

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

December 2014

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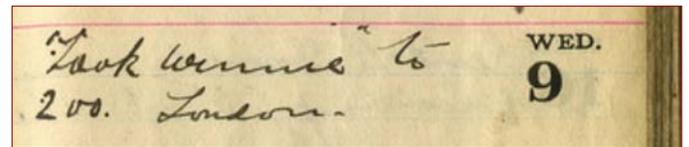
DECEMBER 1914



Almost exactly one hundred years ago, as he prepared to head for the front lines in France, Lieutenant Harry Colebourn took his pet bear to the London Zoo for safekeeping. A veterinary surgeon from Winnipeg, and a member of the Fort Garry Horse, Colebourn had acquired the bear in White River, Ontario, as his troop

train moved east to Valcartier, Quebec. The doctor was a man of few words. His diary entry for that day reads: "Aug.24. Left P. Arthur 7 A.M. on train all day. Bought Bear \$20." Colebourn would later name the orphan cub *Winnie*, after his home town, and she crossed the Atlantic with him to become an unofficial mascot of the 34th Regiment of Cavalry.

It had been Colebourn's intention to collect Winnie when the war was over, and take her home with him. In the interim, however, the bear – who was very tame – had become a great favourite with visitors to the zoo and Colebourn was persuaded to let her stay. It was there she was later befriended by the author A.A. Milne and his young son, Christopher Robin. And the rest, as they say, is history.



as one might find anywhere. It began, however, as a rather plain two-and-a-half-storey brick building designed by John Ewart under the supervision of William Warren Baldwin, Treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada. Conceived as the east wing of a larger master plan, this phase was completed in 1832 for about £2,000. It stood alone on six acres of park lot that had been purchased from John Beverley Robinson, and looked much like a large aristocratic house. And, like a house, it had bedrooms – both in the attic and in a northwest addition (since demolished) designed by Baldwin and completed in 1833. Here slept students at law who had come from outside the town of York. These "quarters" were to be its near undoing.

Osgoode Hall N.H.S.

Toronto is home to 36 National Historic Sites but none is as magnificent (to our mind at least) as Osgoode Hall. Despite being the product of successive additions and alterations, the building that faces Queen Street from behind an ornate fence and a well maintained lawn, is as fine an example of Palladian-style Victorian architecture

Continued on page 4

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



It was a full house at Enoch Turner Schoolhouse on November 24 when upward of 140 people crammed into the West Hall to hear **John G. Geiger**, CEO of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society (RCGS), talk about the ongoing search for Sir John Franklin. Before he began, he was presented with a lapel pin, on behalf of the Explorers Museum in Ireland, by Mark Terry – a member of that museum’s Board of Directors and a Fellow of the RCGS (see above). The award recognized Mr. Geiger’s role in the recent discovery of one of Franklin’s ships, the HMS Erebus. The crowd was lucky. Geiger’s vast knowledge of the history surrounding the ill-fated 1845 Franklin expedition, and his first-hand experience in contemporary scientific follow-up missions, meant that they were treated to an account like no other. It was during the Q&A following the talk that Geiger really shone, however. His excitement about the discovery, and his anticipation of what further revelations the ship’s contents might yield, were infectious. The Town of York Historical Society is extremely grateful for his generosity in sharing this tale on behalf of Toronto’s First Post Office.

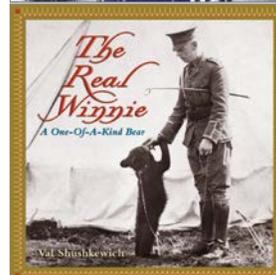
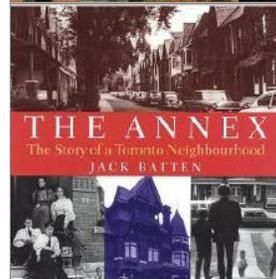
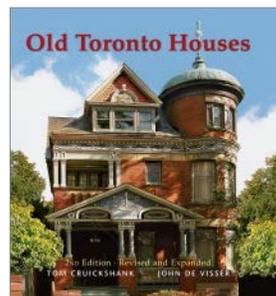


Another New Face at TFPO

Jess Roycroft joined the staff of Toronto’s First Post Office this fall, stepping into the big shoes of Cara Patterson when the latter relocated to Hamilton, Ontario. A native of North Bay and a veteran of that community’s public-library staff, Jess is a 2013 graduate of the University of Ottawa with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (cum laude) in Anthropology. That background, coupled with her subsequent retail experience, well prepared her to deal with the myriad of face-to-face situations one encounters at the city’s oldest communications hub. From processing student loan applications to sending money to Uganda, from bulk shipments to that one special gift that’s just got to get there, Jess has it nailed. Please join us in welcoming her to both Toronto and TFPO!



Don’t Forget the Gift Shop this Holiday Season!



We’ve got gorgeous books for all the local history buffs on your list, and we’ve got the bags to put them in. We’ve also got little zippered cases in three sizes. For someone who has everything, there’s always a personal seal and some sealing wax...and, just to let you know, our vintage stamp packs are back!



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, December 7, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Join us for the recently revived annual year-end social at Toronto's First Post Office! We'll be making mail art and papery crafts, remembering Christmas traditions from Old York, enjoying some festive nibbles and libations, warming up by the fire, and looking forward to the year ahead. Don't forget to bring along your Christmas cards for mailing! **Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide Street East, free. For more information, please call 416-865-1833 or check it out at facebook.com/TOs1stPO.**



CRISIS ON ST. CRESKINS

December 13-15, matinées (2:00 pm, 13th and 14th only) and evenings (7:00 & 9:30 pm)



Repairs to their own accommodations find the students of Boyce Naval Academy billeted at Hart House College on the eve of that school's St. Creskins celebration. They may even collaborate with the art students in the annual telling of that tale. Furthermore, as young Henri Fabergé – the apple of Boyce Headmaster General Lorette's eye – gets a taste of the bohemian life, a crisis may be brewing...

Campbell House Museum, 160 Queen Street West, \$20. Call 416-597-0227. This show contains mature subject matter suitable for patrons 12 and older.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF CHRISTMAS AT CASA LOMA

Until December 28

Visit with Santa in his workshop (until December 23 only) and tell him your Christmas wish, enjoy exciting live theatrical performances of *The Snow Queen*, feast your eyes on 10 fabulous Christmas trees decked out by top designers, experience a Winter Wonderland lighting display in the gardens, sing along with live carolers, create festive arts and crafts, explore on a giant holiday character scavenger hunt and much more..

Casa Loma, 1 Austin Terrace. Regular hours and admissions apply. For more information, please call 647-725-0707 or e-mail info@casaloma.org.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL: Humber River Shakespeare Company

Wednesday, December 17, 7:00 pm



Gather with friends and family as five actors bring this timeless tale of greed, ghosts, salvation, and hope to life. With Victorian costumes, enchanting masks and a trunk full of story-telling treasures, they will transport you from Scrooge's cold bedroom to a dismal churchyard, the Cratchit's meagre table, Fezziwig's joyful party and the brightness of a Christmas morning fresh with snow.

Black Creek Pioneer Village, 1000 Murray Ross Parkway, \$20 for adults, \$10 for children. Tickets at brownpapertickets.com.

JANE AUSTEN CHRISTMAS SUPPER

Friday, December 19, 7:00 to 10:00 pm

Here's your chance for a taste of Jane Austen's world. Sit at an elegant table by the fire and enjoy a full historical meal comprised of the foods she and her contemporaries knew. A blend of the familiar and the intriguingly different, these utterly delectable dishes show us a lesser-known aspect of her time. Period costume is welcome and encouraged, but entirely optional.

Historic Montgomery's Inn, 4709 Dundas St. West, \$45. Reservations required: 416-578-1031. Further information at janeaustendancing.ca.





Osgoode Hall, *from page 1*

Following the rebellion of 1837, billets were needed for the troops who arrived to garrison the city. Into Osgoode Hall they moved, and there they stayed until 1843. Assessing the damages, architect John Howard described the Baldwin



“Range” as bruised, bayoneted and bug-infested. Although the law society received only £500 in restitution, it almost immediately contracted Henry Bower Lane to restore and expand the hall. A west wing was built at last. Both wings were given monumental stone porticos, and the centre block was crowned with domes. This is the building that appears in the watercoloured etching (page one) published in Gleason’s pictorial, Boston (17 July 1852), p.44.

The last major 19th-century expansion (1855-1857) was by the firm of Cumberland and Storm, who completely redesigned the centre block both inside and out, creating the lavish interiors we see today. Some consider the



2nd-floor library (below left) to be the most beautiful room in Canada. If you haven’t seen it, you must. If you go during Doors Open Toronto, take advantage of the view (above right) from the neighbouring Canada Life building – as if a miniature 19th-century movie set has been lowered into the heart of the modern city.

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

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Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday: 9:00 – 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 December 25-28th for Christmas, January 1 for the New Year, and February 17 for Family 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 *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 McErvell, Councillor Pam McConnell and Nancy Wigston.