



**NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**  
**AUGUST-OCTOBER, 2011**

**1960-2011: 51<sup>st</sup> Year**

www.nyhs.ca

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***From the President***

The end of an era: since the mid-1960s, the Society has had a connection with the Gibson House Museum. In 1964, the Borough of North York acquired the Gibson House. It was officially opened as a museum in 1971, with the support of the Society, historical interpreters, exhibits, displays and an annual festival. The Gibson House Volunteers were a sub-committee of the NYHS, and after amalgamation, they became City of Toronto volunteers. Through the years the Society has had representation on the GH Museum Board and post amalgamation, one appointee. City of Toronto museum boards have now been dissolved by Council. See page 2 for more information.

A reminder to members, the October meeting program: *C. W. Jefferys: Picturing Canada* – his daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Fee (1912-2010) was the Society's Honourary President for many years.

Congratulations to the 2011 recipients of the Volunteer Service Awards. See page 2.

*Geoff Geduld*

Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 7.30 p.m.

***HERITAGE TREES: PRESERVING OUR NATURAL ROOTS***

Edith George, past director of the Weston Historical Society & advisor to the Ontario Urban Forest Council.

How we can identify a tree's historical and cultural significance? Using a special red oak as the example in her presentation, find out what is a heritage tree and why is it important to protect it.

**LOCATION**

North York Central Library  
Meeting Room #1  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
5120 Yonge Street  
(at Park Home Ave)  
West side of atrium,  
use elevator outside  
library.

Parking: Enter  
from Park Home Avenue,  
east of Novotel Hotel

TTC: North York Centre  
subway station

Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 7.30 p.m.

***C. W. JEFFERYS: PICTURING CANADA***

Screening of documentary film by director John Bessai. This 48 minute film is an entertaining and provocative look at one of Canada's most prolific artists who during his career captured the essence of Canada through his illustrations, drawings and paintings.

Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 7.30 p.m.

***BREAKING THE SILENCE: VETERANS' UNTOLD STORIES***

Ted Barris, author, will talk about his experiences getting war veterans to speak about their stories from the Great War to Afghanistan.

Meetings co-sponsored by the North York Historical Society  
and the  
North York Central Library, Canadiana Department

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## **VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS**

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration  
Congratulations to

10 years: Mary Ann Cross, Jeanne Hopkins

30 years: Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan

40 years: Louis & Donalda Badone

The June 23<sup>rd</sup> issue of *The Mirror, East Edition*, on pages 1 & 6, ran a story with photographs of the Badones and McQuillans. It will go into the Society's Archives.

## **SUMMER OUTING TO BLACK CREEK PIONEER VILLAGE**

As part of our visit, on Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, we took part in a private beer tasting and historic brewery tour, in addition to our own time within the village. For many, it was not their first visit to Black Creek Pioneer Village, but for myself it was.

I enjoyed seeing the buildings, interpreters, and animals throughout the village. It reminded me of my summer job I had in high school working at Heritage Park in Calgary, Alberta which in many ways is similar to Black Creek Pioneer Village. The weather held up for the day, though it was little cooler and overcast for most of the day.

The highlight of our visit was the historic brewery and beer tasting. Interestingly, the historic brewery is Canada's only one. Our guide gave us an interesting history of beer in relation to Ontario's earlier residents. The ingredients and techniques of the ales were also described in detail. The beer made here uses the same techniques that the pioneers used. We tried three types of beer that were all very different from one another. All of the beer at the historic brewery is non-carbonated. It was a little odd at first, but I got used to it, as did other attendees. Some enjoyed the tasting so much that they bought a growler of Black Creek Ale to take home with them.

An afternoon enjoyed by all who attended, and highly recommended for those with an interest in history and beer!

*Teresa den Boef, Director of Programs* (edited)  
(Photographer: T. den Boef)

## **MUSEUM MANAGEMENT BOARDS**

April 12/13, Toronto City Council adopted the following: Chapter 103, Article 1, Sections 1, 2 & 3, of the Municipal Code, regarding the Museum Boards, be deleted to reflect the status of Museum Boards as key advisory bodies since Council approval of the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the Museum Boards, and to enable transition to an alternate engagement process as endorsed by Museum Boards. (edited)  
There will now be a single resource group named Toronto Museum Reference Council,

along with potential for site or topic specific groups. At this time we do not have any information as to the Gibson House/Zion Schoolhouse plans.

## **DONATIONS 2011**

### **Heritage Resource Centre**

Sheryl Adelkind, Bill Aird, Donald Booth, Isabel Davey, Margaret Chadwick, Linda Gargaro, Chandor Gauthier, Marion Kinch, Alan & Marti Latta, Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan, Betty Minaker, Penny Potter, Maggie Trott, Mary Wyatt

### **Plaquing Program**

Sheryl Adelkind, Margaret Chadwick, Marion Kinch, Alan & Marti Latta, Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan, Penny Potter, Maggie Trott

**Plaque (Cummer)** Gunild Spiess



## WILLOWDALE PLAQUE

200 Years Yonge (1796-1996), *Connecting Communities* was the theme to celebrate legendary Yonge Street. On the North York "Yonge Street Bicentennial Planning Committee", Frank Whilsmith, then past president, Betty Crossley and Gunild Spiess (members) were citizen representatives.

Council representatives were Joanne Flint and John Filion. The four Yonge Street blue commemorative signs (York Mills, Lansing, Willowdale and Newtonbrook) were installed that year.

The late Betty Crossley expressed concern about the condition of the Willowdale plaque (located in the Willowdale Pioneer Cemetery at Yonge & Church) to Councillor John Filion, Ward 23, at a public meeting some time ago. The councillor struck a committee, NYHS was invited, Betty and Gunild were the representatives. The replacement plaque, includes a map and two photographs, will be unveiled this fall. Below is the text and captions:

### Willowdale

This graveyard is a rare remnant of the time when Willowdale was a small agricultural community centred around this stretch of Yonge Street. Aboriginal peoples hunted, fished, and camped on this land for thousands of years before European settlement began in the late 1790s. The area then became known as "Cummer's Settlement" after the pioneering family of Jacob Cummer (Kummer). The name "Willowdale" appeared after the opening of the area's first post office, named "Willow Dale", in 1855.

Largely unchanged until the early 20th century, Willowdale then began to expand with the development of new residential streets, first stretching out on either side of Yonge Street. In 1923, it became the site of the new offices of the Township of North York. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, residential development rapidly replaced the earlier farmsteads as widened roads and new expressways provided better access from North York to the City of Toronto.

Caption 1: This 1878 map shows Willowdale as a post office (PO), school (SCH), and Methodist Episcopal Church (ME) along Yonge Street – all serving local farm families. Farm orchards are indicated as rectangular clusters of small dots. The name "Willowdale" eventually grew to encompass the

neighbouring rural centres of Lansing (to the south) and Newtonbrook (to the north). Illustrated Historical Atlas of York County, 1878. Toronto Public Library

Caption 2: This 1914 photograph looks south across Yonge Street to the site of this plaque. Willowdale Methodist Episcopal Church (later Willowdale United Church) then stood next to the cemetery. As found in Patricia Hart, *Pioneering in North York*, 1968.

Caption 3: Looking north from Park Home Avenue up the west side of Yonge Street in 1897. A general store (at left) then contained the post office, and served as a central hub for both supplies and news for the rural community. The 1892 Willowdale School, S.S. #4, stands further up the street. North York Historical Society

## HERITAGE TORONTO WALKS

[www.heritagetoronto.org](http://www.heritagetoronto.org)

The walks continue to Sep. 25<sup>th</sup>. There's a local one on Sat. Sep. 10<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 a.m.

### LAWRENCE PARK: A GARDEN SUBURB

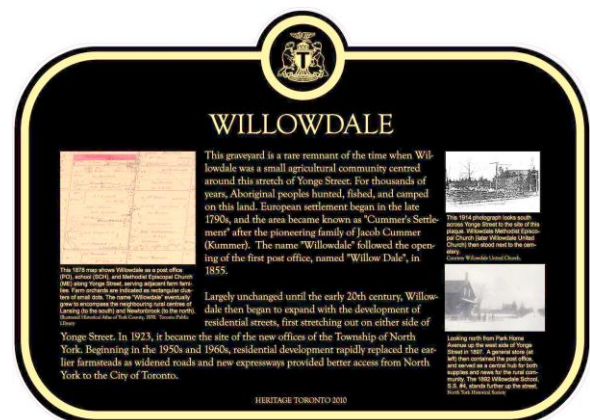
Explore part of Lawrence Park, a residential neighbourhood that dates to 1907, when Wilfrid Servington Dinnick, the young, English-born president of a Toronto loan and mortgage company, purchased two farm properties near Yonge and Lawrence. His intention was to create a garden suburb – one of the first in Canada – for the city's middle class.

Meet at Lawrence Park, near SE corner of Lawrence Ave E and St. Edmund's Dr. at William McDougall Heritage Plaque. Finish at George H. Locke Memorial Branch, TPL, 3083 Yonge St., at Lawrence Ave E. Approx. one and a half hours.

Leaders: Barbara Myrvold, Toronto Public Library and Lynda Moon, North Toronto Historical Society.

**ADDITION** At the conclusion of the tour, Join the TPL for the presentation of a Heritage Toronto Plaque celebrating the George H. Locke Memorial Branch library.

**PLAQUE UNVEILING** – information will be emailed and posted on [www.nyhs.ca](http://www.nyhs.ca).



## THE CASE OF THE MYSTERY RAVINE RUINS

### ...a Duncan Family Legacy?

The NYHS had been contacted about these ruins a few times. Late spring, John Chipman, a CBC Radio producer, asked about them, and we began to try and solve the mystery. Clarice Dale, a new member, agreed to take on the task. John Chipman brought the story to Metro Morning, CBC Radio #1, on May 31<sup>st</sup> talking to Clarice and Edith Geduld (Geoff Geduld was also there) at the site. Since the broadcast, we have had a couple of emails but the mystery has not been solved. (Upper photograph – upper)

The municipal address is 250 Duncan Mills Rd, Ward 34 (w. of Don Mills Rd & n. of York Mills Rd). There are two buildings, both next to the Don River. Building #1 has a missing roof. (lower photograph) It is westerly of the two and closest to the river. Building #2 resembles a tomb, and is located about 75m to the east of #1. The site is at the boundary between two parcels of property: Township of York East Concession 3, Lot 11 and Lot 12.

Lot 11: Moatfield Property: 1827, William Duncan arrives in Canada from Ireland and purchases property, at what is now Sheppard and Dufferin. 1837 David Duncan is born. 1848, William Duncan buys 200 acres from William Bishop. The property is located on the north side of present day York Mills Rd between Leslie St and Woodbine Ave. This property is intended for David. Around 1865, Moatfield House is constructed in classic Farmhouse Gothic. In 1873, David marries Anne Laird, and is given the farm as a wedding gift. He soon transforms it into a successful dairy operation. They raised two sons and one daughter at Moatfield. Brother Henry resides at the adjacent plot to the south, giving the area the name of "Duncan's Corners".

In 1878, homes and mills up and down the river are destroyed in a historic flood. 1905, Duncan Station is erected on the property of Henry, on the south side of York Mills Rd by the Canadian Northern Railway. Name later changed to Oriole, and the station was moved to the north side of York Mills Rd. The farmhouse was

moved in 1986 and is now an upscale restaurant.

Lot 12:1813, land owned by Alexander Montgomery and in 1820 by the Hunter family. Around 1840 a farmhouse is built by the Hunters. In 1962, Alf Anderson builds "Green Acres" farmhouse on the same site as the old 1840 house, which was destroyed by fire the previous year. Possible explanation for the ruins: farm buildings, remnants of a sawmill, machinery shed and pumping station.



Above material extracted from Clarice Dales' research findings. Contacts and research sources are included in the illustrated report on [www.nyhs.ca](http://www.nyhs.ca) (photographer: Geoff Geduld)

### 2011 NORTH YORK MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE FORUM

#### *Suburbia: Heritage of the Everyday*

At the North York Civic Centre, Thurs.  
Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7.00-9.00 p.m.

### AT EAST YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

John S. Ridout Auditorium, S. Walter  
Stewart Branch, Memorial Park Ave/  
Durant Ave. Tues. Sep. 27<sup>th</sup>, 7.30 p.m.  
Topic: ***The Heritage of Foods***  
Speaker: Dorothy Duncan

North York Historical Society is an affiliate of  
the Ontario Historical Society  
and is a non-profit organization sponsored  
in part by the Ministry of Culture