



NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November, 2016 - January, 2017

1960-2016 – 56th Year

www.nyhs.ca

From the President

At our September general meeting I reported that the NYHS had reached an agreement with the O'Connor House organization, and had moved our research material, business files, etc., from the storage locker to the restored estate house. Some furniture and unsorted material was moved temporarily to a member's garage. Most unfortunately after the announcement, we were informed that due to water leakage during the summer months, the building would be closed as mould had been identified. Remedial work was begun and a full engineering report is expected shortly.

In preparation for the 2017 Annual General Meeting, our Nominating Committee: Bill Aird (Past President), Edith Geduld (Director) and Geoff Geduld (Member-at-Large), will be reaching out for board and committee representatives. I hope some of you will come forward and help us continue to support the Society.

Season's Greetings.

Glenn Bonnetta

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 7.00 p.m.

THE FRANK O'CONNOR HOUSE STORY (MARYVALE FARM) at 7.30 p.m.

Senator Frank O'Connor's Story, Paul Farrelly, Heritage Advocate & OCH Researcher.

Restoration of the O'Connor Estate, Tony Wagner, Former OCH Org. Board Chair.

Overview of O'Connor House Org, Brian Sankarsingh, OCH Board Chair

The Frank O'Connor House buildings are located on what was Maryvale Farm (Victoria Park Avenue/Lawrence Avenue East area). This was the country residence of Frank O'Connor, founder of the Laura Secord candy shops. A noted philanthropist, he was appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1935, until his untimely death in 1939.

Wednesday, March 15, 2017 @ 7.30 p.m.

THE GREAT WAR: A HANDS ON INQUIRY

Bruce Beaton, Facilitator, City of Toronto Museums & Heritage Services

In this innovative museum outreach program, one gets close up and personal with real artifacts from *The Great War*. This hands-on approach uses the historical inquiry process to bring history to life in an immediate and memorable way. Toronto's Historic Sites aim is to engage the public in telling Toronto's story.

Meeting Location: Meeting Room #1, 2nd floor, North York Central Library, 5120 Yonge St. (west side of atrium – use elevator outside library).

NORTH YORK CENTRAL LIBRARY TEMPORARY CLOSURE

if not reopened by Feb. 15th members will advised of meeting location.

Meeting is co-sponsored by the North York Historical Society and the North York Central Library.

The North York Historical Society is an affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society and a non-profit organization.

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NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
February 17, 2016
North York Central Library, Auditorium at 7.00 p.m.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The President, Glenn Bonnetta, called the meeting to order, and welcomed members to the North York Historical Society's 56th Annual General Meeting. He highlighted some of the achievements of the Society during 2015: the donation of the Society's history collection to the North York Central Library; awards received, including the Ontario Historical Society's *Scadding Award of Excellence*, and the North York Mirror's *Urban Hero* award in the Arts and Culture category; unveiling of the John Bales House plaque, and the installation of the Cummer Family plaque. He thanked the 2015 Board of Directors, Committees, Members, and our partners, the Canadiana department of the North York Central Library. Ruth Kingma is stepping down as Secretary, and was thanked for her services. The Canadiana department will be closing in 2016, but a North York History Room is being created in the North York Central Library.
2. **MINUTES OF THE 2015 AGM:** from the December 2015-February 2016 Newsletter: Approved by the Membership. (Tony Wagner, Dianne Gay)
3. **REPORTS:** included in the Newsletter are reports from the President, the North York Community Preservation Panel, and the following Committees: Archives, Plaquing and Programs. Approved by the membership. (Bill Aird, Dianne Gay)
4. **TREASURER'S REPORT:** The Statement of Financial Position as at December 31st 2015 was presented to the Membership by Edward Macdonell. The statement has been reviewed by Wesley Lee. Approved by the membership. (Edward Macdonell, Edith Geduld)
5. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE and BOARD ELECTIONS:** The President handed the Chair to Bill Aird, Past President and chair of the Nominating committee. Other members are Edith Geduld (Board representative) and Robert McQuillan (Member at Large). The proposed slate of Officers and Directors for 2016 were listed on the Agenda: President, Glenn Bonnetta; Past President, Bill Aird; Vice President, Linda Gargaro; Treasurer, Edward Macdonell; Secretary, vacant; Directors (5) Edith Geduld, Susan Goldenberg, Sarah McCabe, 2 vacancies. There were no nominations from the floor. Nominations approved (Betty McQuillan, Dianne Gay). B. Aird returned the Chair to Glenn Bonnetta.
6. **PROGRAM:** Glenn Bonnetta extended his thanks to Bill Aird, and this concluded the business portion of the meeting. Linda Gargaro introduced the evening's speaker - Nikki Clarke, whose topic was *Black History Experience Through Television*.

PLAQUING COMMITTEE REPORT

John Bales House plaque (in Earl Bales Park): installation ceremony postponed until 2017. Plaque currently installed but will be moved.
Newtonbrook & Lansing: Installations delayed due to difficulty in finding permitted locations. Golden Lion Hotel, O'Sullivan Hotel and Dempsey Store plaques approved by Heritage Toronto's Plaques & Markers Committee and supported by the local councillors.
Edith Geduld

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Below are some of the events, meetings, etc., we attended, participated in, supported etc., which are not covered in other annual reports:

ATTENDED

Funerals/visitation: Myrna Fox September 28th, Bettie Burnett October 22nd.

Heritage Grants Workshop, February 4th.

Heritage Day, at the Ontario Historical Society; February 15th.

Cultural Hotspots' planning meetings, launch, mural unveilings (Don Mills Road/Sheppard Ave E and, 700 Sheppard Ave W) and closing event.

Toronto Historical Association meetings.

Jane's Walk: *A Farmer, a Rebel, and a Princess* (leaders: Gibson House Museum' staff) May 7th.

Toronto's Great War Attic, 10 short films screening at TIFF, May 14th.

Reimagining Yonge Street meetings.

Willowdale Leaders Forum.

Nov. 5 *Toronto's Cultural Heritage Landscapes* Forum, November 5th.

O'Connor House Organization; discussions/negotiations re: possibility of working & storage space in the estate building.

North York Central Library; meetings re: proposed North York History Room.

OTHER

Rebellion in North York 1837 (NYHS publication) 85 copies donated to Gibson House Museum.

Old school material to Historic Zion Schoolhouse

Miller Tavern entrance display – restoration.

Gibson House Museum/Earl Haig School: Willowdale Community Photography & Illustration Contest: loaned photographs and provided volunteer judges.

Gibson House Museum Exhibit *Then & Now*, loaned photographs.

OUTREACH

Memories of North York, Bill Aird, April 8th & 28th NY Seniors' Centre; Mosaic Community Centre.

Seniors Discovery Fair at North York Central Library, display and volunteers, June 25th.

Councillor Carroll's *Summer Celebration* (Ward 33): display and volunteers. June 25th.

Willowdale Community BBQ (MP & MPP): display and volunteers, July 10th.

Gibson House 45th Anniversary, June 4th & *Fall Festival*, display and volunteers, September 24th:

Don Valley North Community BBQ (MP), display and volunteers, August 14th.

SUPPORTED

Letter writing campaign in support of HODG (Ont. Ministry Grant)

Lawrence Park West area: *Heritage Conservation District* study.

10 Buchan Court (Col. Phillips Estate): designation and Heritage Easement Agreement.

PERMISSION REQUESTED

TV program filming in St. James' Cathedral Park requested permission to include the Robert Gourlay statue in program shot. Adrienne Alison, sculptor, also contacted.

AWARD

Received \$500 from *Cultural Hotspots* for research and assistance provided.

APPLICATIONS/REPORTS

HODG, CRA/Charitable and VSO.

Glenn Bonnetta

President

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

North York Historical Society Scrapbooks: indexing has been completed and will be presented to the North York Central Library at some time.

David Gibson Letters: John Laraway completed sorting the transcribed letters. The next task is to find a home for the material.

Louis Badone papers have been sorted and the pictures scanned.

Below is a sampling of questions we received about heritage properties, from descendants searching for family graves and information, a special candy and more. Most of them we resolved but not all.

George Jackson House (Downsview): Weston's local newspaper sought information on this heritage property. **270 Drewry Avenue (Rueiter's House):** A teacher from R. S. Lang School asked for information, so he can tell his students. There was a question about Lester Pearson's childhood home.

Sydney Flynn, wife of Daniel Flynn (Willowdale): a descendant requested burial place information. **Eliza Wincup (Willowdale Cemetery):** A Wincup descendant, a first time visitor to Toronto, asked where she was buried. I discovered that Eliza's daughter had married a Shepard, so put her in touch with a Shepard family member. **Margaret VanHorn Cummer:** a descendant, who lives in Alberta, asked for information about Margaret's parents.

Not yet resolved:

47 Walwyn Avenue, which won a *House of the Year Award* in the 1950, and a particular candy at a Don Mills store in the 1950s, also whether at one time there had been a foreign consulate on Park Home Avenue.

Among donations received:

Senator O'Connor College School's principal donated a photograph.
Penny Potter donated a copy of reprint of *150 Years at St. John's, York Mills* by M. Audrey Graham.

An emerging young artist, Elizabeth (Beth) Dawson, enquired about historic images of the Sheppard/Bathurst area for use in a mural she was working on. The photograph included in this report shows the artist in front of the mural, *A Memoryscape of North York*, at 700 Sheppard Avenue East. Mural includes images of the Gibson House, the John Bales House, Mel Lastman Square and more. (Photographer: Glenn Bonnetta)

My thanks to volunteers: Bill Aird, Susan Goldenberg and John Laraway. Unfortunately, John will no longer be able to continue due to health reasons. I would also like to thank the Ontario Historical Society and staff for their support and assistance.

Glenn Bonnetta (Archives)



IN MEMORIAM



Myrna Marlene Fox U.E.

1937-2016

Long-time member.
Condolences to family and friends.

Also member of the Toronto Branch, United
Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada.

Dominion President 2002-2004



Bettie Burnett

1925-2016

Long-time member.
Condolences to family and friends.

She met Canadian Army Sgt. Ray Allan Burnett during WWII. In 1946 crossed the Atlantic on the S.S. Aquitania to Halifax, N.S. In 1949, she moved into a newly built house on Leona Drive and lived there until it became part of the Leona Project.

NORTH YORK COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PANEL REPORT

Heritage Grants Workshop, Feb. 4th

44 Beardmore Cres. (Ward 26) Jacob Cummer House; sold.

90 Burndale Rd. (Ward 23) building/heritage permit issues.

22 Edgecombe Ave (Ward 16), heritage nomination supported.

Wynyates/Col. Phillips Estate (Ward 33), 10 Buchan Court: Designation & HEA approved. Property owners North York General Hospital moving forward on future re-use plans.

Street Naming: 151 McNicoll Ave (Ward 24), NYCPP recommended recognizing Scrace family. Developer's recommendation of Queen Magdalene Place approved and 1185 Eglinton Ave E, (Ward 26). Panel recommended recognizing Taylor family. Councillor supported "Sonic" developer's choice. NYHS supported review of current street naming policy.

Edith Geduld, Past Chair, NYCPP

FIRE DESTROYS LANDMARK HOUSE

On November 27, 1962, an important part of North York history was destroyed, when a three-alarm fire swept through the 150-year-old Milne Homestead, a showpiece of the Metro Parks' Edward Gardens (now the Toronto Botanical Gardens).

After being alerted at 1.55 a.m., firefighters from five stations, rushed to the scene. They fought to control the fire in a struggle that lasted until 7.00 a.m., but were unsuccessful. Fortunately, nobody was injured. According to *The Enterprise* newspaper, the blaze may have started from an oil burner or electrical wiring. Estimates of the damage ranged from \$40,000 to more than \$100,000. A precise figure was difficult to determine, as much of the value of the building was in its age, plus antique furniture and an invaluable naturalist library. The house was frame, making the fire even more challenging to control. Newspaper accounts said the house was 150 years old, but a letter to the editor said it more likely was about 95 years old, and not the first house built on the property. The original house was a log cabin. At one time, according to *The Toronto Telegram*, the house was owned by grocery magnate, Justin Cork, who established Loblaws.



The Milne House from the Toronto Library digital collection

At the time of the fire, the building was occupied by the Civic Garden Centre on the first floor and the Ontario Federation of Naturalists on the second. According to *The Enterprise*, the garden club's library had been "one of the most complete horticultural libraries in the country".

The Milnes were a prominent North York family. Alexander Milne had developed and operated several wool mills. The third mill stood on what was called Milne's Hollow in the east Don Valley until 1946, when it was demolished for the material which it contained. According to an autumn 1963 article by Don Valley conservationist, Charles Sauriol, the mill was a "massively built structure, 80 feet long, 50 feet wide and 40 feet high. It contained three stories and a basement. A belfry had been built in the centre of the peaked roof. The walls were made of red and yellow brick, supported by stone facings.

"Shafts and pulleys were suspended from ceilings. All three floors of the building were braced with massive beams of oak. The turbine was set in motion by the waters of the Don River."

A tea house was built on the foundation of the Milne homestead. The Milne name lives on today in the form of the Milne House Garden Club, founded in 1967. According to its Google website it was named "to perpetuate the historical association of the Edwards Gardens area with Alexander Milne the original owner of the property which was part of a 500-acre Crown land grant given in the early 1800s".

The Milne name is also perpetuated by the "Alexander Milne Rose". It was commissioned to mark the 20th century anniversary in 1987 of the Milne House Garden Club. A miniature pink rose, developed by a rose hybrid specialist, it is the symbol of the club.

Written & researched by Susan Goldenberg, Director, North York Historical Society (edited)

PROGRAM REPORT: February-December 2016

- February 17, 2016 **Annual General Meeting & BLACK HISTORY EXPERIENCE THROUGH TELEVISION**, Nikki Clarke, author, local TV personality, producer and entrepreneur.
- March 16, 2016 **BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE**, Adrienne Alison, sculptor and painter.
- April 20, 2016 **ONTARIO GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**: Overview of the OGS, examples of Genealogical Research and future of Collection at the Toronto Reference Library, Richard Yearde, Chair, OGS, (Toronto Chapter)
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY: Overview of Toronto Jewish Family Histories, Cemeteries and Memorial Projects. Also book of members' stories and future of the Collection at the Toronto Reference Library, Les Kelman, President, JGS.
- May 18, 2016 **BREAKING THE SILENCE**, Lori Oschefski, author, genealogical researcher of British Home Children.
- September 21, 2016 **HISTORIC UNIONVILLE – A VILLAGE IN THE CITY**, George Duncan, author, architectural historian and Senior Heritage Planner, City of Markham.
- October 19, 2016 **HISTORY OF THE MISSISSAUGAS OF THE NEW CREDIT FIRST NATION AND SOME CURRENT INITIATIVES RECOGNIZING THEIR HISTORY**, Carolyn King, Cultural Awareness Consultant and Member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.
- November 16, 2016 **BOMB GIRLS: TRADING APRONS FOR AMO**, Barbara Dickson, author and historian.
- December 10, 2016 **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**, by Charles Dickens, presented by John Huston. At the Historic Zion Schoolhouse.

February to November Meetings are co-sponsored by the North York Historical Society and the North York Central Library

Linda Gargaro, Programs

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – PROXY

Solicited by the Board of Directors of the Society for February 15, 2017

The undersigned paid up member of the North York Historical Society hereby appoints Edward Macdonell, Treasurer, 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 15, 2017 at 7.00 p.m.

The proxy holder is here instructed:

1. The election of persons nominated as Officers and Directors of the Society for the year 2017.
2. The appointment of a financial reviewer named by the Board of Directors or Nominating Committee.

And hereby revoke any proxy given previously.

Name..... Date.....

Signature.....

AT THE GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM
5172 Yonge Street (entrance off Park Home Avenue, west of Yonge)
416-395-7432 gibsonhouse@toronto.ca

A visit to Gibson House Museum during the holiday season is truly festive! The scent of fresh pine wafts through the house, swags of cedar and red ribbons decorate the mantles and sweet cider is warmed by the hearth. Stop by for a tour and discover Scottish Hogmanay traditions and sample shortbread in the historic kitchen. You might also like to start your shopping in our Museum Shop which is overflowing with stocking stuffers, handmade crafts and treats for every sweet tooth!

Saturday, December 10, 1 to 4:30 p.m. **GINGERBREAD COOKIE DECORATING**

Start your visit by decorating gingerbread cookies with holiday sweets. Then, take a tour of the museum with our costumed interpreters and learn how the Gibson Family would have baked gingerbread over the hearth. Finish your visit by enjoying your gingerbread cookie! General admission applies. Cookie decorating is \$1 per cookie.

Wednesday, December 28, and Thursday, December 29 6:00 p.m.

A GIBSON HOUSE HOGMANAY DINNER

Gather at the historic Gibson House for a special evening inspired by the Scottish traditions of Hogmanay – includes haggis, traditional drinks, a sit-down dinner, storytelling and music.

Pre-registration and pre-payment required. Tickets can be purchased online at www.toronto.ca/gibsonhouse. \$60 plus tax per person.

AT HISTORIC ZION SCHOOLHOUSE
1091 Finch Avenue East

December 10 at 7:30 p.m.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL, by Charles Dickens, presented by John D. Huston

Written in 1843, this may be the best loved fictional work in the English language. Few people know that Dickens wrote and performed a thrilling and hilarious solo theatrical version of this famous story for many years, playing all the characters and providing the narration. Now you can experience the laughter, tears and joy of the original with John D. Huston as Charles Dickens in this rare and enchanting holiday must see! Tickets can be purchased online at www.toronto.ca/zionschoolhouse \$20 per person plus tax.

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Membership 2017

Mail To:

Name(print).....Phone..... North York Historical Society

Address..... Post Office Box 45045

..... 5845 Yonge Street

Email: Newsletter by email: Yes... No... Willowdale, ON M2M 4K3

Family: \$25.00.....Individual \$15.00.....Senior \$10.00.....Student \$5.00.....Institutional \$20.00.....

Donation: General \$.....Plaquing Program \$.....Miriam Jackson Memorial Fund \$.....

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