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Individual Memberships: \$30 Family Memberships: \$50

Sign up online at 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

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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 November 11 for Remembrance Day, December 25, 26, and 28 for Christmas and Boxing Day, and January 1 for New Years' Day.

Telephone: 416-865-1833

E-mail: info@tos1stpo.com

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Town of York
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



TORONTO'S FIRST
Post Office

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TORONTO'S FIRST
Post Office

October 2020

Newsletter

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INSTITUTIONS OF HONEST REFUGE: Rediscovering the Skyline Diner and The Bowles' Lunch Chain

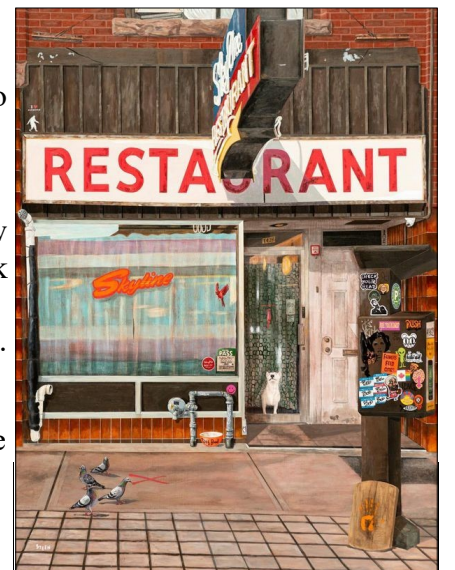
by special correspondent Ellen Blaubergs

As the Covid-19 pandemic forces the permanent closings of iconic Toronto eateries, we are reminded of past favourite and familiar places.

Recently, one of Parkdale's venerable old diners, the Skyline, received some much-appreciated attention as it was celebrated in a new song and a new visual art rendering. Is it a good tune if it lands on for U.S. President Barack Obama's 2020 Summer Playlist? Well, *Neon Skyline* by Saskatchewan's Andy Shauf did just that! It was inspired by the diner and written while Mr. Shauf resided in the area.

Brandon Steen's acrylic painting, *Skyline Diner*, was showing at the Elaine Fleck Gallery in September. It was part of the artist's "Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner" series. In an interview with the Toronto Star's Deborah Dundas, he noted that "diners have always been an institution of honest refuge". Having frequented them while in art college, he is grateful that some (like the Skyline) have been saved and preserved by their new owners.

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Skyline Diner by Brandon Steen, 2020. Image courtesy of The Toronto Star.

A DUNDAS STREET UPDATE



Dundas Street image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

In the last Newsletter, we described how municipalities around the world were facing requests to change place names that referred to historical figures whose actions don't reflect society's current ideals.

In Toronto, a petition with more than 14,000 signatures was presented to Mayor Tory, requesting that the name of Dundas Street be changed. Dundas was a name that came to Upper Canada by way of Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe for his friend Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville, who delayed the abolition of slavery for 15 years, and affected the freedom of an estimated 630,000 people.

Mayor Tory asked City staff to recommend possible responses. When that report was delivered later in July, the options included retaining the name but adding interpretation along the street; retaining the name but renaming City-owned spaces that include the name Dundas, including three parkettes and one library branch; or outright changing the names of Dundas Street (East and West), Dundas Square, Old Dundas Street, and other civic assets that use the name Dundas.

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COMING UP AT TFPO (VIRTUALLY)



MODERN CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP

Thursday, November 26th, 7-9pm, via Zoom
Register at moderncalligraphyonline.eventbrite.ca
\$35 members, \$40 non-members
Expert Cody Calligraphy will start with how to hold a brush pen, basic strokes, the alphabet, common words, and more! Your ticket includes a print-at-home workbook, and access to the workshop replay. Supply your own pen or order a kit upon registration (kit must be ordered 7 days before the workshop).

LETTER WRITING SOCIAL

Sunday, December 13th, 1-2pm, via Zoom
Details at facebook.com/groups/torontoletterwriters
The Toronto Letter Writers Society is a friendly group that meets monthly to celebrate letter writing. It's casual and up to you what you want to work on.

CHRISTMAS IN THE TOWN OF YORK

Sunday, December 17th, 7-8:30pm, via Zoom
Register at christmasinyork.eventbrite.ca
FREE (donations gratefully accepted)
Many of the ways Christmas is celebrated today originate in the Victorian era. Historian Richard Fiennes-Clinton will also look back at a time that celebrating Christmas was illegal. Whether you're passionate about putting up the Christmas tree, or like to channel your inner Scrooge, you'll be sure to find something of interest in this presentation.



Members may have noticed that you haven't received an invitation for this year's Annual General Meeting of the Town of York Historical Society. The pandemic caused some delays, but we are hoping that you'll be able to join us for a virtual AGM in November. Keep checking your mail box!

MEMBERS' UPDATE

We have been updating the technology at Toronto's First Post Office, and are in the process of switching to an automated system for supplying members and donors with tax receipts.

We appreciate your patience during this switch. If you made a donation or renewed your membership recently, you should have received an email with your tax receipt as an attachment. If we don't have an email address on file for you, they will arrive, as usual, by mail.

We may also soon be in contact to update your information. Our grateful thanks to all our members for being an active part of our community, and, again, keep checking your mail box!

REMINDERS FOR BOXHOLDERS

Post Office Box rental rates will be increasing on January 1st, 2021. Currently, the annual rate for box rentals is \$185, including membership and taxes. You may renew until December 31st at that rate, for as many years as you like. However, after January 1st, 2021, the rate will be \$195, including membership and taxes.

If you have a Post Office Box and are currently finding it difficult to collect your mail, please be aware that we offer a personalized mail forwarding service. Mail from your box can be forwarded weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly to your home address. If you would like to set this up, speak to us at the counter, call Kat at 416-865-1833 x3, or email info@TOs1stPO.com for more information.

A DUNDAS STREET UPDATE, *continued from page 1*

The financial impact of that final option was also considered, as the change would affect street signs, subway stations, transit shelters, park signs, Bike Share stations, a fire station, a museum, a library branch, and, of course, thousands of private businesses. In September, at a follow-up meeting, Council asked the City Manager to begin public consultation on the change, and to report back in early 2021.

Mayor Tory released a statement on his position, which is that "the decisions of Council and the City of Toronto's motto, Diversity Our Strength, make it clear that we must continue to take action to address anti-Black racism – as well as racism against Indigenous communities and equity-seeking groups – in order to build a city that is more inclusive, progressive and reflective of the values of its diverse members... Considering the renaming of Dundas Street is just the beginning of the work we need to do to build a Toronto where we all belong."

Postscript: In July, we reported that Dundas met Yonge in 1795. In fact, though these were the main roads in and out of York at that time, in the early 1800s, Dundas turned sharply at Ossington, and terminated at Queen Street. Over the next 150 years, 15 formerly separate streets, including some laneways, were joined to create the modern thoroughfare that now reaches eastward to Kingston Road.

We regret the error, and wish to thank Bill Kindree of the Toronto Historical Association for questioning that statement and sending us back to the books.

HERITAGE NEWS IN BRIEF



A new "TORONTO" sign has been installed at Nathan Phillips Square. This new sign is a more durable replica of the original, which was installed more than five years ago for the Pan American/Parapan American Games. The new sign is illuminated, 10-feet tall, and features a designed vinyl wrap on the outer edges of the of its letters. The current vinyl wrap is an

artwork titled Patterns of the People, designed by Toronto artist Danilo Deluxo McCallum to honour the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, and is part of ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art 2021.

In August, temporary versions of heritage plaques quietly appeared in Toronto, uncredited. They each told a side of history often left out by more mainstream sources. One sign appeared outside of Jarvis Collegiate, detailing how William Jarvis (for whom the street is named) opposed the abolition of slavery, and how his son, Samuel, stole funds from the Six Nations Trust Fund when he was Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs. A similar sign appeared at Baby Point. When contacted by the media, the historians quoted on the plaques supported the project, and the social media audience applauded, but both plaques were reported gone not long after.



An update on the progress of the St. Lawrence Market North Market building was released in September, with a notice of possible noise as construction reaches street level. The building is now expected to be completed by spring 2022. The Market has been an Old Town landmark for more than 200 years and is a valued historic site in Toronto. The previous market building was demolished in 2015.

FROM THE COLLECTION



When candles were a primary source of lighting, it was thought that the most economical length of a wick was a quarter of an inch. Scissor-like in form, this utilitarian brass candle snuffer would help to maintain this ideal length.

A snuff box is attached to the inner blade, while a flat lid for the box is attached to the outer blade. In addition to snuffing the candle, this box collects the snipped wicks and wax trimmings. The device also has three brass legs that support the finger rings and the tip of the inner blade, which ensured that no ash, soot, or melted wax would dirty your desk.

This candle snuffer may not be glamorous, but the sheer number of them that are in our collection confirm its practicality and wide-spread use.

2016.6.27, candle snuffer, 15.9 L x 5.6 W x 3.5 H.



EXPLORE COLLECTIONS ONLINE



Top Hat
Object/Artifact



Pipe Bowl
Object/Artifact



Slate Pencil
Object/Artifact

Toronto's First Post Office is pleased to announce that its collections are now available online! Like most museums, only about 2% of the archival and object collections are on display at any one time. Most of the archival documents and artifacts remain in specialized storage where they are cared for with proper climate, light, and pest monitoring. They are then presented to the public through exhibits and displays on a rotational basis. Some objects are so sensitive to light and changes in temperature, or are otherwise so fragile, that they are never placed on display. Though preservation of our history through these objects is important, it is also essential to make this history accessible to the public through online access. The pandemic accelerated this project. With visitors no longer able to come in and view the museum's objects, it was more important than ever to make them available online.

The database is presented as two collections: the Archival Collection and the Artifact Collection. The content is diverse and varied but relates to the Town of York and early history of Toronto, and the early postal history of these places. In the Archival Collection, users can find early indentures and land sales, letters including everyday correspondence, recommendations, business deals, and even marriage proposals. The Artifact Collection includes not only writing tools and communication artifacts, but everyday objects from the early town such as clothing, tools, and games. Each item is presented with details: where, how, and by whom it was made; what it was used for; and how it came to the museum. It is enriched with relationships to other items, people, and places based on shared physical characteristics and history. Users can select an entry, zoom in, and observe close details.

Explore our collection through the TownofYork.com website, and clicking on the menu item "Learning and Resources", then choosing "Collections and Archives".

Please note that we are adding more content everyday. We would like to sincerely thank all our Collection Volunteers who are working diligently on this project.

POST EARLY THIS YEAR

Usually, we would use this space to let you know the last-minute mailing dates to reach people before Christmas. This year, instead of a list of dates, Canada Post sent us this statement:

"We encourage anyone sending a parcel or a card to friends or loved ones this holiday to do so as early as possible. That's because Canadian shopping habits have dramatically and permanently shifted in response to COVID-19, resulting in a year of significant parcel volumes."

Toronto's First Post Office has seen Christmas -level mail volumes since March, and expect this December to be unprecedented. We echo Canada Post's advice: buy stamps early, prepare your mail before arriving at the post office if possible, and send your holiday cards and parcels early.



DID YOU KNOW... you can fill out customs forms online and save time! Visit bit.ly/customsform when sending parcels internationally. We'll print out the form when you reach the P.O.

SHOP OLD TOWN TORONTO AND WIN!

Toronto's First Post Office is a proud member of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood BIA, and we were very excited to hear about a promotion that they are running in November and December.

This promotion is to encourage people to shop local at the businesses that help make up the Old Town community.

HOW DO I ENTER?

Spend at least \$25 (including taxes, but not including delivery charge or tips) or more at Toronto's First Post Office —or any Old Town Toronto business— and remember to save your receipt!

Upload a photo of your receipt to ShopOldTownTO2Win.com. Multiple receipts can be uploaded per week! However, only one receipt per business can be entered.

HOW DO I WIN?

Every weekend from November 15 to December 20, the BIA will be drawing one receipt. The person who uploaded that receipt will win \$500 for themselves, and \$500 for the business where they shopped!

"Shop Old Town Toronto 2 Win" starts November 8, and draws will take place every Sunday until December 20th. Support local businesses, and win!



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.

SALE

20% OFF
at TownofYork.com
with code LOVEPAPER

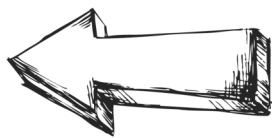
Offer applies October 31-December 31, 2020. Cannot be applied towards Canada Post product or postage. Cannot be applied in addition to any other offer (member discount, etc.). Previous purchases cannot be adjusted.

SALE

ALL CARDS are
BUY 4 GET 1 FREE
at Toronto's First Post Office

Offer applies October 31-December 31, 2020. Offer only available in-store. Offer cannot be applied towards Canada Post product or postage. Members and volunteers' discount can be applied to the four paid cards. Cannot be applied in addition to other offers. Previous purchases cannot be adjusted.

SHOP ONLINE



When shopping in person became difficult, we were overwhelmed with requests for an online shopping option. In

the last issue, you may have noticed a new online shopping option for the 2020 Mail Matters stamps.

Just in time for the Toronto Stationery Show, we have now expanded the online selection with cards, chocolate, prints, and more.

To browse, go to TownofYork.com and click SHOP. All purchases are sent out within 24 hours, with tracking. And, as always, shop purchases support the museum's mandate, as well as the individual makers.

TORONTO STATIONERY SHOW



Just a few of the vendors at the Toronto Stationery Show. Top row: Mythical Matters, Love Lettering by Doris Wai, Wask, Queenie's Cards. Bottom row: Sprouts Press, Edgar & Martha, Salt and Paper (formerly Owl Paper Goods), Swell Made Co.

Last year, the Toronto Stationery Show was held at the Great Hall in August. Toronto's First Post Office was the official Post Office of the day, and from our table inside the main doors, we could see the head of the line that stretched around the block. We spoke to people who had travelled hours to attend the show. As the one-day show wrapped, we were already looking forward to 2020. What's that line about best laid plans?

2020 happened but, not to be stopped, the Toronto Stationery Show continues as a virtual event! From October 18 to November 7, follow @torontostationeryshow on Instagram and Facebook, and explore Canadian makers as they showcase their paper goods, tools, and more. Many vendors are offering their own discount codes, too!

Toronto's First Post Office is proud to be a sponsor of the 2020 Toronto Stationery Show!

INSTITUTIONS OF HONEST REFUGE, *continued from page 1*

For those attending Parkdale Collegiate Institute in the 1970s, the giant toasted danishes at the Green Dolphin on Queen St. West were considered a big treat, but the place for great french fries and gravy (with lots of pepper) was the Skyline. They were worth walking the extra block east. While flipping through old high school year books a few months ago, I noticed that both diners had regularly posted ads in these annuals, helping offset printing costs. It was great having two diners to frequent when a few extra dollars stayed in our pockets from after-school jobs.

Older Torontonians may remember Bowles' Lunch, a chain of diners founded by Bostonian Henry Bowles. At its height in the 1950s, Bowles' Lunch boasted six locations in the financial district and beyond. Bowles was a shoemaker who travelled a lot and was often disappointed by the quality of the food he encountered on business trips in the U.S. He set up his own restaurants in 1897. The first was in Springfield, Massachusetts. Eventually, he moved north to London, Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa.

The original interior décor of Bowles' Lunches was almost entirely white porcelain; customers would pick up their meals at steam tables and carry them to chairs lined up against the wall. These featured a small table that formed one arm of the chair. This arrangement was great for a fast meal alone or the chairs could be pulled together for more social dining.

Initially, Bowles' Lunches were "men only" establishments, open 24 hours a day. By 1936, a bakery was added, tables and chairs were in place, uniformed waitresses were hired, and advertisements encouraged a more female and family-oriented clientele.

Patrons were often treated to the colourful lingo employed by the wait staff as orders were placed. An order of "CPR strawberries" would net a dish of prunes, while "musical fruit" brought you baked beans. "Adam and Eve on a raft" was diner parlance for two poached eggs on toast, and a call the daily "splash" would result in a bowl of soup. Other favourites were hot breakfast cereal, eggs, ham sandwiches, oysters, and coffee.

Bowles' Canadian branches were taken over by Scott's Restaurants in 1952. Scott's brought Kentucky Fried Chicken to Canada in the early 1960s and converted some Bowles' to Scott's Chicken Villas.

Ellen Blauger is a long-time member of the Town of York Historical Society, former Toronto resident, and retired historical archaeologist and museum assistant with a great interest in restaurant ceramic ware. Responses to Ellen's work will be forwarded from info@TOs1stPO.com.



Left: Bowles' Lunch mug, manufactured by Scammell China, 1924 -1954. Image courtesy of restaurantwarecollectors.com.

Centre images courtesy of urbsite.blogspot.com/2011/05/bowles-lunch.html.

Right: Closeup of a partial Bowles' Lunch Limited plate manufactured by W.H. Grindley & Co., England, 1925 -1954. Their vitrified restaurant wares were strong and heavy, with the name printed under the glaze – perfect for the numerous times each piece would be handled and washed in its lifespan. Author's collection.



June 13, 1927 - 53 Bloor - Bowles Lunch. Exterior image courtesy of City of Toronto Archives. Interior image courtesy of losttoronto2.wordpress.com