



NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER, 2011 – JANUARY, 2012

Founded 1960
www.nyhs.ca

From the President

I am sure you will all have heard that the Gibson House Museum and Historic Zion Schoolhouse are threatened with closure to meet the Mayor Ford's 10% budget cut edict. Montgomery's Inn and the Market Gallery are also threatened. Even if the site list changes our concern remains the same – our City museums should not be looked at as just a collection of old buildings of limited utility and revenue. They are a permanent record of our city's birth, growth and way of life and tell us the narrative of our city. These museums should not be measured by individual site attendance and admission revenue but as active participants in a citywide menu of diverse attractions and part of the social and cultural structure of the city.

I urge you to contact the site's local councillors: Councillor Shelley Carroll (Historic Zion Schoolhouse) and Councillor John Filion (Gibson House Museum), also your local councillor and the Mayor. Contact information is provided on page 8.

Historic Zion Schoolhouse is where our December meeting is going to take place – on page 3 & 4 there is the history of the schoolhouse, and how appropriate in view of the threatened closure. Also on page 5 & 6 there's the story of the Gibson House.

The Canadian Air & Space Museum is also under threat of closure. Contact Councillor Maria Augimeri (local councillor), your councillor and the Mayor.

On Thursday, December 1st, there will be a town hall meeting being held just for HERITAGE ISSUES as part of the *Official Plan Review*. I urge our members to come to Metro Hall, 55 John Street, Room 308, from 6.00 to 9.00 p.m.

Seasons Greetings

Geoff Geduld

Thursday, December 8th, 7.00 p.m.

HISTORIC ZION SCHOOLHOUSE

1091 Finch Avenue East (east of Leslie Avenue)

The North York Historical Society is getting-together at the Schoolhouse. There will be some history, a sampling of the Zion Schoolhouse program and refreshments.

Pre-registration required. There's no charge but donations will be welcomed. A tax receipt will be provided for donations over \$10.00. Parking on Trudy Road & Angus Drive (east of Schoolhouse).

Wednesday, February 15, 2012 at 7.30 p.m.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, and

YOU ARE HERE: PROVINCIAL PLAQUES and the WAR of 1812;

Sam Wesley, Ontario Heritage Trust

Ontario Heritage Trust's Provincial Plaques are site-specific - they tie our history to the places where it occurred.

at the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street,
Meeting Room #1 (west side of atrium) use elevator
outside the library

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

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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Wednesday, February 16, 2011

at the North York Central Library, Meeting Room 1.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Geoff Geduld (President) called the meeting to order, and welcomed those present to the North York Historical Society's 51st Annual General Meeting. Meetings of the Society are now co-sponsored by the Canadiana Dept. of the North York Central Library. In 2010 we celebrated our half-century, and were recognized by the City of Toronto, and the Ontario Historical Society. Sadly, we also lost our Honourary President, Mrs Elizabeth (Betsy) Fee.

Partnering with Heritage Toronto and the City of Toronto, we unveiled a plaque in memory of North York's first Reeve: R.F Hicks.

The President extended thanks to the Board of Directors, Appointees, Committee Chairs and their supporters: Board: Donald Booth, Chandor Gauthier, Ruth Kingma, Vall Alagirisamy, Glenn Bonnetta, Teresa den Boef, Linda Gargaro, John Laraway.

Committees: Sheryl Adelkind, Bill Aird, Shirley Bennett, John Blewett, Mary Ann Cross, Edith Geduld, Jean Hill, Miriam Jackson, Lillian Methven, Brian Simms, Marion Simpson, Maggie Trott and Doug Wardle. Also the two past presidents, Penny Potter and Jane Saunders, for making the 50th Anniversary Event a special occasion.

Only 2011 paid up members are eligible to vote this evening. The Agenda and Financial Report have been circulated.

2. MINUTES of the AGM of February 10th 2010 were included in the December 2010-February 2011 Newsletter

3. REPORTS: The following reports were also included in the last Newsletter:

- (i)) President's Report - Geoff Geduld
- (ii) Appointee/Representative Reports: Gibson House/Zion Schoolhouse Museum Management Board, North York Community Preservation Panel
- (iii) Committees: Archives, North York Community Oral History Project, North York Minute, Plaquing, Programs

Motion to approve the Minutes of the February 10, 2010 AGM, Reports (i), (ii), (iii) was passed.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT: Report prepared by Chandor Gauthier was

circulated. There was some discussion about the cost of insurance. Motion to accept was approved.

5. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT: Edith Geduld assumed the Chair of the meeting. Committee: John Laraway (director), Shirley Bennett (member at large) and Edith Geduld (a past president). The Society has an appointee on the Gibson House/Zion School House Museum Management Board. The appointment was until November 2010 or until a successor is named. Applications for museum boards are still on hold, so John Laraway will continue on.

The Society no longer has appointees to the North York Community Preservation Panel, Edith Geduld, Linda Gargaro, Ruth Kingma and Mary Ann Cross are currently members. Only Mary Ann Cross has reapplied. The Society encourages members to apply. The Chair noted that the list of Appointee/Representatives, and the list of Committee Chairs is included in the Agenda for the meeting.

6. ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2011-2012:

2011 Slate: - Board

Past President	Donald Booth
President	Geoff Geduld
Vice President	Bill Aird
Treasurer	Chandor Gauthier
Secretary	Ruth Kingma
Directors: (5)	Valluvan (Vall)

Alagirisamy, Glenn Bonnetta, Teresa denBoef, Linda Gargaro, John Laraway

The chair of the Nominating Committee presented the 2011 slate of candidates for the Board. There were no nominations from the floor. The candidates were approved by acclamation. E Geduld welcomed the 2011 President and Board.

7. THE PRESIDENT assumed the Chair of the meeting, and thanked the members of the Board, and welcomed Bill Aird as the new Vice President.

Announcement: Members are invited to the Heritage Family Day reception at the Ontario Historical Society, John Mackenzie House at 34 Parkview Avenue, on Monday February 21, 2011 from 2.30 - 5.30 p.m.

PRESENTATION:

THE MODERN CAN BE HERITAGE TOO
Speaker: Ellen Kowalchuk, Cultural Heritage Specialist, Ontario Realty Corp.

Adjournment.

Ruth Kingma, Secretary (edited)

HISTORIC ZION SCHOOLHOUSE

The Schoolhouse is located at 1091 Finch Avenue East, (Ward 33, Don Valley East). It is a designated heritage site under by-law 27974 passed the North York City Council on December 15, 1980.

Zion Schoolhouse has been owned by the City of Toronto since amalgamation of the City's heritage museums in 2000, and is now managed and operated by the Toronto's Cultural Services.

The schoolhouse was built in 1869 by the citizens of the farming community of L'Amaroux. It is the last unaltered one-room schoolhouse in the North York community and represents an important stage in Upper Canada's educational history. The school was closed as an active education facility in 1955, and after a period of abandonment the building was restored and reopened as a heritage site in 1986. The building also acted as a social centre and meeting place for the community.

The school was situated on farmland many miles away from the town of York, and is now surrounded by modern urban development. Together with the nearby Zion Church (on Finch Avenue East, east of Don Mills Road on the north side), the Schoolhouse is one of the last remaining features of the historic rural landscape.

Zion Schoolhouse is significant for its historic role in the history of rural education in Canada. The one-room schoolhouse represents an important phase in the development of educational policy in the country; such schoolhouses were common throughout rural and outlying areas from the 1850s to the mid-20th century.

The Schoolhouse follows a standard architectural plan and retains many of its original external features. The school was restored in the late 20th century based on comparisons with similar buildings from the period and information derived from historical sources and oral accounts. The interior contains a number of modern and cosmetic renovations, including features that were added to fulfill current fire code requirements.



Photo: circa 1890 North York Historical Society

The Schoolhouse property has produced various artefacts, including archaeological finds that may be associated with the late 19th century and 20th century occupants.

One-room schoolhouses were once scattered throughout Upper Canada, serving the outlying and rural communities around the larger towns and cities from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. The schoolhouses represent an important stage in the development of public education, since prior to 1850s education was not free, and often was unavailable to children of poor families or those in remote locations. In 1844, Egerton Ryerson was appointed as the Superintendent of Schools for Upper Canada. He promoted the establishment of an education system that would be free, universal and accessible; the resultant 1871 School Act Amendment prompted the development of a province-wide system of common schools that were non-sectarian and open to all children.

The one-room schoolhouses were built with the aid of government grants, and offered basic education to children from 6 years of age up to high school entrance. The schools were located in every 3rd concession, and so provided greater accessibility to children living in rural areas. Attendance became mandatory, and the schoolhouses remained an integral element of universal public education well into the 20th century, when the growth of towns and the development of modern transportation allowed for the centralization of schools in the mid-1950s.

The rural schoolhouses became obsolete after the institution of the modern school system, and were closed and often demolished during later urban development projects.

The settlers of L'Amaroux in North York erected a log school between 1829 and 1834, near the present intersection of Don Mills Rd and Finch Ave E, on land owned by Mr. Henry Scrace. York Township was organized into school sections in 1839, and the school in L'Amaroux became known as School Section #12 (S.S.#12). In 1869, the log school was replaced by a new red brick school on the south side of Finch Ave near Leslie St. It was known as Zion School S.S. #12, and served many generations of L'Amaroux children until its closure in 1955.

Zion Schoolhouse sat vacant for many years until the property was purchased by the North York Council from the North York Board of Education in 1963. In the mid-1970s the Borough Parks & Recreation Depart. gave permission to the United Jewish Welfare Fund to occupy and renovate the building. In 1986 the Schoolhouse was restored to the 1910 time period under the direction of the North York Historical Board, with participation from local volunteers and former students. The School was reopened as an educational site on September 22, 1986, with programming supported by the North York Board of Education.

The Zion Schoolhouse collections include copies of a variety of primary documents, photographic material, and oral histories. An extensive photographic collection is available on site, along with transcripts of interviews conducted with students who were educated at the school before its closure. The North York Central Library and the North York Historical Society also possess photographs etc.

The Schoolhouse was stripped of its furnishing after its closure in 1955, and so the majority of the artefacts are not original to the building. The artefact collection was acquired through purchases and donations, and consists of materials appropriate to the 1910 focus date, including the stove, teacher's desk, piano, bookshelves and the school desks.

The term "Zion" was chosen by the Primitive Methodists who settled in the region, and refers to the Old Testament term for a holy place, or holy mountain.

Zion Schoolhouse has survived a radical transformation of the local landscape, in the mid-20th century the school was situated on a dirt road and surrounded by farmland. This heritage site is one of the original settlement's few remaining features, and serves an important educational resource on the history and development of Upper Canadian rural communities.

NORTH YORK COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

North York Historical Society
in partnership with the
North York Seniors Centre

Sponsored by the Government of Canada,
New Horizons for Seniors Program.

A conversation with Doug Wardle was the beginning of this project. As reported last year we applied for a grant to record memories of North York, and on December 6, 2010, Doug and his wife Reta, were the first to be interviewed.

Professor Marion Coomey, Ryerson University (also previously with the CBC) conducted training sessions and to date we have recorded over thirty interviews. Most of them are our members and few from the NY Seniors Centre. In September we participated in their *Active Living Fair* and in October we invited their members to enjoy *Tales of Old North York*, presented by Penny Potter. As a result of this we have been asked to return with another presentation.

Our thanks for sharing your stories – all are interesting and priceless.

Interviewers and tech support still needed – do please come forward and help us.

Interviewers: Bill Aird, Linda Gargaro,
Ann McIlroy, Brian Sims

Tech Support: Vall Alagirisamy,
Glenn Bonnetta, Geoff Geduld

Co-ordinator: Edith Geduld.

Consultant: Doug Wardle

Linda Gargaro, Director

Chair, Oral History Project (edited)

GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM

The David Gibson House is located at 5172 Yonge Street (Ward 23 Willowdale). It is a designated heritage site under by-law 27975 passed by North York City Council on December 15, 1980.

The Gibson House Museum in North York is a red brick Georgian Revival farmhouse located on land that was acquired by the Gibson family in 1829. David and Elizabeth Gibson lived in a wood frame house on the site until they were forced to flee to the United States during the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. The building that now stands was constructed in 1851 after the family's return to Toronto, and was home to David and Eliza's household as well as their son, Peter Silas Gibson's family until 1916. The house was occupied by a series of owners and tenants until the Township of North York acquired the property in 1965. Gibson House was restored and opened as a heritage museum on June 6, 1971.

Gibson House is associated with the domestic and public lives of David and Eliza Gibson, who were prominent members of the rural Willow Dale community in the North York Township and significant figures in the history of Upper Canada. Gibson House is one of a number of 19th century farmhouses that survived the major urban development that accompanied the city's expansion into North York in the 20th century. The building has been modified over time to suit the needs of several generations of the Gibson family, as well as those of various later owners and tenants.

The Gibson property has produced a number of archaeological finds, including artefacts dating from the mid to late 19th century that are associated with the domestic lives of the Gibson family and of later inhabitants.

Gibson House was once part of an active and progressive working farm, and was a significant feature within the Willow Dale community, nine miles from the town of York. The expanding city gradually absorbed the farmland and villages of North York. Gibson House is now surrounded by a thoroughly urban landscape and serves

as a reminder of the borough's early settlements and rural history.

Gibson House is historically significant for its connection to the Gibson family. David Gibson, (1804-1864) immigrated to Quebec from Scotland in 1825 and worked as a surveyor in Upper Canada for many years. Gibson assisted in mapping much of early Toronto, including the city's streets and sidewalks, and was also a successful farmer and an influential politician in his local district. David was a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1834 and 1836 as well as a leader of the Reform Movement. After the Rebellion of 1837 he was forced to live as a fugitive in Upper Canada before escaping to the United States. His wife, Elizabeth Milne Gibson, and their four children joined him after the first Gibson House was burned by Government soldiers. Eliza Gibson travelled regularly to Upper Canada to collect rents from the family's properties until David's father, James and half-brother William arrived from Scotland and began to manage the Willow Dale farm. The Gibson family returned to Upper Canada in 1848, and moved into the second Gibson House in 1851.

The Gibson property was willed to David and Eliza's daughter, Margaret Jane, upon David's death in 1864. The property then passed to Margaret's brother Peter Silas and his wife Eliza Holmes, who raised their ten children in the house. Most of the historic Gibson farm was sold for sub-division in 1913, except for an acre at the southeast corner where the Gibson House is, and where the Gibson Park was located. And a third of an acre on the south east corner that was deeded to Peter Silas' eldest son, Harold Holmes, upon his marriage in 1897. Harold built a large red brick house on this site that was used as the new family home and then as a public library until its demolition in 1957.

The Gibson farmhouse was rented to relatives of the Gibson family in the 1920s. In 1942 the house was sold to local contractor Noel Knowles who modernized the building and introduced a number of extensive renovations. After Mr. Knowles' death in 1952, the house was sold and then

rented to a series of tenants. In 1960 the North York Historical Society was founded by a group of citizens who had come together to advocate for Gibson House. The Township of North York purchased the remaining Gibson House property in 1965 for \$1.00 and other considerations "for the purpose of a museum, historic site, or public park," and in 1966 the building underwent exterior and structural restorations under the direction of the restoration architect B. Napier Simpson.

The site was used as a storage facility until 1970, when the North York Council chose to restore and operate Gibson House as a heritage museum in response to the National Centennial in 1967. Council entered into a private restoration agreement with Brigadier-General J. A. McGinnis of the Toronto Historical Board, and the house was recreated, under the direction of Museums Advisor Dorothy Duncan, to reflect the Gibsons' home circa 1851, based on contemporary documents from the period. The museum was opened to the public on June 6, 1971.

The Museum's artefact collection includes a small but significant collection of Gibson artefacts, including David Gibson's surveying instruments and a tall case clock the works of which were removed from the first frame house by Eliza Gibson before fire consumed her house. The remainder of the collection was purchased or acquired from local donors and consists of materials representative of the various local homes, farms, and business of the mid-19th century.

Gibson House is one of the few surviving features of historic Willow Dale, a small crossroads community that was situated on Yonge Street, nine miles from the Town of York. Willow Dale was originally known as Kummer's (or Cummer's) settlement, and contained a population of 150 in the late 1850s. Willow Dale and its neighbouring North York communities benefited from their placement on Yonge Street, one of the earliest and most

-6- heavily traveled transport routes in Upper Canada. David Gibson petitioned the

government to open a community post office in the mid-19th century, and suggested the name Willow Dale in honour of the numerous willow trees that grew in the district.

A Tolman Sweet apple tree, the last remaining tree from the orchard that David Gibson established in 1832, stands on the parkland south of Gibson House. Cuttings from the two Tolman Sweets and a Snow Apple that were standing in the late 1980s were used to establish a number of trees that now stand in Dempsey Park.



Geoff Geduld

ARCHIVES (HERITAGE RESOURCE CENTRE) REPORT – 2011

The following donations were received this year:

Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan: Centennial in North York material.

Dorothy Milne estate: books and information of North York historic buildings.

Mrs. N.K. Taylor: books

Volunteers: Miriam Jackson, Sheryl Adelkind and John Laraway continued to work through the unsorted material.

Glenn Bonnetta, Director of Archives (edited)

PLAQUING REPORT – 2011

The Robert Franklin "R. F." Hicks plaque was installed in the R. F. Hicks Park during the summer.

A plaque honouring the Cummer Family has been researched. Many thanks to Gunild Speiss for her assistance. Fund raising for this plaque continues.

Glenn Bonnetta, Director

PRORAMS 2011

February 16, 2011 **Annual General Meeting** and **THE MODERN CAN BE HERITAGE TOO**
Ellen Kowalchuk, Cultural Heritage Specialist, Ontario Realty Corporation

Wednesday, March 16, 2011
ROSEDALE: MANSIONS AND MORE
Marta O'Brien, Architectural Historian

Wednesday, May 18, 2011
UNBUILT TORONTO: a history of the city that might have been
Mark Osbaldeston, author

Saturday, June 25, 2011
A summer outing to the
HISTORIC BREWERY AT BLACK CREEK PIONEER VILLAGE

Wednesday, September 21, 2011
HERITAGE TREES: PRESERVING OUR NATURAL ROOTS
Edith George, past director of the Weston Historical Society & advisor to the Ontario Urban Forest Council.

Wednesday, October 19, 2011
C. W. JEFFERYS: PICTURING CANADA
Screening of documentary film by John Bessai, film director

Wednesday, November 16, 2011
BREAKING THE SILENCE: VETERANS' UNTOLD STORIES; Ted Barris, author

Thursday, December 8, 2011
Outing to the **HISTORIC ZION SCHOOLHOUSE**
Teresa den Boef, Director of Programs

NORTH YORK MINUTE 2011

This year's subjects were varied. Special thanks to Penny Potter for her memories of C. W. Jefferys and his family and also to Andrew Lowe for revealing the Canadiana Department's secrets to us and providing a tour.

We encourage members to share their stories to us.
Linda Gargaro (edited)

NORTH YORK COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PANEL

Mary Ann Cross, Ruth Kingma, Linda Gargaro, Edith Geduld

Interviews for the new panel following the Municipal Election of 2010 have still not taken place.

3rd year North York Modernist Architecture Forum topic was *Surburbia – Heritage of Everyday*. A dialogue on post war modern architecture as part of the city's heritage.

8 Buchan Court (Wynyates/Col. Phillips Estate), Ward 33, Don Valley East, listed property. City inspection due to concern of neglect by owners (North York General Hospital).

Street name OMB Folly has been changed Johnson Farm Lane thanks to Mary Ann Cross's research.

Loretto Abbey, 101 Mason Boulevard built 1927 on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties moved for designation.
Edith Geduld

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – PROXY

Solicited by the Board of Directors of the Society for the February 16, 2012

The undersigned paid up member of the North York Historical Society hereby appoints Ruth Kingma, Secretary, as proxy holder, with full power of substitution to attend, vote and act on behalf of the undersigned at the Annual General Meeting of members of the Society to be held on Wednesday, February 16, 2012 at 7.30 p.m.

The proxy holder is here instructed for: (strike out option not desired):

- 1. The election of persons nominated as Officers and Directors of the Society for the year 2012.
- 2. The appointment of auditor named by the Board of Directors of Nominating Committee.

And hereby revoke any proxy previously given.

Name of member.....Date.....

Signature.....

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2011

My thanks to the Board of Directors, appointees (NYCPP and THA), Committee Chairs and volunteers for their support and help this year. Some committee reports are in this newsletter. In addition my thanks to Phone: Miriam Jackson & Marion Simpson, Newsletter: Edith Geduld, Social: Jean Hill, Sunshine: Lillian Methven, Jane Jacobs' Walk: Glenn Bonnetta & Edith Geduld, Mystery Ruins Research: Clarice Dale, Street Naming: Clarice Dale & Jeanne Hopkins

Special thanks to our new Vice President (also Webmaster): Bill Aird.

This year we met with the management of the Miller Tavern and Councillor Jaye Robinson (Ward 25 Don Valley West), re: NYHS office costs.

Attended THA meetings, Heritage Round Table, Heritage Toronto Awards, Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, Emery School 50th Anniversary, Heritage Advisory Committee (appointment), Willowdale Plaque unveiling.

Participated in local MPPs community outreach events, Official Plan Review Open House, 85 Laird Drive commemoration, OGS Cemetery Petition, Mystery Ruins investigation, and more.

Communications to the new North York Community Council, Core Services Review, Canadian Air & Space Museum and more.

Geoff Geduld, President

Please note: Gibson House Museum and Historic Zion Schoolhouse information edited from *Statement of Significance*, City of Toronto Museum Services.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Gibson House Museum:
Councillor John Filion 416-392-0210
councillor_filion@toronto.ca

Historic Zion Schoolhouse:
Councillor Shelley Carroll 416-392-4038
councillor_carroll@toronto.ca

Mayor Rob Ford 416-397-3673
Mayor_Ford@toronto.ca

Toronto City Hall Mailing Address:
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Also please check our website
www.nyhs.ca

GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM
Holiday Season Tours
Nov. 15 to Dec. 23, noon to 5pm
Regular admission applies.

To the New Year: A Hogmanay Dinner
Enjoy a special evening inspired by the traditions of Scottish Hogmanay. Enjoy live music and a scrumptious dinner by the fire. Take an imagined journey through story and drama to a New Year's Eve in another time.
Pre-registration and pre-payment required.
\$42.50 plus tax.
Call 416-395-7432 or
visit [www. Toronto.ca/gibsonhouse](http://www.Toronto.ca/gibsonhouse)

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Membership 2012

Name (print).....Telephone.....

Address.....

.....

Email:..... Newsletter by email: Yes No....

Family \$25.00.....Individual \$15.00.....Senior \$10.00..... Student \$5.00

Donation: Heritage Resource Centre Plaquing Program.....

Please make cheque payable to the North York Historical Society
P.O.Box 45045, 5845 Yonge Street, Willowdale, ON M2M 4K3