



## EXPLORING TORONTO, DISTANTLY



*Kensington Market is the subject of ACO Toronto's latest walk. Image courtesy of Andrzej Wrotek/Flickr.*

Toronto has been physically distancing, self-distancing, and quarantining for more than a month. Playgrounds have been ribboned-off, police officers have been patrolling park benches, and cherry trees have been blossoming for the benefit of webcams. As the weather improves, it's hard to keep a Torontonians indoors. But it is possible to explore at a safe distance from each other. May we suggest taking yourself on tour.

Your favourite museums and heritage organizations have been preparing resources to help you rediscover your city. We've collected some ideas to get you started on a virtual or solo field trip in Toronto this spring.

**ACO TORONTO'S WALKING TOURS:** The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario's Toronto Branch has been releasing weekly self-guided walking tours. Explore The Beaches, The Annex, Parkdale, and more. If you're a fan of built history, an exploration of another ACO Toronto project—TOBuilt—is in order. Search a database of city buildings and discover the history behind your favourite landmarks. ACO Toronto is even offering free annual memberships for those who would like to contribute to the TOBuilt database!

*Tours are available at [acotoronto.com/resources](http://acotoronto.com/resources). TOBuilt can also be found at [acotoronto.com](http://acotoronto.com).*

**JANE'S WALKS:** Jane's Walk Weekend is traditionally the first weekend of May, but of course this year's challenges led to a speedy pivot. Many of the citizen-led walks of neighbourhoods all over the city can still be found on the Jane's Walk website.

*Search the whole list at [janeswalkfestivalto.com/walking-map](http://janeswalkfestivalto.com/walking-map).*

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## CHANGES AT TORONTO'S FIRST POST OFFICE

As the world faces an unprecedented and rapidly changing situation, Toronto's First Post Office is carefully evaluating how best to serve our visitors and community. We have made a few changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The post office counter is operating, and mail is available to be collected from post office boxes, but the museum space is effectively closed. We await the advice and instruction of Toronto Public Health as to when we can cautiously re-open that space and in-person activities. In the meantime, quills and ink have been removed from the Reading Room. Museum staff are still available for research requests, so please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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## NEW FACES IN THE POST OFFICE

Toronto's First Post Office welcomed two new members of the team early in the new year. We are happy to finally introduce our new Postal Clerks, Raine and Monique.



Monique Leclerc was born and raised in Toronto, and is already firm friends with many of our regular visitors. Monique attended the Ontario College of Art, where she studied Graphic Design. Monique has served for many years as an office manager, as well as being an accomplished graphic designer. Monique describes herself as a devoted mother to her son Jordan, and a trophy wife to her husband Richard.



Raine Pultz is relatively new to Toronto, but has quickly become a familiar face within the city's stationery community. Raine is originally from Albany, New York, and adores pigeons and other birds. They also identify as nonbinary. We very much recommend a visit to [asundayraine.com](http://asundayraine.com), to view some of Raine's artistic endeavours, particularly in animation.

## CALL FOR NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Members are encouraged to submit articles concerning the history of the Town of York and early Toronto, built heritage, postal history, or other items of interest to the Town of York Historical Society.

Please contact the Editor at [info@tos1stpo.com](mailto:info@tos1stpo.com).

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING POSTPONED

Due to the current pandemic and restrictions on gatherings, the Board of Directors of the Town of York Historical Society has decided to postpone the Annual General Meeting, usually held in May.

The Board hopes that we will be able to hold an AGM soon after the State of Emergency has been lifted, with an option to attend and vote virtually. We thank you for your patience. Members, please keep an eye on your mailbox for your invitation, date to be determined.

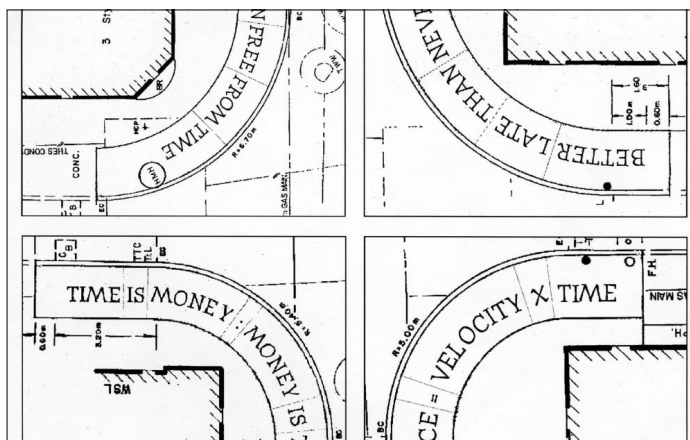
## EXPLORING TORONTO, DISTANTLY, *from page 1*

**HERITAGE TORONTO:** Unfortunately, COVID-19 has meant that Heritage Toronto's popular tour program has been cancelled for 2020. However, there are several maps on [heritagetoronto.org](http://heritagetoronto.org) that can be explored at home or on a smartphone.

*Start exploring at [heritagetoronto.org/explore-learn/](http://heritagetoronto.org/explore-learn/)*

**MASSEY HALL'S SOUND MUSEUM:** No need to leave home for this tour! Emerging from a years-long revitalization project, Massey Hall has mounted an online Sound Museum, a celebration of the acoustics of the hall itself: footsteps on stage, an audience member taking their seat, a can being opened in the bar.

*Sound Museum: [masseyhallandroythomsonhall.com](http://masseyhallandroythomsonhall.com).*



*Time and a Clock is part of the Riverside Public Art tour, available at [janeswalkfestivalto.com](http://janeswalkfestivalto.com). Image courtesy of [Codaworx.com](http://Codaworx.com)*

# VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Laura

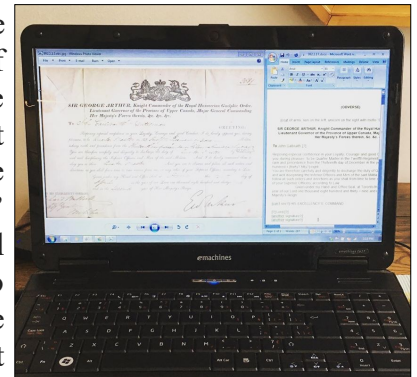


The Town of York Historical Society and Toronto's First Post Office has a large collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century archival documents ranging from letters, deeds, diaries, journals, receipts, etc. Volunteers assist with the digitization of the collection through the transcription of handwritten documents. The transcription of these primary sources helps increase access to these historical records by making them easier to read, search, and use. By transcribing documents, our volunteers uncover hidden aspects of history by unlocking the stories they contain.

Laura has been a volunteer with us for a little over three years. As a university student living outside of Toronto, she primarily helps with transcriptions, but occasionally helps with events when home over the summer and school breaks. Here she answers some questions about what it's like volunteering with us:

**What made you want to volunteer at Toronto's First Post Office?** My encounter with Toronto's First Post Office was a curious incident – I was a high school student simply exploring volunteering opportunities when I came across TFPO on the web. I thought TFPO was a perfect match for my fascination with both history and letter writing, and I fell in love with the museum immediately after I paid my first visit! I also love how the museum is able to tailor my volunteering experience with my location and availabilities, so I can still contribute to the museum even when I am out of town for university!

**What is the biggest challenge you've encountered while transcribing?** The biggest challenge for me personally is trying to interpret certain characters, if not whole passages of selective letters. Most of the individuals writing these letters had their personal writing styles that might differ significantly from what I am used to seeing for "cursive writing" in the modern world. Although the situation is far from being as extreme as trying to make sense of physicians' handwritten notes, it can still be difficult for me, a non-expert who is still looking to improve her cursive-recognition skills. The main way I try to overcome this challenge is through context – sometimes I might not recognise all the characters in a word or even in a sentence – but reading the words right next to them eventually helps me putting all the pieces together.



**What do you find the most rewarding about your volunteer task?** In the grand scheme of things, I find it most rewarding that I am somehow building this personal connection with the museum and local history through every word and every letter I transcribe. Yes, there are definitely challenges along the way, but it is very satisfying when I finish transcribing a letter. In this digital age, I believe transcription is a very appropriate way to preserve these letters and making them more comprehensible and accessible to the world – and I am beyond glad to be part of the movement.

During these difficult times and while we physically distance ourselves, we have been enormously grateful for all of our transcription volunteers. By helping transcribe historical documents, our transcription volunteers help make our collection more accessible for future generations.

If you are interested in any of the volunteering opportunities at the Town of York Historical Society, please drop us a line at [info@TOs1stPO.com](mailto:info@TOs1stPO.com).



# NEW FACES ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We bid farewell to two board members in the last quarter-year. Luisa Giacometti and Valerie Bayers have moved on, and we thank them for their service and wish them the very best. The Board of the Town of York Historical Society has since filled their seats with the appointments of two members of the Society, Alex Zisman and Ruth Cameron. We welcome them both!



Alex Zisman comes to us with over 12 years of experience in financial services in both public and private firms, Alex is a Fellow of the Canadian Securities Institute, a Chartered Investment Manager, and an accredited Personal Financial Planner. Alex is also currently involved in the Ontario Chapter of Junior Achievement, where he volunteers as an educator-for-a-day, introducing basic finance and money management to 6, 7, and 8th graders across the GTA.

Ruth Cameron has been an active member of the Town of York Historical Society for some time. Ruth grew up in Western Canada, and has served as a teacher and a lawyer, as well as raising two children. Ruth is currently practising mental health law, and being a happy Gran.



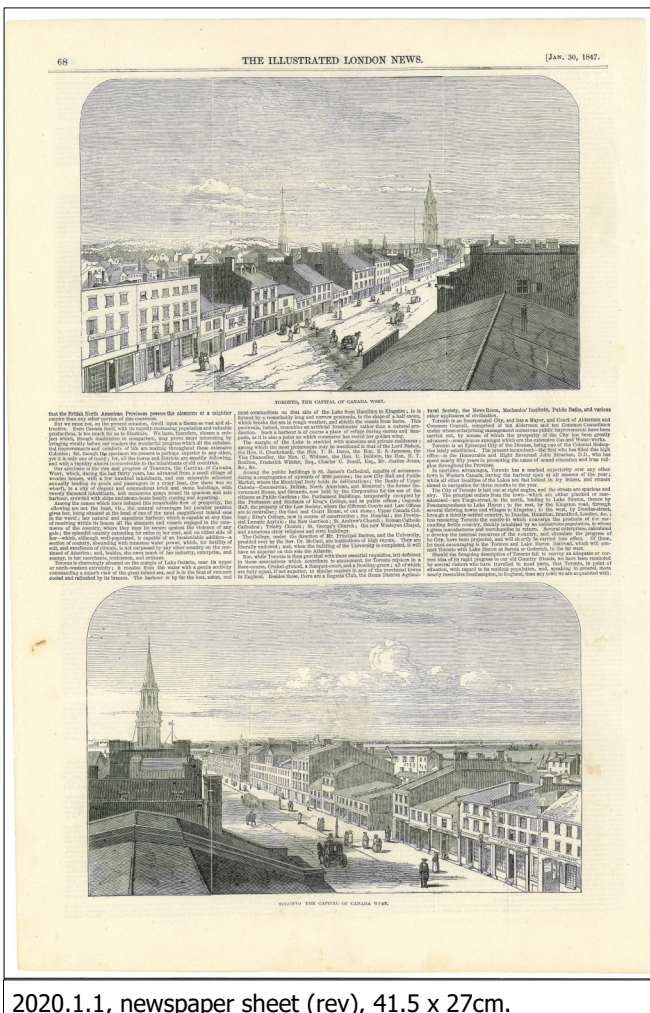
## FROM THE COLLECTION

### Toronto, the Capital of Canada West

A recent donation to our archival collection, and quite the ode to early Toronto, this double sided page from "The Illustrated London News" features an article about the growing city, as well as two lithographs of King Street. Published January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1847 the article praises Toronto as a town of beauty, grace, and industry. Over the course of a page and a half, the article describes:

“... The rise and progress of Toronto, the Capital of Canada West, which during the last thirty years, has advanced from a small village of wooden houses, with a few hundred inhabitants, and one miserable schooner annually landing its goods and passengers in a crazy boat (for there was no wharf), to a city of elegant and commodious brick and stone buildings, with twenty thousand inhabitants, and numerous quays round its spacious harbour, crowded with ships and steam-boats hourly coming and departing.”

This piece, extolling the virtues of a life in Toronto, was purposeful advertising. Published in London, it encourages emigration while reminding the public of “the importance of the possessions which Great Britain still retains on the continent of North America.” The article is accompanied by a pair of engravings of Toronto, depicting views of King Street East. The images are from paintings by Mr. J.F. Sanders about whom little is known.



2020.1.1, newspaper sheet (rev), 41.5 x 27cm.

# MAIL MATTERS DRAWING CONTEST



Calling all artists between the ages of 6-12: sharpen those pencil crayons, moisten those watercolours, or fire up the iPad! We want to see your artistic flare!

Draw Toronto's First Post Office in your own style, and share why mail matters to you. The winning artwork will be featured on a limited edition run of Canadian postage stamps, to be sold exclusively at Toronto's First Post Office, and will be featured in an upcoming issue of this newsletter. The winner will also receive a commemorative sheet of 25 stamps for their own use. These are real stamps that you can use to send mail anywhere in Canada.

Submission deadline: June 15th, 2020. Entries will be featured on Facebook and Instagram @TOs1stPO and voted on by the public.

For additional contest details and information on how to enter, please visit: [bit.ly/mailmatterscontest](http://bit.ly/mailmatterscontest).

## HOT IN THE SHOP: New #MadeinCanada Vendor!



Boldfaced Goods have landed in the shop at Toronto's First Post Office! Of course, they had us immediately with their Canada stamp pin,. And there's lots more Canadiana in the form of pins, cards, patches, and even air fresheners.

Hankies have also lately become something of a statement, especially as a season of live-streamed weddings approaches. Boldfaced Goods have supplied us with a selection of silk-screened handkerchiefs. They're perfect for sharing your #mood, even when your mic is muted.

Speaking of the shop, the staff of Toronto's First Post Office would like to thank all of you who reached out to request shop-at-home options. We are happy to announce that we are working on an easier online experience, and as we look forward to our virtual shop opening, we're also looking forward to welcoming everyone back to the Post Office.



***Not yet a member?*** Join the Society for only \$30 per year!

You'll receive this newsletter delivered to your mailbox, get our monthly events e-newsletter before non-members, and always save on events and in the shop at Toronto's First Post Office.

Join up at the Post Office, or online at [townofyork.com/membership-box-rental](http://townofyork.com/membership-box-rental)



# SOCIALLY-DISTANT LETTER-WRITING

With the temporary closure of the museum space, we were especially sorry that the Toronto Letter Writing Society wouldn't be able to continue their monthly meet-ups.

But as people look for ways to connect with loved ones, letter-writing has boomed, and we are overjoyed to hear that the LWS is still finding ways to share the love! One Sunday a month, they are still meeting - virtually, now - to share their creations, ideas, and inspiration.

To learn more about the LWS and hear about upcoming Zooms, join them on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/torontoletterwriters/](https://facebook.com/groups/torontoletterwriters/).

We'd like to recognize the amazing work of volunteer hosts Jessica and Andrea. Two years ago they took over our Post-a-Letter Sundays and created the Toronto Letter Writing Society. Due to their passion, dedication, (and yummy cookies!), this meetup is now stronger than ever.

Thank you, Andrea and Jessica!



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## COVID-19 CHANGES, *from page 1*

Our hours have been temporarily reduced. We are now open Monday to Saturday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, and closed on Sundays.

Toronto's First Post Office offers one-time or regular mail-forwarding for box holders. If you would like more information on this service, please email [info@TOs1stPO.com](mailto:info@TOs1stPO.com) from the email address listed on your box rental waiver.

We have increased cleaning and sanitizing practices in the Post Office. Staff are closely monitoring their own health and are practicing good hand hygiene. Where possible, staff are working from home. Our on-site volunteers have been asked not to come in for the duration.

All museum programs, rentals, and workshops have been cancelled or postponed. We are offering virtual events, however. Please make sure you're on our email list to hear about these as they are announced. Sign up at [TownofYork.com](https://TownofYork.com).

If you are a box-holder and need to renew, you can do so from the comfort of home with a cheque or credit card. Email [info@TOs1stPO.com](mailto:info@TOs1stPO.com) for more information.

If you are a member, you can now renew online at [townofyork.com/membership-box-rental](https://townofyork.com/membership-box-rental).

We will continue to do our best to work with our customers, box-holders and Canada Post to minimize disruption during these turbulent times. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. The quickest way to reach us is by email at [info@TOs1stPO.com](mailto:info@TOs1stPO.com).

# HERITAGE NEWS IN BRIEF

**LATEST NEWS ON THE PLANETARIUM:** Heritage consultants ERA Architects have submitted more a response on the proposed Centre for Civilizations, Cultures and Cities (CCC) at the University of Toronto. The CCC would sit on the site occupied by the 1968 Planetarium building, and partially occupied by Falconer Hall, a 119-year-old mansion to the south. Though City of Toronto heritage staff had assessed the Planetarium as possibly eligible for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act for its historical/associative value and local landmark status, but ERA now states that the building “is degraded, ill-suited to adaptive reuse, and cannot be incorporated into the proposed development.”

**CANADIAN NATION EXHIBITION CANCELLED:** For only the second time in its 142-year history, the CNE has been cancelled for the summer of 2020. The CNE normally brings more than \$220 million to the Toronto area, and employs more than 5,000 people. The first closure was during World War II, when the space was used as a training and recruitment centre.

**ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY RELEASES DIGITAL ARCHIVE:** The OHS recently announced the completion of a digitization project that includes the entire run of the 120-year archives of *Ontario History Journal*. The issues from 1899-1915, and 2005 Autumn to 2018 are available to all, with other issues available to OHS members only. To explore *Ontario History*, visit [ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/back-issues/](http://ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/back-issues/)

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## ON THIS DAY IN TORONTO HISTORY

**HANGING OF LOUNT AND MATTHEWS, APRIL 12, 1838:** Outside the gaol on King Street, near Church, two participants of Mackenzie’s 1837 rebellion were hanged as an example to other would-be rebels. Both men, Peter Matthews and Samuel Lount, had joined the rebellion to push for government reforms in Upper Canada. The rebellion, along with the Lower Canada rebellions of 1837-38, directly led to the establishment of Responsible Government in Canada.



**GREAT FIRE, APRIL 19, 1904:** In the early evening of April 19, a Toronto policeman spotted flames at 58 Wellington St. West, a necktie factory. The fire eventually destroyed more than 100 buildings, but only one casualty. The resulting damage to business put more than 5,000 people out of work. At the time, this was 2.5% of the city’s population.



**SACKING OF YORK, APRIL 27, 1813:** After a series of British victories in Canadian battles, 16 American ships began an attack on the poorly defended Town of York in the early hours of April 27. The British withdrawal included blowing up the store of gunpowder at Fort York. The resulting explosion ended the battle, though looting and burning continued. American casualties were numbered at 55 killed and 265 wounded. York’s casualties (including civilians) have been numbered at 82 killed, 43 wounded, 69 wounded prisoners, 274 captured and 7 missing.



**FIRST EXHIBITION OF THE GROUP OF SEVEN, MAY 7, 1920:** The group sparked controversy from the first, in identifying themselves as Canada’s first national and “native” school of painters who were producing the “true visual expression of Canada”. Their first exhibition was at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the AGO). On May 7, Canada Post released a set of Group of Seven stamps, though delivery to post offices has been delayed.



# 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**

Sign up online at [townofyork.com/membership-box-rental](http://townofyork.com/membership-box-rental)

## 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/donations](http://townofyork.com/donations)

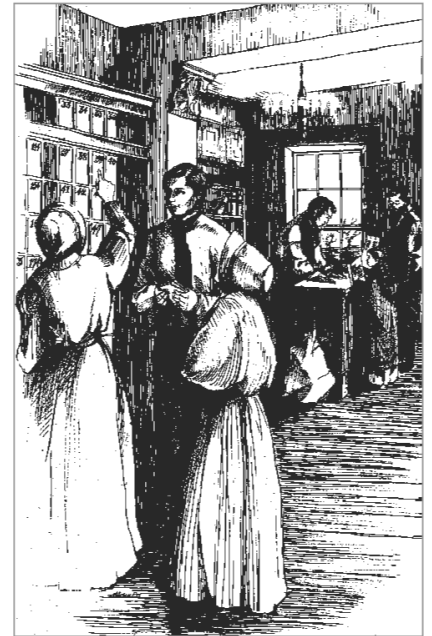
## Get Your Mail at a Museum.

*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 we're open on weekends!

## Be Social.

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



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## 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 May 18 for Victoria Day, and July 1 for Canada Day. During the COVID-19 crisis, hours of operation are reduced to 10:00-4:00 Monday to Saturday, and closed Sundays.

Telephone: 416-865-1833

E-mail: [info@tos1stpo.com](mailto:info@tos1stpo.com)

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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: Kevin Both, Ruth Cameron, Anthony Colvin, Katherine Dennis, Shirley Farrar, John Jones, Corinna Prior, Martin Rainbow, and Alex Zisman.

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