



NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
MARCH-MAY 2014
1960-2014, 54th Year

From the President

The 54th Annual General Meeting of the North York Historical Society was held on February 19th. I welcome the 2014 Board and Committees (listed on the back page).

There are a number of significant anniversaries this year. The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is 100 years old. Toronto was incorporated as a city 180 years ago, previously known as York. And this year marks 100 years since the outbreak of World War I (WWI).

The 100th anniversary of the ROM is certainly worth celebrating, and I think we should offer our congratulations and good wishes for the future. WWI, 1914-18, often referred to as "the war to end all wars" was an unprecedented slaughter which failed. War continues to engender misery in many areas of the world. Recent events once again highlight that war is still a threatened response by many, who hold positions of power and influence in the world. Surely this does not serve the interests of people anywhere?

On the 180th birthday of the City of Toronto, I am sure we all realize that a great city cannot be successful and grow without investing in its culture and heritage.

I encourage everyone to be active in the life of our community and the work of our society.

Bill Aird

Wednesday, April 16th at 7.30 p.m.

WILLOWDALE: YESTERDAY'S FARMS, TODAY'S LEGACY

Scott Kennedy, author

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

Wednesday, May 21st at 7.30 p.m.

TORONTO, THEN AND NOW

Mike Filey, author, and contributor to *The Toronto Sun*.

A power point presentation that contrasts a variety of locations in Toronto through the use of rare old photos and present day views.

At Downsview Library, 2793 Keele Street. Parking available.

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

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MEMBERS – please note the following information:

MAY 21st Meeting was planned to be held at the newly renovated Fairview Library. Unfortunately due to the subsequent water damage and thus the closure of the branch the meeting will take place in the Downsview Library instead.

JUNE: information about an outing in June will be available at the April meeting. Information will also be emailed and telephoned.

DONATIONS 2013 (November-December)

General Operating Fund

Bill Aird, Gwendolyn Kane, Anne McIlroy, Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan, Tony Ricci

Cummer Family Plaque:

Carole Caruthers

John Bales House Plaque:

Carole Carruthers, Geoff & Edith Geduld, Gwendolyn Kane, Anne McIlroy

Miriam Jackson Memorial Fund

Glenn Bonnetta, Geoff & Edith Geduld, Jean Hill, Judy Howdle, Ruth Kingma, Dorothy Madden, Kami Matar, Robert & Elizabeth McQuillan, Terry Rydewski, Peggy Wilmot, Anonymous,



DONATION to the Gibson House Museum by Douglas and Reta Wardle of a child's rocking chair, circa 1890s, which belonged to Cora Finch of the Finch family (north east corner Finch Avenue & Yonge Street).

Photograph by Sarah McCabe, NYHS member, December, 2013 at the Gibson House Museum.

TALES OF OLD NORTH YORK

In 1960, long time North York resident, Harold Gray, collected and recounted anecdotes about early North York life. These stories are in the North York Historical Society's scrapbooks which are currently being integrated into the North York Central Library's Canadiana Department.

Grinding for Tolls: In his grandfather's time there was not much money around and a lot of the grinding was done by toll; that is, the miller charged a certain number of pounds (currency) for each 100 pounds (weight) as toll. This brings to mind a story of the miller who had two sons. He asked one boy, "Tom, did you toll this grist?" The boy said "Yes father." Then he asked the other boy, "Did you toll this grist?" (the same grist) "Yes father," he said. The father said, "Well, you are both such damn liars I will toll it myself just to make sure."

Bees (gatherings): In the early days they arranged working bees to clear the land. Neighbors would come with their teams of oxen to dig around the stumps of the trees to be removed, cut off some of the roots, hitch the teams to the stump and pull it out.

And then there were bees for threshing. A farmer spread his sheaves out on the barn floor and threshed them with a flail. Most of the farmers in the district exchanged hands at threshing time. When threshing machines became available about a twelve man team was required and the thresher and helper. Four or five men passed the sheaves to the men feeding the threshing cylinder. One would cut the bands on the sheaves, others spread them out so that they would feed evenly into the machine. Two or three men would be needed to carry the grain to bins in the granary. Men would also stack the straw outside. Later powered self-feeding separators, which cut the bands and fed the sheaves into a cylinder, replaced the men. Then came the steam engine, thresher and separator, to be replaced by the tractor and then the combine harvester.

Christmas time: There would be a decorated Christmas tree at the churches; adults and children took part in the program. His mother liked Spanish onions, and she was pretty sure of getting one or two from the tree. Some of the farmers, who were jolly fellows always played a joke on his mother. However, they did not get too far ahead of her. He remembered before one Christmas, she made a batch of tarts, which really looked good from the outside but, while she was mixing them, she asked him to go to the woodshed and pick up some thin chips of wood and some sawdust. This was the filling for the tarts which she boxed up nicely and put on the Christmas tree for a couple of the farmers.

In those days people made their own amusement. They would have a house party and neighbours would be invited for dinner and a dance. Those who did not dance could play cards and there would be someone who could play the violin to provide the music.

His father and mother quite often had parties, and he remembered one time they were playing a game, which would not be considered very healthy today. They chose sides, each side had a goal keeper, and every other person on the sides was playing the opposite way. They held a sheet up under their chins and the game was to blow a small downy feather and try to score on the goalkeeper at either end. One elderly lady took a deep breath getting ready to blow and swallowed the feather. "Is that the game?" she asked.

Groundhog Hunting: His father, Timothy Gray, was a great man for hunting. There was usually a man or two working around their place and they sometimes amused themselves at noon shooting at a groundhog which lived in a hole in a bank on the far side of the mill pond, about three hundred yards away. They had been shooting at this groundhog one day and then gone back to work. His mother came out of the house, saw the animal sitting up and decided she would take a crack at it. She did, and spoiled the fun for the men, for she killed the groundhog.

Settling an estate: He had a little book which his uncle, Thomas Gray, used when he was executor of an estate in 1895:

Funeral expenses	\$125.45
Digging Grave	4.00

He went to Toronto in connection with the estate and his expense account each day was 35 cents. In addition there were other costs.

1 overcoat	\$5.00
Drawers and shirts	1.14
1 pr. Pants	.50
2 pr. Stockings	.50
Dinner in Toronto	.25
Hostler for hitching horses	.10
Hay for horses at hotel	.25

Recipes: Thomas Gray's little book also contained recipes.
As a cure for a cold: 2 parts rum, 1 part glycerine.

For pickling pork: 5 pails cold water, 1 pail salt, 1 quart black strap molasses and ¼ pound saltpetre.

Researched and written by Susan Goldenberg, NYHS Director (edited)



Threshing on west side of Yonge Street, north of the North York Civic Centre, circa 1945.
Given to the North York Historical Society by Robert McQuillan.

TORONTO'S HISTORIC SITES: www.toronto.ca/museums

GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM, 5172 Yonge Street (call for access directions during construction around the site) 416-395-6915 gibsonhouse@toronto.ca (Did you know this former home of surveyor David Gibson was once part of a 105 acre farm?)

Thursday evening, April 3rd, a cellist (from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra) will be giving a half hour concert at 6.00 p.m. in the parlour. This is part of the **Keep Toronto Reading** the one book, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. PWYC

National Tartan Day: Sunday, April 6th, 1.00/5.00 p.m. Regular admission or ½ price if you wear Tartan!

Mother's Day Tea: Saturday & Sunday, May 10th & 11th, 2.00/4.00 p.m. Pre-registration required \$60.00 + taxes, includes tea for two and a gift for Mom. Additional tickets \$30.00 + tax. One seating per day.

Ongoing: Every Sunday afternoon there's a seat for you at the historic kitchen table. Relax and have a chat over tea and homemade cookies. Enjoy a tour of this lovely 1850 farmhouse. Regular admission applies.

Knitting & Crocheting: every Sunday from 2/4pm. Go to the parlour for a relaxing afternoon. All ages and skill levels. Bring your own projects from home or try out one of our fun patters – add something to the #yarnbomb! FREE to participate. Donations are always welcome.

EVENTS AT OTHER TORONTO'S HISTORIC SITES

TODMORDEN MILLS: PAPER MILL GALLERY, 67 Pottery Road, 416-396-2819. Ontario Society of Artists – to March 23rd. **Botanical Artists of Canada**, March 26-April 6.

SPADINA MUSEUM, Historic House & Garden, 285 Spadina Road, S. of St. Clair West, next door to the Casa Loma). 416-392-6910 spadinamuseum@toronto.ca **Dressing for Downton** Costumes from Downton Abbey to April 13. Toronto's Downton Abbey! The guided tour takes you through the servants' quarters, a lavish dining room, a drawing room elegant enough to impress the Dowager Countess and the kitchen of Mrs. Patmore's dreams. See 20 exquisite costumes worn during the filming of this highly acclaimed period drama. Also check out special June events.

MARKET GALLERY, South St., Lawrence Market, 95 Front St. E. Now to April 19th 416-392-7604: **To Preserve and Promote Black History: Celebrating 35 Years of the Ontario Black History Society.** The OBHS has expanded the public's awareness and appreciation of black history. In 1979 they successfully petitioned the City of Toronto for recognition of February as Black History Month. This exhibition tells the story of black history in Ontario and the continued efforts of the OBHS to study, preserve and promote this important heritage with its local, regional and international connections.

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2014 Board of Directors, Representatives & Committees

www.nyhs.ca

nyhs@bell.net

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Past President	Geoff Geduld	416-222-3485	geoff.geduld@sympatico.ca
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	Maria Sabatino		
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North York Community Preservation Panel
Toronto Historical Association

Mary Ann Cross
Bill Aird

Committees (Chair)

Archives

Glenn Bonnetta

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Newsletter
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Bill Aird

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

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Membership 2014 - 53rd Year

Name (print).....Phone.....

Address.....

Email address..... May we email newsletter to you?.....

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

Donation

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