

NEWSLETTER

The Town of York Historical Society

July 2018

Vol. XXXIV No. 3

OUT OF THE GROUND AND INTO A BOX

Most museums are only able to exhibit a small percentage of their collections. This may be due to space constraints, environmental controls, and the condition of the object. Generally, what you see has been carefully selected for its educational value as extremely typical—or extraordinary—of its kind. But the objects in museum storage are generally available for research. And while in museum storage, they are kept under the highest standards to keep that object safe. We hold these high standards because these objects, selected for their historical value, are held in the public trust. They belong to all of us.

Archeologist Ron Williamson of Archaeological Services Inc. (ASI) has been calling attention to a problem with how the province's licensing system for digs fails the public. Just like objects in Ontario's museum collections, archaeologists are required to hold the fragments and objects that they find during excavations in trust. Unlike the world's museums, Ontario's archeological heritage is not often made available to the public for research or education. And archaeologists are not held to the standards required to keep these objects safe from deterioration once they are out of the ground. Tens of thousands of objects are vulnerable and uncatalogued in basements, storage units, and garages.



A collection of ceramics, cleaned and waiting to be organized by ASI staff. Source: [instagram.com/archaeologyto](https://www.instagram.com/archaeologyto)

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LIVING "THE SETTLERS' DREAM"

by correspondent Janet Walters, Toronto's First Post Office's former Director/Curator and Toronto ex-pat.

They truly roll out the red carpet for you here in Prince Edward County. Just across the street, as I begin to write, they have just painted the newly refurbished tennis court a marvelous shade of brick. This was a final touch in the renovation of Benson Park (a Canada 150 project). Benson Hall, home to PEC Parks and Playgrounds, sits just behind the tennis court, its broad white balcony beckoning. It beckoned to me because, as it turns out, somewhere under that blue-green paint beats the heart of Picton's 19th-century post office.



Family portrait of the Barker House on its original Main Street site. Source: *The Settlers' Dream*

In 1806, Abraham Barker, the 10th son of a United Empire Loyalist who had arrived in 1784, purchased a 200-acre farm in Hallowell township comprising much of what is now downtown Picton. By the time of the American invasion in 1812, he had built an elegant wood-frame two-storey house in the Loyalist – or "Wilderness Georgian" – style. Barker, along with his nephew, opened a general store in 1824. They were popular men with a reputation for honesty.

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COMING UP

At Toronto's First Post Office



Canadian Historic Places Day

Saturday, July 7, 10:00 am-4:00 pm. *Free! Please drop by!*

Pop into Toronto's First Post Office for a visit and ask a costumed interpreter your questions about the Town of York, or how the postal system worked in early Toronto. Try your hand with quill and ink! Join the national celebration during the second annual Canada Historic Places Day by visiting your favourite historic place and discovering local social and cultural history.

Watercolour Workshop: Hibiscus

Thursday, July 19, 6:00-9:00 pm. \$30

Hosted by artist Jennifer Fryer. Capture some sunny summer vibes with bright hibiscus greenery! In this beginner/intermediate workshop, we will learn how to use concentrated watercolours, masking fluid, as well as a variety of salts, drips, and splashes to create a vibrant hibiscus painting. Pre-registration is required.

Register: hibiscus.eventbrite.ca or call 416-865-1833



Brooklyn Doran Concert

Thursday, August 16, Doors: 6:30 pm, Show: 7:00 pm. \$15

Brooklyn Doran is an indie folk singer-songwriter, originally from Kenora, Ontario who is now based in Toronto. Brooklyn weaves song and storytelling, from humorous anecdotes to emotional ballads, to delightfully folk-infused love songs. Her music has received airplay on CBC and contemporary radio, and has been featured in music publications worldwide. Performing both as a solo artist, as a duo, or in her full 5-piece band, Brooklyn has snatched the hearts of fans across Canada. Tickets are limited for this special event, so act fast!

Tickets: shows.sidedooraccess.com/shows/859173339



Post-a-Letter Sundays

July 8, August 12, and September 9, 1:00-4:00 pm. *Free! Please drop in!*

A free, monthly drop-in for writers, correspondents, bullet journalers, and all those who would like dedicated writing time in good company.

Stay tuned for more details on these upcoming events...

Culture Days: Quill Writing Workshops

September 29-30. *Free admission, but pre-registration is required!*

To celebrate Culture Days, Toronto's First Post Office will be leading free quill-writing workshops! Write a letter as they did in the town of York in the 1830s. Your letter can be mailed, so don't forget to bring an address!

Sign up for our newsletter at TownofYork.com to be the first to hear when registration opens.



Autumn Bus Trip to Niagara-on-the-Lake

Join us for a all-inclusive trip to beautiful and historic Niagara-on-the-Lake! Members of the Town of York Historical Society will get the first look at details when their invitation arrives by mail before registration is opened online, so keep an eye on your mailbox!



ELSEWHERE

In Toronto's Old Town and about Toronto History



It's About Time: Dancing Black in Canada

Ignite Gallery, 165 Augusta Ave.

Weekends only, July 14—August 12, 2018

Curated by Seika Boye, PhD, this exhibit exposes the representation of Blackness on Canadian stages, as well as audience and media reception of Black performance in Canada 1900—1970.

Toronto's Old City Hall, an Illustrated Talk by Architectural Historian Marta O'Brien

Beeton Hall, main floor, 789 Yonge St.

Tuesday, July 24, 2018, 6:00—7:00pm

Our much-loved third City Hall has been restored over the past 20 years: its beautiful carved stone details are vivid, and much of the interior is as lavish as when the building opened in 1899.

Mixed Messages: Making and Shaping Culinary Culture in Canada

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, 120 St George St

May 21—August 17, 2018

An exhibition featuring a diverse selection of rare Canadian cookbooks, periodicals, and culinary objects from 1840-1967, telling the story of those who shaped the culinary culture of Toronto.

Bike City: How Industry, Advocacy and Infrastructure Shaped Toronto's Cycling Culture

The Market Gallery, 2nd Floor, 95 Front St. E.

June 30—November 17, 2018, Admission: \$5.00-\$8.00

Today, the bicycle is a mode of transportation for almost a million riders in Toronto, yet sharing the road has been an ongoing challenge for city builders and users for over a century.



**WALKING TOURS:
SUMMER SERIES!**



SUMMER WALKING TOURS

Join us for a series of walking tours as we explore the Town of York, and the issues that faced the early city of Toronto in the 1830s.

July 14, 12:30-2pm

The Battle of York, 1813: Terror in the Town

August 25, 12:30-2pm

Death, Violence, and Justice in the Queen City

Tours start and end at Toronto's First Post Office. Tours run rain or shine, and may cover rough ground. All ages are welcome. Dogs and bicycles are welcome as we walk, though portions of some tours may include indoor areas where they are restricted.

SAYING GOODBYE TO STEPHEN OTTO



On April 22, Toronto lost a dear friend with the passing of Stephen Otto.

Otto was a member of the Town of York Historical Society, and his tireless work was recognized by the Society with the Sheldon Godfrey Award in 2010. His name will be most closely linked with the fight to protect the area around Fort York so that the National Historic Site would be surrounded by green space, a place of honour. Steve was a co-founder of the Friends of Fort York in 1994, helped to set up the Fort York Foundation in 2006, and was a knowledgeable resource for many seeking solutions to the biggest challenges of city-building, or the smallest details of Toronto history. Steve Otto will be greatly missed.

NEWS IN BRIEF



MUSEUM OF ILLUSIONS OPENING SOON

Though Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrors may have moved on from the AGO, Old Town Toronto is abuzz with news that a new selfie hot-spot is moving in! Already a draw in Austria, Croatia (pictured, photo courtesy of Instagram user @mullinger_), Malaysia, and Oman, the new Museum of Illusions is scheduled to launch later this summer on King Street East, near St. Lawrence Hall, with more than 60 opportunities to snap yourself in a variety of optical illusions and wacky spaces.



LOST & FOUND AT CAMPBELL HOUSE

A carefully chosen collection of building fragments has returned to downtown Toronto as part of a year-long exhibit. These stone fragments, rescued from numerous demolition sites in the 1950s and 60s by Rosa and Spencer Clark, then became part of what is now the Guild Park and Gardens, or went into long-term storage. Very appropriately, the exhibit includes a commemorative stone which stood on the site of Town of York's Courthouse, where Campbell House's Sir William Campbell was the first presiding judge. (Pictured: the head of Bacchus, Roman god of wine, a keystone from the Ontario Bank, 34 Wellington St. East, 1868-1964)



ANNEX HOME FACING DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT

6 Walmer Road, built in 1896 in the Queen Anne Revival style, became a designated heritage property in 2013, but has recently been in the news as neighbours accuse the owners of intentionally allowing the home to deteriorate to the point of demolition. Residents want the City of Toronto to repair the building, including its heritage attributes, and charge the owners with the cost. (Image source: Bob Krawczyk for TOBuilt)

MISSING MASSEY HALL WINDOWS FOUND

After much sleuthing, particularly by Toronto historian Shirley Ann Brown, two missing 1894 stained glass windows have been found in the basement of Roy Thomson Hall. After their removal from Massey Hall, the windows were last seen in 2001. But now, after their restoration, the windows will now be part of a massive revitalization project at Massey Hall. Gordon Lightfoot will be playing two concerts to close the Hall at the end of June. The closure is expected to last until 2020. (Image source: Shirley Ann Brown/Toronto Star)



TWO NEW FACES ON THE BOARD

During the AGM in May, two new board members joined the Town of York Historical Society's Board of Directors. They have already contributed a lot of energy and fresh ideas, and we are very happy to welcome them!



Valerie Bayers

Valerie is passionate about working with the public and being an active part of the community. "Toronto is amazing, I love the different neighborhoods and learning more about the history behind this city." Valerie is a graduate of the Human Resources program at the University of Toronto and has been

employed as an Office Manager since 2013. Valerie is dedicated to creating a positive and empowered workplace and has developed employee engagement strategies to improve teamwork, communication, and productivity. Valerie is First Nations and is a member of the Bigstone Cree Nation in Northern Alberta.



Anthony Colvin

Anthony was born and raised in downtown Toronto. He has lived in historic Corktown for the last 15 years, and caught the museum bug while working as a co-op student at Campbell House and spending afternoons in the city archives. Anthony's family business is located in historical buildings at

Queen and Berkley. After completing a degree in Human Geography and Urban Studies from Queens University, he returned to work at the Royal Bank of Canada as a Client Advisor. Most days Anthony can be found in St Lawrence Hall, enjoying working in one of the city's oldest properties.

RECENTLY At Toronto's First Post Office



#PaperFair at the P.O.

This year, for the third annual June #PaperFair, we welcomed several new Toronto artists and makers to set up a table at Toronto's First Post Office and introduce our clientele of paper connoisseurs to their handmade goods. The sense of community between makers in Toronto is incredible, and it's inspiring to watch them create and collaborate.

If you missed the show, it's not too late! Our shop now stocks Kat Signature's beautiful art cards, Any Key Press' letterpress cards, journals and handmade cards from New Tella Calligraphy, and watercolour cards from Jennifer Fryer Illustration. We also restocked shop favourites from On The Bright Side, Namaste Freund, Sprouts Press, Edgar & Martha, and The Paper Trail Diaries.

Pop by the shop soon and get to know made-in-Toronto talent! P.S. You'll find a coupon in this newsletter for 25% off your shop purchase before Labour Day!

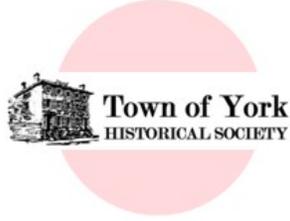
WISH YOU WERE HERE?

Join our email list and receive details on our upcoming events delivered to your inbox every month. Subscribe at TownofYork.com.

AN APP THAT MAKES GIVING EASY

Canada Helps, a trusted organization for online giving has unveiled a new app: Mylo. Mylo rounds up each purchase you make with a debit or credit card until you reach the donation goal that you've preset. Rounding up with each purchase not only makes tracking your spending much simpler, it's also an easy way to support charities like the Town of York Historical Society and Toronto's First Post Office.

Why give using Mylo? Your donation will be made automatically, and you'll receive a official tax receipt to lower your tax bill. Refer a friend, and have a quick \$5 donated in each of your names.



1 Connect
Create an account on Mylo and link your bank to the app.

2 Support
Select a Canadian charity and set a donation goal.

3 Spend
Use your debit and credit cards to make purchases.

4 Donate
Mylo rounds up and donates your spare change!

Want to set up a monthly or make a single donation? Canada Helps makes that easy too! Simply visit www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/14568 or click "DONATE" at the bottom of any page at TownofYork.com.

WHAT'S HOT IN THE SHOP: SUMMER SAVINGS!

SNAIL-MAIL SUMMER!

TAKE 25% OFF THE PRICE OF YOUR ENTIRE GIFT SHOP PURCHASE AT **TORONTO'S FIRST POST OFFICE**



- MADE BETWEEN -

JULY 1 AND SEPTEMBER 2, 2018

Cannot be applied towards Canada Post product or postage. Cannot be applied in addition to any other offer (member discount, booksale, etc.) One coupon per customer. Coupon must be surrendered at time of purchase. Previous purchases cannot be adjusted.



**TORONTO'S FIRST
Post Office**

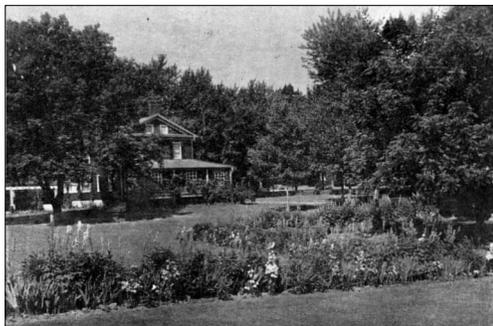
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416-865-1833
TOWNOFYORK.COM

Pop by the P.O. this summer for big savings in the shop! Stock up on cards and never be caught short by a special occasion. Treat yourself to a Toronto streetcar desk organizer, or a Toronto art print, framed and ready for hanging. Or examine our collection of enamel pins and badges—the perfect thing to slip as a little extra into a greeting card.

This discount doesn't apply to postage or Canada Post services, but it does apply to our writing kit—save even more when you buy a hand-cut quill pen, cotton rag paper, ink, an inkwell, and your choice of brass seal insignia and colour of sealing wax. With your coupon, the writing kit is only \$29.96.

As always, your purchases helps support Toronto artists, local makers and Toronto's First Post office.

“THE SETTLERS’ DREAM” *from page 1*



The Barker residence (seen from the east) in 1937. Source: *Picton's 100 Years 1837 – 1937, A Historical Record of Achievement*

By virtue of being the only establishment on Asa Danforth’s road between Hallowell and Bloomfield, it became a de facto post office. In Abraham’s lifetime, the settlement grew up the hill and the road in front of his home became the main street of a bustling village.

In 1849, David Barker became the official Postmaster of Picton, as well as an “Issuer of Marriage Licences.” He operated these businesses out of the Barker home. The family also owned a steam-powered foundry in town; Barker stoves are still in demand by collectors.

In 1896, Public Works came knocking. They wanted the site for a new, modern post office. In the end, “Her Majesty Queen Victoria” purchased enough land that this new P.O. could sit well back from Main Street.

The large locust trees that had graced the Barker’s front lawn would remain in situ until 1981.

As for Barker House, it was simply jacked up and hauled back out of the way. According to Paul Adamthwaite at the Naval Marine Archive, its turning to face King St. was the result of an accidental pivot during the move. The house was given a dramatic makeover according to the latest residential fashion. It received Queen Anne pediments with patterned shingling, a dentilled cornice and a full-width veranda. By the 1930s, surrounded by verdant gardens, it had become known as the Old Grange, and was home to a pair of elderly Barker spinsters.

In 1946 its then owner, a canning magnate by the name of William Henry Benson, donated the estate to the town to become Picton’s first formal park. The house itself was once considered as the site for a museum, but this was not to be. During the 1950s, it hosted two grade 3 classes – overflow from Mary Street Public School. Margaret Haylock was one of the displaced children. In the May 9th, 2011 edition of the *County Weekly News*, she recalls being initially dismayed by the prospect of this exile. This was soon forgotten when the treed and grassy playground of the park proved preferable to Mary Street’s asphalt and proximity to the town dump. I couldn’t agree more.

Note: the headline Janet chose for this missive comes from Tom Cruikshank and Peter John Stokes’ The Settler’s Dream: A Pictorial History of the Older Buildings of Prince Edward County, 1984. This book is the “built-heritage” bible of The County, though the title has taken on an unintended meaning in 2018’s climate of reconciliation.



Benson Hall in 2017, before the installation of the new tennis court. Source: countylive.ca.

OUT OF THE GROUND *from page 1*

Williamson recently told the Toronto Star: “We have the strongest legislation in North America for pulling this stuff out of the ground prior to development, so it’s not destroyed by development. We have the weakest legislation for what to do with the stuff.” (*Toronto Star*, June 16, 2018)

In many cities, there is an established pathway between the object being recovered out of the ground and a museum, or the rightful owners. In Toronto, these objects are often the pieces that are so often lacking in Toronto’s museums, that reveal the history of 10,000 years of pre-contact societies. Perhaps the much-anticipated City of Toronto Museum could be that repository?

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.

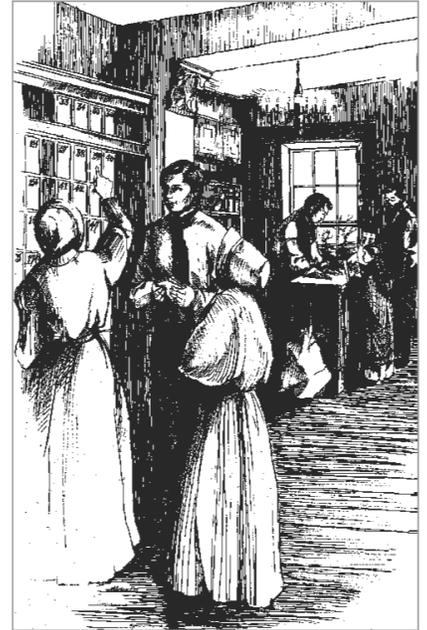
Get Your Mail at a Museum.

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

Only \$173.85 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 July 1 and 2 for Canada Day,
August 5 and 6 for Simcoe Day, and September 2 and 3 for Labour Day.

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The Town of York Historical Society Directors: Valerie Bayers, Kevin Both, Anthony Colvin, Shirley Farrar, Michael Kaspro, Geoffrey Milos, 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.
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Town of York
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



TORONTO'S FIRST
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