geiger's unique insights on the recent headline-making find in the context of the broader Franklin story. It will be an unforgettable evening!
Monday, November 24, at 7:00 p.m.
Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity Street
A fundraiser for Toronto's First Post Office

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND: Lest We Forget

DISPATCH: WAR PHOTOGRAPHS IN PRINT, 1854–2008

Until December 7, 2014

From Roger Fenton's photographs of the Crimean War (1854–55) to Louie Palu's videos from Afghanistan (2008), this exhibition investigates how photographic representation of war has evolved in the Western press over 150 years. Through photographs, magazine spreads, slide shows and newsreels, Curator Thierry Gervais highlights the production of photographs and the collaboration between photographers and picture editors in the making of visual news.

Main Gallery, Ryerson Image Centre, 33 Gould Street. Closed Mondays.



FIERCE IMAGININGS: Text and Image in First World War Literature

Until December 19, 2014

This exhibition focuses on the words and images of those who served in the Great War – individuals like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Erich Maria Remarque, but also on that of writers born decades after 1918 such as Pat Barker, Sebastian Faulks and Joseph Boyden. These perspectives, far removed from one another in time and personal experience, illustrate the continuing importance and extraordinary influence of a war that was fought one hundred years ago. Free tours are offered on November 6 and December 4.

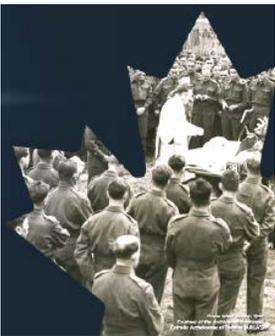
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, 120 St. George Street (open weekdays only).

FOUR FAMILIES, ONE WAR

November 1, 2014 – January 11, 2015

This exhibit, will look at how four Toronto families experienced the Great War through the voices of those who fought overseas, and those left here at home. Featuring original letters, journals, photographs and posters from the library's Special Collections.

TD Gallery, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street.



CALLED TO SERVE: Canada's Military Chaplains of all Faiths

November 6 – 16, 8:00 am to 6:00 pm daily

Through photographs, paintings, press clippings, posters, letters, poems, uniforms and other artifacts, this exhibit pays tribute to the brave padres who joined members of the armed forces on the front lines of past wars and still walk with them today in regions of armed conflict and natural disasters. Unarmed and often working alongside medical field personnel, chaplains lend spiritual support to fighting troops, comfort the wounded and bereaved, console the dying and provide dignified burial for the dead.

Cathedral Church of St. James, northeast corner of King and Church Streets.

TORONTO'S GREAT WAR ATTIC

The First World War had a catastrophic global reach. With more than 230 self-identified ethnic groups in our city, there is an unprecedented opportunity to collect personal stories and images of keepsakes and heirlooms passed down from many countries by those who lived through the war, either in military service or on the home front, to their descendants now living in Toronto. *Toronto's Great War Attic* is hosting a series of "Pop-Up Museums" and you're invited to be the curator - display your WWI keepsakes, share your stories, and gain insight from historians and curators.

Upcoming dates and locations include November 13 (Joseph D. Carrier Gallery, Columbus Centre), November 15 (Gibson House Museum), and November 28 (Cedarbrae Library). More information is available on the City of Toronto Museums website.





Danny Murphy and his dog Tank, Photo: Kevin Scrimshaw

Local Fixture Dies at Sixty-One

Danny Murphy's was a familiar face in the St. Lawrence Market neighbourhood. For years his "day job" had been to sell newspapers such as *Outreach* outside the liquor store at Market and Front Streets. Danny himself wasn't homeless – he lived in a rooming house on Ontario Street – but this activity supplemented his small pension and made him a lot of friends. Arguably, Danny's *best* friend was his Labrador retriever, Tank. Danny had adopted Tank about three years ago and the two became inseparable. Inseparable, that is, until Danny passed away on September 16 and Tank was taken – despite the protestations of his neighbours – for ten days of observation at the City's Animal Services.

When it became known to LCBO staff and patrons that Danny was gone, a small shrine of flowers and notes grew outside the liquor store. Then, on September 25, Covington Capital Corporation (a local business) hosted a memorial for Danny in the mezzanine kitchen at St. Lawrence Market. About 80 friends and acquaintances gathered to share stories and raise a toast of Old Milwaukee Ice (Danny's beer of choice) in memory of the neighbourhood icon. It was announced at the time that, given a clean bill of health, Tank would be available for adoption the following Monday. That's when Paulette Touby, editor of *The Bulletin*, accompanied by Danny's friend Kevin Scrimshaw for moral support, went to pick him up. After some initial hiccups, Tank is getting used to his new family, and luxuries such as wall-to-wall broadloom and the free shampoos and pedicures offered him by Chris Moise, owner of Pet Cuisine. Danny would be so happy.



Frank and Paulette Touby with their dogs Daisy and Tank
Photo: Vince Talotta/Toronto Star

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

260 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, ON M5A 1N1

Telephone: 416-865-1833
Facsimile: 416-865-9414
E-mail: tfpo@total.net
Charitable Reg. No. 108101627RT0001
Newsletter Editor: Janet Walters
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 the Sundays preceding them.

**The Post Office will be closed on November 11 in
honour of Remembrance 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.

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

Individual Memberships	\$25
Family Memberships	\$40
Lifetime Memberships	\$250

Directors: Tom Arnold, Kevin Both, Allan Boynton, Luisa Giacometti, Sanford Hersh, Susan Grav, Suzanne Kavanagh, Judith McErvel, Councillor Pam McConnell and Nancy Wigston.