

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE-AUGUST, 2015

1960-2015 – 55th Year

www.nyhs.ca

From the President

It is with great pleasure that I announce that, at the 127th Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Historical Society, the North York Historical Society was presented with the 2014 Scadding Award of Excellence for outstanding contribution to the field of history by a heritage group. This recognition covers the Society's work through the years since 1960. We will post the submission on the website.

On April 8th the John Bales House Plaque was unveiled at the Dublin Heights Elementary & Middle School. We were delighted to have a Bales family descendant, Dorothy Floyd, present. The installation was to take place this summer in Earl Bales Park. Unfortunately this has had to be postponed, as the roof of the house is being replaced. See page 3 & 4 for information on the plaque and the house.

On May 14th, the Cummer Family Plaque was installed on Doris Avenue at McKee (close to where the Joshua Cummer House stood), followed by a tea reception at the John McKenzie House - several Cummer family descendants attended.

On May 30th there was an official opening event of the Gibson Park, in front of the remaining heritage apple tree. The Society mounted a display in the Discovery Gallery at the Gibson House Museum. In the park there are now two beds of roses (slightly to the east of the museum).

Hope you all have a good summer. See you in September.
Glenn Bonnetta

Wednesday September 16th at 7:30 p.m.
ETOBICOKE: THEN AND NOW

Denise Harris, Chair, Etobicoke-York Community Preservation Panel, Heritage Officer and Past President, Etobicoke Historical Society
Come and hear about Etobicoke's early history and see how much the area has changed over the past 140 years.

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

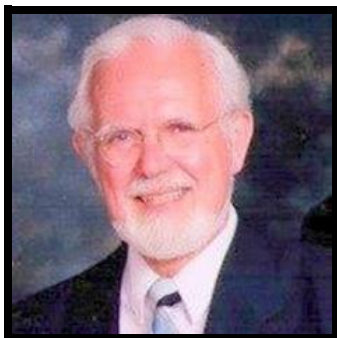
Meeting is co-sponsored by the North York Historical Society and the North York Central Library's Canadiana Department

Contents:

- 2. In Memoriam, Donations, Volunteer Service Awards, Rhubarb Revelry Quiz
- 3 & 4. John Bales House Plaque, Street Names
- 5. York Mills' Residents
- 6. Calendar, Photo captions and credits
- 7 & 8. Photographs

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



John Kelvin (Kel) Crossley
1927-2015
Long-time member
Condolences to his family and friends

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS 2015

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Congratulations to

Bill Aird and Anne McIlroy – 5 year award

John Laraway – 15 year award

DONATIONS 2015

General Operating Fund Sheryl Adelkind, Betty Brannen, Margaret Cameron, Gordon

Hawkins, Marion Kinch, Edward Macdonell, Pat MacNaughton, Lillian Methven, Kathleen Reader, Gregory Skelley

Plaquing Fund Margaret Cameron, Carole Carruthers, Lillian Methven, Eleanor Pyke, Gregory Skelley

Miriam Jackson Memorial Fund Margaret Cameron, Isobel Davey, Geoff & Edith Geduld (in memory of Jack Cameron), Lillian Methven

Ontario Historical Society's Roof Fund Ruth Kingma

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

RHUBARB REVELRY TRIVIA CONTEST

Our May meeting was held at the Gibson House Museum and we all had to do this trivia contest compiled by the staff of the GHM. Following which there was a selection of rhubarb treats for us all to enjoy. Provided by the GHM, Bill Aird, Edith Geduld & Penny Potter

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|---------------|
| 1. Rhubarb is a perennial fruit. | True or False | 7. "Patience and rhubarb work wonders" is a | |
| 2. Rhubarb is native to Canada. | True or False | German proverb. | True or False |
| 3. Poisoning from ingesting rhubarb leaves | | 8. There is a film during which the only word spoken | |
| became a problem during World War II. | True or False | is "rhubarb". | True or False |
| 4. Rhubarb can grow in the dark. | True or False | 9. The popularity of rhubarb has been affected by the | |
| 5. The "Rhubarb Triangle" is located in the Caribbean. | True or False | price of sugar. | True or False |
| 6. Rhubarb played a part in the Opium Wars between | | 10. Rhubarb can help protect our ozone layer. | True or False |
| China and Britain. | True or False | | |

See page 4 for the answers

JOHN BALES HOUSE

4169 Bathurst Street, circa 1824. (Located in Earl Bales Park)



JOHN BALES HOUSE circa 1824



Photograph of the Bales family, circa 1860. John and Elizabeth Bales (seated, centre) were married by Bishop John Strachan at the Church of St. James in 1823.
Toronto Star

This one-and-a-half-storey log house is one of Toronto's oldest buildings still standing on its original site. The house features a steeply pitched gable roof, a stuccoed exterior, and a symmetrical design typical of the vernacular Georgian style. Significant interior elements include a panelled storage wall in the south bedroom of the second floor and an original fireplace.

The builder of the house, John Bales, emigrated from England in 1819. In 1824, John and his wife, Elizabeth, purchased 60 acres (24 hectares) of land on the southeast corner of Bathurst Street and Sheppard Avenue. They developed their property to include this house, a barn, and eventually, a large orchard. Around 1840, the family added a cool room for food storage (since demolished) and a kitchen wing.

The house was sold by the Bales family in 1887. By 1922, the property was owned by the York Downs Golf and Country Club and the John Bales House became the home of the club's greens keeper. In 1975, the land surrounding the house became Earl Bales Park, named after a great-grandson of John and Elizabeth.



Left: Illustrated Historical Atlas of York County, 1878, showing the Bales family farm (outlined in green), purchased in 1869 by Joseph Bales from his parents, John and Elizabeth. The black square indicates the John Bales House.
Toronto Public Library



Right: Aerial photograph, 1947, showing the John Bales House (circled in red) situated in the York Downs Golf and Country Club.
City of Toronto Archives

Designated under the Ontario Heritage Act
HERITAGE TORONTO 2014

John Bales (1799-1873) emigrated from Cumberland, England about 1819. He was employed in York, as a gardener by John Beverly Robinson, Attorney General of Upper Canada. There he met Elizabeth Scott (1802-1889), another English immigrant, who was a maid to the Robinsons. They were married in St. James Church on December 1, 1823 by the Reverend John Strachan.

John Bales purchased 60 acres on the western half of lot 15, concession 1 west, for £75. The sale was registered in September, 1824. He cleared the land and built a house of logs, which was later stuccoed. John and Elizabeth had eleven children. Bales family lore states that the farm was sold in the 1850s, and the Bales moved to a larger farm on lot 15, concession 1 east. However, there is no indication in the land registry that this happened. The original farm was sold by Joseph Bales in 1887 to Shedden Company. It is possible that the Bales rented the more substantial farm, and in turn rented out the original farm. The land at Bathurst and Sheppard is rather hilly, and the farm was possibly regarded as too small by the 1850s.

Others lived in the Bales house until 1922, when the property was sold by Shedden Company to the York Downs Golf and Country Club Ltd. In 1923, the house became the home of the greens keeper of the golf club. It served that purpose for many years, even after the golf club was transformed into Earl Bales Park in 1975. The park was named in honour of a great grandson of John Bales. The Bales barn was incorporated into the club house of York Downs, and was demolished after the area became a park. The Bales house was enlarged and renovated several times. A one-story side wing was demolished in 1991.

Continued from page 3

The Bales family prospered in North York. Joseph Bales purchased the property on lot 15, concession 1 east, in 1885 for \$9,000. Family history says that he bought it back, the land having been sold after John's death in 1873, but there is no indication of this in the land registry. Joseph C. Bales inherited the land from his father, and at some point his brother, Oliver, acquired lot 14, concession 1 east.

Oliver Bales served on the first council of the newly created Township of North York in 1922, as Deputy Reeve. He was re-elected in 1923. Joseph C was a councillor in 1927. His son, Earl (1896-1922) became Reeve of North York in 1934, and served until 1940. He was a member of the North York Planning Commission from 1946 to 1972. Oliver's son, Dalton, served on North York Council from 1959 to 1962. He was elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1962, and served until 1975. In 1966, he became Minister of Labour. He subsequently served as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Attorney-General. In 1980, he was tragically killed in a traffic accident at age 59.

(Glenn Bonnetta. Research for Heritage Toronto "Plaque Committee" edited)

NOTE TO NYHS MEMBERS: Research was undertaken by the NHYS. Proposal was submitted to Heritage Toronto's Plaquing and Markers Committee. NYHS Plaquing Fund contributed \$1,000 and Councillor James Pasternak (Ward 10) moved motion, at Toronto City Council, for a Commemorative Heritage Plaque \$4,500 to be funded by Section 37 community benefits (February 20, 2014 #MM48.15)

MORE HERITAGE STREET NAMES

DAVISVILLE AVENUE: south of Eglinton, the Davis family, who owned a pottery, gave their name to Davisville Avenue.

CASTLEFIELD AVENUE: on the way north the road ran into the residence of Franklin Jackes' home "Castlefield."

LAWRENCE AVENUE: McDougall, east of Yonge, and Eagle Avenue in Weston, were renamed after a family of that name who owned a farm at Yonge Street.

WILSON AVENUE was named for the reeve's family.

SHEPPARD AVENUE either got its name from the proprietor of the Golden Lion Hotel at the south-west corner of Yonge, and what was then Lansing, or from the Shepherd family who owned a general store, later known as Dempsey's, at the northwest corner.

DON MILLS ROAD: because of the many hills in North York, it was impossible to make a roadway down the 2nd concession (Bayview), 3rd (Leslie) or 4th (Woodbine). The solution was to create a road midway between the 3rd and 4th concessions. Initially called Independent Road and later Don Mills Road. The road began at Danforth Road and Broadview Avenue, and ended at York Mills Road. At the intersection of Danforth and Broadview there was a toll gate for teams entering the city. The money was used for upkeep of roads. Later, when turning north on Don Mills Road, there was one of the first lines of telephone wires, and strangers to the city were instructed to follow the telephone line.

Written and researched by Susan Goldenberg, Director, NYHS (edited)

RHUBARB REVELRY TRIVIA QUIZ

From page 2 - answers

1. True (and false, technically it is a vegetable but in the U.S. it was deemed as fruit for import/export purposes to reduce the tariffs).
2. False 3. False 4. True 5. False, 6. True 7. True 8. True 9. True 10. True

SOME INTERESTING EARLY YORK MILLS RESIDENTS

THOMAS MERCER FAMILY came from Pennsylvania in 1794 in a wagon, with a cow tethered on behind, and when requesting land Mercer was offered 100 acres in exchange for his wagon.

CORNELIUS ANDERSON, with his family of nine children, settled in York Mills around the time the Mercers did. During the War of 1812, he lost a horse pressed into service by the government, and many years later he received \$13.00 in compensation.

JAMES HOGG, after whom Hogg's Hollow is named, emigrated from Scotland in 1824.

In 1832, he challenged George Gurnett, editor of the *Courier* and a future mayor of Toronto, to a duel over an article in the paper, regarding attempts by a York committee to swell attendance by inviting in people from rural areas.

The *Courier* wrote: "Every wheel of their well-organized political machine was set in motion to transmute country farmers into citizens of York. Accordingly about nine in the morning, groups of tall, broad-shouldered, hulking fellows were seen arriving from Whitby, Pickering and Scarborough, some crowded in wagons, and others on horseback; and Hogg, the miller, headed a herd of the swine of Yonge Street, who made just as good votes at the meeting as the best shopkeepers in York."

The duel did not take place, although a burlesque account was published, in which it was pretended that Hogg was saved from a mortal wound by an accumulation of flour under the lapel of his coat, in which his antagonist's bullet buried itself.

York Mills Presbyterian Church, circa 1836, was originally constructed on Hoggs' property on the east side of Yonge Street. He died in 1839. The story in the *British Colonist*, about his funeral, indicated that the political tension continued even after the 1837 rebellion, over the clergy reserves. The final paragraph, referring to St. John's Anglican Church said; "The church was built by public subscription, and it was at first designed as a place of worship to which preachers of various denominations of Christians would have access. By some means or other, which have not as yet been satisfactorily explained, Dr. Strachan managed to secure the exclusive possession of the church for an Episcopal minister, contrary to the original design of the inhabitants of the place, who contributed towards its erection, and as we are informed without the sanction or knowledge of many of them."

CORNELIUS VAN NOSTRAND owned a combined house and store as of 1832. In this early period, the barter system was used by farmers who were his customers, and he settled his account once or twice a year. At the time of the 1837 rebellion, a young girl, 16-year old Anna Maria Marsh, was left in charge of the store when some rebels entered and commandeered all the ammunition they could find. A fur cap caught the eye of one of the men, and he carried it off, promising to pay for it later. Much to the surprise of the van Nostrands, he kept his word. In 1840, Cornelius turned the store over to his 16-year old son, John, who opened the York Mills post office in the building four years later. The van Nostrands and others who operated flour mills were hard hit by the repeal of protectionism, known as the Corn Laws, and the replacement with free trade in 1846. The world market for Canadian flour dried up and millers like van Nostrand, suffered huge losses. The situation was so dire for van Nostrand, that he auctioned much of his holdings, including farm stock and implements, dry goods, hardware and forty barrels of whiskey. In a private sale he disposed of his large grist mill, distillery and about 180 acres of land. He moved to Springfield, now Erindale, and opened a small grist mill. Son John continued to operate the store under the creditors, and was able to pay the family's debts.

Written and researched by Susan Goldenberg, Director, NYHS (edited)

CALENDAR - SOME UPCOMING EVENTS

ETOBICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sat. Sep. 26 *Tkaronto Portage or Toronto Carrying Place Trail: A Shared Legacy*

In commemoration of the 400th anniversary by Franco-European explorer Étienne Brûlé during the autumn of 1615. Academics and local historians debate and discuss diverse subjects. At the Old Mill Inn and Spa, in the Brule Room, with outdoor "living history" theatrical installations scheduled to follow immediately after at designated points along the Shared Path/Pan Am Trail. Event is free. For more information www.etobicokehistorical.com

(In collaboration and partnership with the Swansea Historical Society, the York Pioneer and Historical Society and the West Toronto Junction Historical Society, and with financial support by the City of Toronto's Pan Am Festivals funding grant) For more information go to www.etobicokehistorical.com

NORTH TORONTO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Wed. Sep. 30 at 7.30 pm, *History of the Phonograph and Recorded Sound*, Mike Bryan and Keith Wright. At the Northern District Library, 40 Orchard View Boulevard (a block n. of Eglinton, w. of Yonge, 2nd floor). www.northtorontohistoricalsoicety.org

Note to NYHS members – if you missed our March meeting, here's an opportunity to catch up.

SCARBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Tues. Sep. 22 at 7.30 pm, *Sitting Pretty – history of the toilet*. Bev Dietrich

At the Bendale Library, 1515 Danforth Road www.scarboroughhistorical.ca 416-396-8910

GIBSON PARK

For many years the *Rose Garden* was a landmark parcel of open space at the NW corner of Yonge Street and Park Home Avenue. It was assumed that it was a City Park, not realizing that it was privately owned and was in imminent danger of being destroyed through hi-rise development construction. On May 30th following successful negotiations the opening of the *Rose Garden* was celebrated – it is part of the *Gibson Park* on the west side of the development, that through community involvement, has been created as open space. The new park features many varieties of roses, new and preserved apple trees (there is still one heritage apple tree!) plantings, benches and new mural commemorating the life and family of David Gibson. Also access to the *Gibson House Museum* is now possible from Park Home Avenue and Yonge Street and their garden is flourishing too. (From Councillor John Filion's Community News. Ward 23 Willowdale; edited)

PAGES 7 & 8 PHOTOGRAPHS (credits and captions)

Page 7: *Naming of Ann O'Reilly Road* on June 19th (see NYHS Newsletter August 2014, page 3 for information). Photographs: City of Toronto.

Page 8: *NYHS gets Scadding Award*: Presented at the Ontario Historical Society's AGM, June 20th, to Glenn Bonnetta, President, at the Ismaili Centre. Photograph: Geoff Geduld

Gibson Park Opening, May 30th: Ribbon Cutting – Glenn Bonnetta, President and Councillor John Filion (3rd & 4th from left). Photograph: Geoff Geduld

John Bales House plaque unveiling, April 14th at Dublin Heights E&M School. Dorothy Floyd (descendent) and Councillor James Pasternak each side of plaque. Photograph: Geoff Geduld

Volunteer Services Awards, June 16th. Photograph: Geoff Geduld



Dedication ceremony for Ann O'Reilly Road near where the O'Sullivan Inn stood. Top left: Mary Ann Cross NYCPP/ NYHS; Councillor Carroll Shelley; Denis O'Sullivan, Great-great-grandson of Ann O'Reilly.

Group: Great-great granddaughters, Margaret O'Sullivan and Darlene Hall (3rd & 4th from left) with family.



NYHS gets Scadding Award



Gibson Park re-opening



John Bales House plaque unveiling



Cummer descendants and friends at Cummer Family Plaque unveiling



Gunild Spiess



NYHS outing to Sanofi-Pasteur (Connaught)



Volunteer Service Awards (NYHS)
Anne McIlroy, Bill Aird, John Laraway



Volunteer Service Awards (GHV)
Margit Nocent, Rae MacLean, Jean Hill