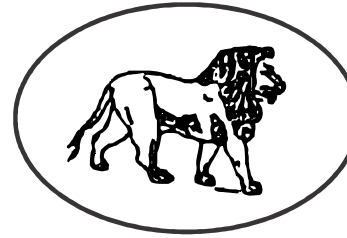


NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
MARCH-MAY 2015
1960-2015, 55th Year
www.nyhs.ca



From the President

The Annual General Meeting was held on February 18th. The 2015 Board and Committees are listed on page 6. On behalf of the Society, my thanks to Bill Aird for his contribution initially as Webmaster, then Vice President and President, as well as participating in almost everything else we have been doing. In spite of his current health difficulties, I am pleased that he will continue to provide support as Past President and Webmaster. Also, our thanks to Geoff Geduld for the many years of service on the board. Welcome and greetings to new director, Sarah McCabe, and also to the returning board and committee members.

On Friday afternoon, February 6th, the Society and the Toronto Public Library signed an agreement to officially add our archives to the collection of the Canadiana Department, on the 6th floor of the North York Central Library. See page 3 for more information.

Please see below for the locations of our April and May meetings – and also the special day at the Gibson House Museum on Saturday, May 30th. Look forward to seeing you there – be sure to tell everyone you meet that the “construction” period is over.

Glenn Bonnetta

Wednesday, April 15th at 7.30 p.m.

LOST BREWERIES OF TORONTO

Jordan St. John, co-author of *How to Make Your Own Brewskis: The Go-to Guide for Craft Brew Enthusiasts*. Nationally syndicated beer columnist.

Meeting location: the North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge Street, in Meeting Room #1 (west side of atrium) use elevator outside library. Meeting is co-sponsored by the North York Historical Society and the North York Central Library, Canadiana Department.

Wednesday, May 20th at 7.30 p.m.

RHUBARB REVELRY at the Gibson House Museum

Includes refreshments and rhubarb samples in the Parlour, Dining Room and Historic Kitchen. 5172 Yonge Street, new entrance off Park Home Avenue.

Speakers: Dorie Billich, Curator and Maggie Newell, Program Officer

Saturday, May 30th 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

WHAT'S SPRINGING UP at the Gibson House Museum?

Celebrating the new garden, orchard and access from Park Home Avenue – and to re-launch the Gibson House Museum – post construction!

Contents:

Page 2: In Memoriam, At the Gibson House

Page 3: NYHS donation to the TPL

Page 4: St. John's Mills Anglican Church

Page 5: Cummer Family Plaque Installation

Page 6: Donations

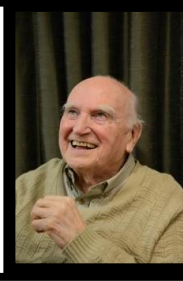
Page 7: *The Enterprise*

Page 8: 2015 Board & Committees

The 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

IN MEMORIAM

Jack Cameron, BSc (Hons), ARIC, PhD
1922-2014
WWII Veteran
Long-time member, past director.
He is missed.
Condolences to Margaret and the Family



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

At the February 18, 2015 Annual General Meeting, members were advised of two motions that were adopted at the February 4, 2015 Board meeting:

1. **Name Tags** will be presented to members on joining. Members will responsible for bringing this to meetings.
2. **Refreshments** will no longer be provided at monthly meetings.

AT THE GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM

Wartime in Willowdale – an exhibit – to May 24

"Dear Sadie: Love, Lives and Remembrance from Ontario's First World War," is a travelling exhibit created by the Archives of Ontario. See letters between soldier Henry Mason and his sweetheart, Sadie Arbuckle that tell their moving story while exploring the reality of war. Local stories of North York including the Gibson family connection to the war and wartime complement the exhibit. Regular admission.

Celebrate National Tartan Day

Saturday, April 11, 1 to 5 p.m. Join in celebrating all things Scottish! Try on a tartan and sample treats on your tour of the house. Learn about prominent Scottish-Canadians like the Gibson's or try a guess at "Which Tartan is Which?" Wear tartan and get in for half price!

Community Quilt Group Get-togethers Thursdays, 6 to 8 p.m. Relax and improve your sewing skills. Beginners welcome. Free

Thursday Night Socials - Thursdays, 5 to 8 p.m. Take a self-guided tour then enjoy a cup of tea in the historic kitchen. The last Thursday of the month is Board Game Night, starting at 6 p.m. Be challenged! Pay what you wish.

Tea and Tour Sundays – 1 to 5 p.m. Have a tour then relax with tea and homemade cookies. Regular admission.

Keep You in Stitches – Sundays, 2 to 4 p.m. Join them for a relaxing afternoon of knitting and crocheting. All skill levels! Free!

Regular admission: Adults \$5.48; Seniors/Youth \$3.10; Children (2-12 yrs) \$2.62

Gibson House Museum, 5172 Yonge Street: new entrance off Park Home Avenue
416-395-7432 gibsonhouse@toronto.ca

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY DONATES NORTH YORK HISTORY COLLECTION TO THE CANADIANA DEPARTMENT

The North York Historical Society (NYHS) and the Toronto Public Library (TPL) signed an agreement on February 6th to add the NYHS archives to the collections of the Canadiana Department, North York Central Library. A special event was held to recognize this significant donation of historical materials from North York.

The Canadiana Department and the NYHS have a mutual interest to preserve and make historical and current information about North York accessible, and have a long history of working together. This donation increases Canadiana's collections related to the history of North York, and the library staff and NYHS members plan to work together to promote and enhance access to these materials in the future.

The donation agreement was signed by Linda Mackenzie, Director of Research and Reference Libraries for TPL and Bill Aird, President of the NYHS.

Canadiana has had a collection on the history of North York since its earliest days in the 1960s. The collection is in-depth covering North York back to its earliest human habitation, and includes books, local newspapers, photographs, maps and clipping files on North York people, places and events. Also part of the collection are about 30 small archival collections, and many municipal and planning documents issued by North York prior to its amalgamation into Toronto.

Among the gems acquired in the NYHS donation:

- *Aerial photographs of North York in 1942 and 1954
- *Series of 39 scrapbooks about lot owners, communities, schools, and churches
- *Papers of the Coulson family, which includes documents going back to the 1830s
- *More than 1,600 historical photographs

North York Central Library Manager, Greg Kelner, served as master of ceremonies and introduced remarks from:

- *Bill Aird, President, North York Historical Society
- *Linda Mackenzie, Director, Research and Reference Libraries, Toronto Public Library
- *Rob Leverty, Executive Director, Ontario Historical Society
- *Dorie Billich, Curator, Gibson House Museum & Historic Zion Schoolhouse
- *Councillor John Filion, Ward 23 Willowdale

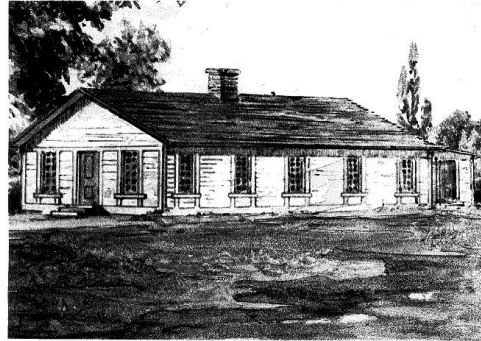
From TPL Blog, edited. Photographs: Geoff Geduld



ST. JOHN'S YORK MILLS ANGLICAN CHURCH, 1816-2016

The bicentennial is just one year away for St. John's York Mills Anglican Church, the oldest church in North York and the second oldest in Toronto. The oldest is St. James Cathedral, which is a parish church as well as a cathedral. St. James, at King and Church Streets in downtown Toronto, was started in 1807. St. John's, located on Don Ridge Drive in the York Mills-Old Yonge Street district, was started in 1816.

Before the church was erected, the area was John's began as a 10 by 20 metre frame structure, three-acre property, which was donated by Joseph the building. For the first few years this church and the only places of worship on Yonge Street, a distance of town of York (Toronto) to Lake Simcoe.



served with missionaries from St. James. St. built by the community from trees felled on the Shepard and his wife. A wood stove heated Friend's Meeting House in Newmarket were the forty miles, as the street extended from the

Deterioration over the years led in 1843 to the brick one that has grown over the years to the building were done by architect John G. Howard, who later original dimensions were 12 by 18 meters, with a tower and organ loft. The style was Gothic. The contract price was £632.00.

St. John's not only has the distinction of being the first church in North York; it also is well known for its barrel organ, one of only a few of its kind in Canada. Rather than being played by an organist, as a conventional pipe organ is, a barrel organ is operated by a person turning a crank. Pieces of music are encoded on to wooden barrels (cylinders). St. John's organ has three barrels, each of which contains ten tunes. The organ, installed in 1847, was sent over from England at a cost of £80 10s 6d.

According to the church's historian, Bill Dennis, the barrel organ was the church's main instrument until the 1860s, when a small cottage or finger organ was installed. A pipe organ was installed in 1928.

For 69 years ending in 1930, the barrel organ was operated by St. John's sexton, John Page Squire. He also rang the church bells, tended the graveyard, kept the church in repair and dug graves, until he was in his late eighties. In the days before electricity, he had to take care of two dozen coal oil lamps. He was the oldest sexton in Canada. He died in January 1931, just six weeks after retiring. For the next three months the organ, which he loved, was kept silent in his honor.

The first person buried in the graveyard was a seven year old child, a grandson of Cornelius van Nostrand, who came from Long Island as a United Empire Loyalist in 1797. The family plot has about ninety graves. The acacia trees around York Mills are said to have been grown from cuttings, brought from the van Nostrand home on Long Island. At the time the boy was buried, slaves were still being advertised for sale in York County, of which Toronto was the home seat, and Toronto was still mostly forest.

Written and researched by Susan Goldenberg, Director, North York Historical Society

CUMMER FAMILY PLAQUE: Plaque Installation

will take place at 2.30 p.m. Thursday,
May 14th just south of the
intersection of Doris and McKee Avenues,
following which there will be a Tea
Reception at the John McKenzie House
(headquarters of The Ontario Historical
Society), 34 Parkview Avenue. Pre-
registration is requested:
416-222-3485
edith.geduld@sympatico.ca

When Willowdale plaque was
installed in the cemetery at Yonge Street
& Church Avenue (see Newsletter Aug-
Oct. 2011), long time member, Gunild
Spiess, suggested that the Cummer
Family's contribution to Willowdale
merited a separate plaque. The Cummer
Family plaque project has been funded
by Mrs. Spiess, her family, friends and
members of the NYHS, with the
assistance of Heritage Toronto's Plaques & Markers Program.

Last November 28th, the Cummer Family plaque was unveiled at McKee Public School. Heritage Toronto gave a visual *Then and Now* presentation. Mrs. Spiess told the assembly of children, parents and staff, that this was the very spot where Jacob Cummer built one-room log cabin in 1797. His third son was born there that year; the first non-aboriginal child in this area.

One day, Elizabeth Cummer, was sitting at the table, holding her baby, while her husband, Jacob, was out clearing the land. She was startled, when an aboriginal man entered and pointed to a knife lying on the table. She gave it to him. A few days later, he came back with a gift of a wooden cradle for the baby, which is still in the Cummer family.

....continued on page 6



THE CUMMER FAMILY

The family of Elizabeth (née Fisher) and Jacob Cummer (Kummer) was important to the founding of Willowdale (North York). Among the area's early settlers of German descent, they arrived from Pennsylvania in 1797. By 1801, Jacob had acquired 80 hectares of land, later known as Cummer's Settlement, on the east side of Yonge Street. He was a successful farmer, entrepreneur, and craftsman. Originally Lutheran, the family founded an Episcopal Methodist chapel and cemetery at Yonge Street and present-day Church Avenue. By 1819, they had built a sawmill on the east Don River, later adding both woollen and gristmills. One of their six sons, Joshua, constructed his farmhouse on this site circa 1830. Upon Jacob's death in 1841, each son was given a farm nearby. The family contributed to this community well into the 20th century.

Produced with the North York Historical Society

HERITAGE TORONTO 2014

CUMMER FAMILY PLAQUE continued

Mrs. Spiess then connected the McKee School students directly to the memory of the Cummer family, who are buried in the pioneer cemetery, where the Willowdale plaque can be seen. In 1965, the principal, Charles Proctor, who also taught history, took the Grade 6 class across the street.

Then Patricia Marsh, who was one of those students, told the assembly, that they gathered around him for a short history lesson on the Cummers' life in this new country. She remembered how difficult it was to imagine, on that warm sunny day, how cold they must have been in the winter with just the fireplace in their cabin to keep them warm. What brave and determined people they must have been.

Mr. Proctor read the inscriptions on some of the tombstones, and she remembered how shocked and sad she was to see the graves of one and two year old children who had died of illnesses, that today are either preventable or easily cured. The students made a number of trips to the cemetery that spring, cleaning up litter, washing some of the gravestones and planting bright spring flowers.

In 1996, when *200 Years Yonge* was celebrated, the cemetery was again in a mess, so local citizens approached Councillor John Fillion, to see whether something could be done. The fallen tombstones were repaired and flowers were planted.

DONATIONS 2014

General Operating Fund Geoff & Edith Geduld, Peter Macdonald, Anne McIlroy, Elizabeth Minaker, Penny Danielle, Eleanor Pyke, Marie Claire Truitt-Alper, Douglas Wallace

Plaquing Fund Elizabeth Minaker

Miriam Jackson Memorial Fund Margaret Chadwick, Geoff & Edith Geduld

Ontario Historical Society's Roof Fund Bill Aird

When making donations, kindly indicate which dedicated fund you wish to support.

MORE SAMPLE STORIES (1946) from *The Enterprise*

Continued from page 7

July 18, 1946: Department of Health, Township of North York

About Laughter: Never laugh at your children but be sure to laugh with them. A hearty laugh, by whipping up the blood and expanding the lungs, heightens the laugher's general sense of well-being. Carl E. Hill, M.D., Medical Officer of Health

July 25, 1946: With the addition of another highway patrolman there will now be five provincial policemen patrolling the Yonge Street highway between Toronto and Barrie.

Reeve George Mitchell of North York Township warns residents of this municipality to stop using water for their lawns and gardens or go without water from 5 p.m. until 10 p.m.

THE ENTERPRISE **North York's First Newspaper**

North York's first newspaper was founded November 11, 1926 in Willowdale. Called *The Enterprise*, it was established by Robert Rankin, a printer, and Thomas Osbourne, a linotype operator. They thought the market was ripe for a community paper, as North York transitioned from a rural community to an urban one. The four-page weekly paper was first produced, in what used to be a store, just north of Yonge and Sheppard.

The paper was given the colorful nickname of *The Squeak*. There are two versions as to why. One is that Osbourne said the first paper was so small it looked like a squeak of a newspaper. The other was explained by Bert Long, the managing editor from 1938 to 1959, "It was affectionately called *The Squeak* mainly because *The Enterprise* wasn't a sophisticated newspaper – it was more folksy," he said. "You couldn't paint the front door green without it being noted in the newspaper and if your neighbours went as far as Burlington for the weekend it was sure to be in the paper next week."

Osbourne sold his interest to Rankin two years later, in 1928. The following year, the stock market crashed ushering in the Great Depression. The paper's circulation held steady, supplemented by free distribution, but advertising shrivelled. Barter replaced cash. Services and goods were exchanged for printing and advertising. During the Depression, William Stowe, a printer, who did some of the paper's printing, became Rankin's new partner.

In 1938, Rankin sold his interest to brothers William A. and George Dempsey, owners since 1921 of the general store at the corner of Yonge and Sheppard streets. At the time, the advertising rate was \$0.20 a column inch, and a year's subscription \$1.00 or \$0.20 an issue. Stowe sold his interest in 1940 to the Dempseys.

The Dempseys hired Bert Long, who had sold advertising for *The Enterprise*. Besides being the editor, Long did proof-reading, collected accounts, wrote editorials, did reporting and page layouts. All this for a salary of just \$12.50 a week. Moreover, he was expected to pay his car expenses. He worked a 60-hour week.

The Dempseys dissolved their partnership in 1948, with William Dempsey choosing *The Enterprise*. In 1959, when Long left the paper to work for the North York school board, William's son Douglas became editor. In 1960, *The Toronto Daily Star* acquired *The Enterprise*. Douglas Dempsey and his brother Herb, organized a new company with *The Toronto Star* called Newsweb Ltd., which specialized in offset newspaper printing. In 1970, Metro Mirror Publishing Ltd. bought *The Enterprise*.

SAMPLE STORIES (1946)

June 20, 1946: The Bell Telephone Company's Customers Suggestion Corner for Rural Telephone Service: One customer writes: "Devise some means so that if neighbours must listen in, they can at least repeat correctly what they heard."

July 25, 1946: With the addition of another highway patrolman there will now be five provincial policemen patrolling the Yonge Street highway between Toronto and Barrie.

More stories on page 6

Researched and written by Susan Goldenberg, Director, North York Historical Society (edited)

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2015 Board of Directors, Representatives & Committees

www.nyhs.ca nyhs@bell.net

| | | | | |
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| Vice President | Vacant | | | |
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| Auditor | Vacant | | | |

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North York Community Preservation Panel
Toronto Historical Association

Edith Geduld
Glenn Bonnetta

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Mary Ann Cross
Edith Geduld
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 2015 – 55th 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: \$.....

Dedicated Funds: General.....Plaquing.....Miriam Jackson Memorial.....OHS Roof.....

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