



NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MARCH - JUNE 2011
1960-2010 – 51st Year
www.nyhs.ca

From the President

Our meetings are now co-sponsored by the Canadiana Department of the North York Central Library. On pages 2 and 3, there's information about what's available and also the story of the first lady of the library in North York – Gladys Allison.

At the AGM on February 16th, the 2011 Board of Directors was voted in by acclamation. A special welcome to Bill Aird, Vice President – first time this vacancy has been filled for quite some time. The Board and Committees are listed on page 6.

Membership renewal is due – there's a form on page 6. And we are always looking for new members to join both the Society and the Committees.

Fund Raising: we now have two active funds – Heritage Resource Centre (our offices at the Miller Tavern) and Plaquing Program. As I pointed out in the last newsletter, we now have to pay occupancy costs for our offices. We have received several donations and thank members for their support. Do please consider a donation.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, May 18th at the North York Central Library, Meeting Room #1 (see below). And then on Saturday, June 25th, a tour of the historic brewery at Black Creek Pioneer Village (members asked us to arrange this at last year's April meeting when we enjoyed the story of BCPV 50th anniversary).

Geoff Geduld

Wednesday, May 18th at 7.30 p.m. (refreshments from 7.15 p.m.)

UNBUILT TORONTO; a history of the city that might have been

Mark Osbaldeston, author

Explore never-realized building projects from the City's founding to the present.

Meeting at North York Central Library, Meeting Room #1, 2nd Floor,
5120 Yonge Street (at Park Home Avenue)

Saturday, June 25th

A SUMMER OUTING TO THE HISTORIC BREWERY AT BLACK CREEK PIONEER

VILLAGE - Meet at 1.30 p.m. - stroll at your leisure for an hour and a half. Historic Brewery Tour (Half Way House Taproom) 3.15 to 4.15 p.m.

Tour will cover history of beer, brewing and drinking in Toronto, includes beer sampling and learning how beer is brewed. It's fun, entertaining and full of history.

Cost: \$18.00 (includes parking at BCPV) to members of the NYHS.

Pre-registration required: Call 416-222-3485 or email northyorkhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Driving: 1000 Murray Ross Parkway, off Steeles West, east of Jane, west of Keele. Car-pooling available.

TTC: Finch Subway, #60 west to Murray Ross Parkway



NORTH YORK CENTRAL LIBRARY CANADIANA READING ROOM

www.torontopubliclibrary.ca

The North York History Collection

features material on North York Township [1922+], and its predecessors. Key research items are located in this room. Additional items are listed in the North York History Index. This index is a part of the local history module, *Historicity*, on the website. Home computer: enter *Historicity* in the main search box of <http://torontopubliclibrary.ca/>. The result will show *Historicity* with an "Access Online" button. Click this button. This will bring up the Digital Collections page with the *Historicity* link on the right. Library computers: click on "Digital Collections of the Toronto Public Library," and select *Historicity*.

The North York History Index has some 35,000 entries for books, articles, photographs and other North York materials. Do a basic keyword search across all local history databases, including North York History.

The North York History File Collection is the most heavily used local history resource. The files contain newspaper or magazine articles concerning specific people, places and events. A paper index is available on top of the Reading Room cabinet containing the files. Files created before 2003 also have entries in the North York History Index on *Historicity*.

The North York Pamphlet File Collection includes brochures, flyers and other examples of paper ephemera. Files created prior to 2003 also have an entry in the North York History Index on *Historicity*. The files themselves are located in the Canadiana closed stacks, and can be requested for in-library use at the Reference Desk.

The Archives contain about thirty small collections, which are stored in the closed stacks. Archival collections are listed in

the North York History Index on *Historicity*, or ask staff at the Reference Desk for a list.

The Book Collection includes hundreds of books, with key items in the North York History bookcase in this room. Additional examples are found in the closed stacks and can be requested at the Reference Desk. Listed in the North York History Index on *Historicity*, as well as in the Toronto Public Library catalogue.

The Map Collection includes hundreds of North York and York County maps. A selection is found in the Reading Room map cabinet, next to the elevators, while the rest are in the stacks, and can be requested at the Reference Desk. There is an index to all maps, including North York maps, on top of the map cabinet. Also listed in the North York History Index.

The Newspaper Collection includes a considerable number of titles, past and present, including the long running *Enterprise* [1926-1969]. Articles are in the North York History Index on *Historicity*.

The Photographic Collection includes over 1000 images. A detailed index is available in a binder on the bottom shelf of the North York History bookshelf in this room. All photographs are also listed in the North York History Index on *Historicity*.

The Poster Collection is a relatively new collection of about 100 items. The posters are not yet listed in the North York History Index, so please ask staff for a list.

The Scrapbook Collection is scattered throughout the North York book collection in this room. Each scrapbook has its own index. There is also an older index, circa 1990, covering most of the scrapbooks, which can be searched by staff upon request. Not indexed, but well worth consulting, are the many volumes compiled by the North York Historical Society, at the end of the North York History book shelves.

August 28, 2010 (edited)

**THE FIRST LADY OF THE LIBRARY
GLADYS ALLISON
PIONEERED NORTH YORK'S
FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Ten years ago, on June 4, 1987, North York's new Central Library was officially opened as part of the Civic Centre Project which would include the City Hall, hotel, office buildings, and shops, now adjoining Mel Lastman Square.

Almost 100 years earlier, in 1896, the first lending library in the North York area had been set up in the general store of Agnes Hogg on the east side of Don Mills Road, just north of Lawrence Avenue.

The first books, purchased with monies raised by Literary Society concerts, were kept on shelves at the back of the store. Neighbours were welcome to browse and borrow.

In 1918, when James Hamilton Smith took over the store and post office, he didn't want the extra responsibility of running a library, so a new home was sought. James Muirhead offered the use of an abandoned military hut on his property, also donating a Quebec heater and the firewood necessary to fuel it. Pearl Muirhead and Mary Duncan organized the library.

The Public Libraries Board of the Ontario Department of Education sent a librarian to help with the cataloguing and organizing. The little library was awarded county and provincial grants of \$25.00 a year. Funds raised from oyster suppers, concerts and other entertainments provided the annual budget of \$125.00.

Over the years, various lending libraries were set up in stores, churches and schools around the township but most residents depended on the Toronto Public Libraries for their reading materials.

Gladys Allison was one such reader and she regularly took her children to the St. Clements Library on Yonge Street. Originally Gladys Amos, she came to Toronto from England in 1907. An avid reader, she wanted to be a teacher but

her father's illness forced her into work as a clerk. She married Bill Allison and, in 1936, the couple with their three children moved to Hounslow Avenue in Willowdale, further away than she would have liked from the nearest library.

Recognized as the "First Lady of the Library", Gladys was the driving force behind the establishment of a public library system in North York. She began a campaign actively for a library service in 1938.

Both Gladys and Bill were active in community and church affairs, and as president of the Home and School Association, Gladys approached the Provincial Library Service for help. After the war, she set up a library in her church's basement.

A local library association was formed in 1950 and, in that year, North York's first municipally sponsored library opened on the ground floor of the newly completed Memorial Community Hall.

In 1958, plans were made to build a proper library. The new library, called The Gladys Allison Library, was officially opened on October 19, 1959. The day before, Gladys herself laid the cornerstone.

In the 1980's, the plans were afoot to develop the centre of the City of North York. In a 99-year lease agreement, the AVRO Group agreed to build a new library and turn it over to the city.

Construction of the present library began in January, 1985. North York's new Central Library, four times the size of the Gladys Allison Library, was officially opened on June 4, 1987.

Gladys Allison's name lives on in the new building: the sixth floor's Canadiana Department is called the Gladys Allison Room

Jeanne Hopkins, *Looking Back* column, *Bayview Post*, July, 1997, and author of several books on Canadian history.

Page 5 – photograph of library (Ted Chirnside)

INVITATION

The Ontario Historical Society's 2011 Annual General Meeting and Honours and Awards Ceremony

Featuring Guest Speaker:
Dr. Ross Fair, Department of History,
Ryerson University
**Improving Upper Canada: Farming
the Colonial Frontier**

Saturday, June 4, 2011 1.00 to 4.30 p.m.
North York Memorial Hall
5110 Yonge Street, Concourse Level
Light refreshments will be served

R.S.V.P. by May 24th
416-226-9011
ohs@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca

NORTH YORK COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Members of the North York Historical Society and the Active Living Centre (North York Seniors Centre) are invited to record and transcribe individual memories and untold stories, which will be made available to the heritage community, educational faculties, cultural organizations, school libraries, senior clubs and centres and – of course the North York Historical Society's Heritage Resource Centre.

ORAL HISTORY

- links social structure and culture of the past to the present and the future;
- provides a record of memories, events and stories;
- saves personal experiences for descendants;
- provides an invaluable source of information for which no written record exists;
- helps us gain greater understanding of society.

Members are invited to come forward to share their memories of North York. Check pages 6 for contact information.

*New Horizons for
Seniors Program – Ontario
Government of Canada

FUND RAISING

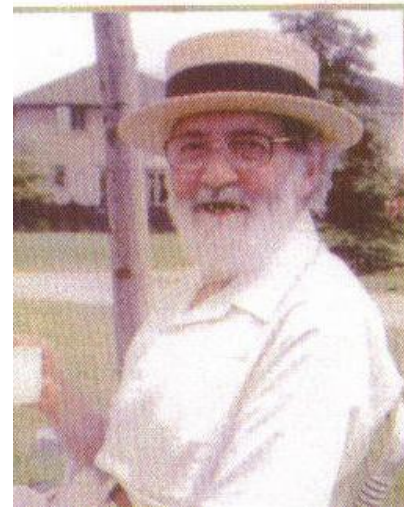
The North York Historical Society currently has two designated funds: **Heritage Resource Centre** (archives and photographic collection at our offices at the Miller Tavern) now accessible by appointment. **Plaquing Projects** (currently in the planning stage: Earl Bales House and the Cummer Family). We thank members who have added a donation when renewing – do please consider supporting us to maintain the HRC and continue Plaquing in the North York area.

Plaquing Projects (currently in the planning stage: Earl Bales House and the Cummer Family). We thank members who have added a donation when renewing – do please consider supporting us to maintain the HRC and continue Plaquing in the North York area.

Charitable receipts for income tax purposes provided for donations

IN MEMORIAM 2011

V. STANLEY DAVIES, passed away on February 1, in hospital after a brief illness. Past director and long time NYHS member. Proud member of Fort Henry and also Fort York Guards.



JANE'S WALK

The North York Historical Society has been invited to participate in a Jane's Walk on Saturday, May 7th from 1.00 to 3.00 p.m.

This is still in the planning stage – starting point will be the Miller Tavern. Glenn Bonnetta, Director of Archives, NYHS, will speak about the history of the area and the Jolly Miller, and then there will be a speaker from the York Mills Ratepayer's Association followed by another speaker giving information the West Don River.

For information, closer to the date, check our website: www.nyhs.ca or www.janeswalk.net or call Geoff Geduld (see page 6 for contact information).

EVENTS CALENDAR

At the Market Gallery
South St. Lawrence Market
95 Front Street East
416-392-7604
Tues/Fri 10/4, Sat 9/4 Free admission
**DANCING THROUGH TIME:
TORONTO'S DANCE HISTORY 1900-
1980** now to July 2nd

At the Northern District Library
40 Orchard View Boulevard, one block
north of Eglinton, just west of Yonge
North Toronto Historical Society;



13. GLADYS ALLISON MAIN LIBRARY (JULY 1963)

www.norhtorontohistoricalsociety.org
Wednesday, March 30th at 7.30 p.m.

C. W. JEFFERYS: PICTURING CANADA
screening of the documentary film, John Bessai, CineFocus Canada.

At the Bendale Library
1515 Danforth Road
Scarborough Historical Society
www.scarboroughhistorical.ca
Tuesday, March 22, 7.30 p.m.

TORONTO BETWEEN THE WARS,
Charis Cotter

Tuesday, April 26, 7.30 p.m.

**VICTORY AT VIMY; CANADA COMES
OF AGE,** Ted Barris

At the Pickering Museum Village -
www.cityofpickering.com/museum

Wanted: Descendants of the Rebels
and Tories of the 1837 Rebellion.

When: Saturday, September 24

This evening is for descendants only.

A SPIRIT WALK, a Backwoods
Players production, entering its 16th year,
which dramatically depicts the events
leading up to the rebellion and how it
affected the lives of your ancestors.
You will be led through historic Pickering
Museum Village by lantern light as the
scenes unfold before you.

Additional activities are planned for the
weekend to enhance your trip into the
past. Late spring, a formal invitation
will follow.

Let your relatives know about this
event. For more information contact
Mandy Smiles 905-683-8401
mmsmiles@cityofpickering.com

