## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Citizen Boards Working Together for the Future of Fort York</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Barclay – A True Friend</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Purvis and Gin Lane, a New Heritage CD</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Fort York Receive Recognition</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar of Coming Events</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers Required</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development South of Fort York - an Update</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Building of Fort York Boulevard</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting The Flow of Light to Fort York’s Buildings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Membership Program for the Friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Charlotte’s Birthday</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fort York Drums – Now Recruiting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks to Our Members, Supporters and Volunteers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Thanks to the Corporations, Foundations and Public Sector</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors whose Support in 2001 Helped Enable Our Important Activities to Continue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two Citizen Boards Working Together for the Future
Of Fort York

The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common is an independent group of over 350 members and volunteers organized as a non-profit corporation and qualified as a charitable organization. The focus of its activities is the preservation and enhancement of Historic Fort York for the benefit of the citizens of, and visitors to, Toronto.

The Fort York Management Board is a citizen board appointed by Toronto City Council to work with the Culture Division of the City of Toronto in the management and direction of the operations of Historic Fort York.

In the spirit of the cooperation existing between the two organizations, the Fife and Drum serves as a newsletter for both.

John Barclay – A True Friend of Fort York

In January of this year The Friends of Fort York and Historic Fort York lost a true friend with the passing of John Barclay.

John joined the Board of the Friends in 1996. He was Chair of the Fundraising Committee and a member of the Executive Committee from that time. His importance to the Friends cannot be overstated. It was John's vision and perseverance that led to the erection of the Heritage Flagpole at the fort. John was also the energetic chair of the Georgian Dinner Fundraiser.

More importantly John was a fine gentleman. His spirit and sense of humour made efforts for the Friends a pleasure. His courtesy and kindness were appreciated by us all.

John was truly a fine Friend and we will miss him.

Ken Purvis and Gin Lane – a New Heritage CD

Those of you who have attended any of the musical functions at Fort York will be familiar with Malarkey, the lively heritage trio made up of Ken Purvis, Gavin Watt and Peter Alexander. Under a new name, Gin Lane, Ken, Gavin and Peter have released their new CD entitled “The Idle Prentices”. If you enjoy the music of the Georgian era, you will want to add this to your collection. Congratulations for a great collection of very enjoyable music. The CD's are $20 and can be ordered by writing Ken Purvis, 19 41st Street, Etobicoke, ON M8W 3N4 or will soon be available in the tuck shop at Fort York.

Friends of Fort York Receive Recognition

The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common were honoured to receive two awards at the 27th Annual Heritage Toronto Awards held on November 15, 2001. “Fort York: Setting It Right” received a Certification of Commendation in the category of Scholarly and Non-Fiction Publications. Cathy Nasmith and Bob Allsopp received the award as authors and editors and on behalf of the Friends and The Fort York Management Board as publishers.

The Friends of Fort York received a Community Heritage Support Award and were presented with a cheque for $500. Six Community Heritage Awards were presented to community-based heritage groups selected by the City’s Community Councils.

“Fort York: Setting It Right” was also awarded The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects National Merit Award under the Communications Category.
Coming Events

Tuesday, April 23, 7:30 p.m. Royal Canadian Military Institute

Friends of Fort York Lecture Series – Dr. Carl Benn, Chief Curator Museum Services for the Culture Division of the City of Toronto, will be presenting “The Soldiers Trade”. His talk will centre around the material selected for the new exhibit scheduled for late spring installation at Historic Fort York. Dr. Benn will discuss the equipment and training of the soldiers who garrisoned the Fort during the 19th Century.

Saturday, April 27 – CBC Radio 1

Many of our readers will know Ward McBuney for his fine stories about Toronto and its history. On the morning of Saturday, April 27, Ward’s story read on Fresh Air (CBC 1 – 6 A.M. – 9 A.M.) will focus on Historic Fort York, the Battle of York and, specifically, the cross belt plate found by David Spittal, Fort York’s resident archaeologist, in 1995. Often Ward’s stories are aired between 8:00 and 8:30 A.M.


Monday, May 20th, – Victoria Day at Fort York – Tours and Demonstrations.

Tuesday, June 4th – Friends of Fort York Annual Georgian Mess Dinner – a Fundraiser. This year’s dinner will celebrate King George III’s birthday. For information call Richard Dodds at 416-231-1693

Thursday, June 20 – Friends of Fort York Annual General Meeting
  – Reception 6:30 P.M. – Blue Barnacks Historic Fort York.
  – Meeting 7:30 P.M. followed by a talk by John Wirth, Professor of History at Stanford on General Zebulon Pike, an American hero who died at the Battle of York in 1813.

Friday, June 21st – Aboriginal Day – Annual Buffalo Jump Peace March concludes at Fort York at 12 noon.

Monday, July 1st – Canada Day at Fort York – Tours and Demonstrations.

Volunteers Required

Fort York Drums - The Fort York Drums is made up of young volunteer recruits aged 11-15 with the support of a selection of the Fort York Guard who have a particular talent or interest in music. One of the problems in recruiting the young volunteers relates to the difficulties parents have in providing transportation to and from Fort York particularly where they are outside the downtown core. We would very much like to hear from members who could help in providing transportation to relieve the load. We would pay mileage.

Membership Committee - We are organizing a new membership Committee for the Friends and need volunteers.

For further information on either of these activities, please contact Joe Gill at 416-860-6493.
Development South of Fort York — An Update

Readers will be aware from the extensive press coverage that the Ontario Municipal Board ruled in favour of the H&R Development proposal for 28 and 36 storey condominium towers on their property south of Fort York. The excellent arguments presented on the interests of heritage and the need for a decision respecting those interests were to no avail. The OMB decision spoke of a need to balance “the public good with proprietary interests” and found the heritage protection arguments less cogent than the practical concerns of the developer.

The decision clearly complimented the Friends of Fort York for their dignity and for the quality of their presentations. This was cold comfort in view of the OMB’s decision that the height controls were not essential to respect for the fort.

Our efforts on behalf of the fort at City Council and the OMB have significantly increased the consciousness of heritage issues in general, and of Fort York in particular, in the minds of the public in Toronto and, more importantly in the minds of Toronto City Councillors and other public officials. While we may have lost one battle we will go on to win the war. There is evidence that the planning process with respect to future developments around Fort York will show a greater recognition of the importance of our heritage and take greater care to protect the public interest.

Further decisions on development on the remaining lands south of Fort York are deferred pending attempts to finalize decisions on the fate of the Gardiner Expressway and on other transportation issues in the area.

Our fundraising program to finance our appearance at the OMB is now successfully completed. We wish to thank all of those whose contributions made our efforts on behalf of Fort York possible. Contributions totalled almost $30,000 which enabled us to meet all of our liabilities.

Building of Fort York Boulevard

For the last few months construction has been underway on Fort York Boulevard in the area immediately south of the fort. When it opens this summer, this road will cut the corner of Bathurst Street and Lakeshore Boulevard, threading its way under the Gardiner Expressway and past the east end of the Fort York Armouries. (See map) Eventually it will be extended east from Bathurst to Spadina to join up with another section of street that runs along the south side of Skydome, at which point it will become the main east-west collector through the new neighbourhoods south of the railway corridor.

This aptly-named new boulevard will make Fort York highly visible and eventually provide direct access to the site and its projected visitor reception centre. Although there was dispute in the mid-1990s over how far the road should be from the ramparts and its potential to overwhelm the fort, the Friends succeeded in getting improvements to what was first proposed, which became part of the Bathurst-Strachan Part II Plan. Subsequently the City of Toronto Works and Emergency Services department has been able to soften the road’s impact on the fort further by specifying a higher level of landscaping and design than usual. Key advisors on the project included LEA Consulting and du Toit Allsopp Hillier.
Double rows of trees will flank the street while planters on the north side will buffer the sidewalk from traffic as the road ramps down from Bathurst. At the intersection with Bathurst a broad stair will connect the street-level sidewalk with a wide, green space along the foot of the ramparts. The stair will be built into a drum-shaped indentation in the ramp, its wall lined with stainless steel on which will be etched important dates and events in the history of the fort. (See illustration overleaf). A sign at the top of the stair, "Fort York - 1793," will identify the site to those passing by.

We have begun to refer to the green space at the foot of the south ramparts as the Archaeological Landscape, since it is here that several important interpretive features will be uncovered through future archaeological excavations. At its west end will be found the crater created when the powder magazine exploded in 1813, while closer to Bathurst Street are foundations for several railway-related buildings and wharves, the earliest dating to the 1850s. The original line of the lakeshore can be traced along the length of the Archaeological Landscape. Archaeologists are monitoring the construction of Fort York Boulevard to record any evidence turned up by the trenching machinery.
The "Drum" on Fort York Boulevard

Protecting The Flow of Light to Fort York’s Buildings

Recently the Friends learned of an obscure section in Ontario’s law affecting real property that may lead to a moderation in the height of towers proposed to be built near the fort. In 1880 the Legislature terminated here the application of the principle, long established in common law, that the owner of a building secured a prescriptive easement over his neighbour’s property to a flow of light to his building if the light was enjoyed without interruption for twenty years. In simple terms, the amendment allowed new buildings to block the flow of direct light to older ones more easily and with fewer legal complications.

An exception was made in the legislation for buildings for which an easement was already established, that is, for those which were standing in 1860 and had not been overshadowed in the interim. Clearly, when the act was passed a prescriptive easement already existed in favour of the oldest buildings at Fort York. We have determined that it has not expired and continues to the present. As soon as we became aware of this, we considered it prudent to write Mayor Lastman and members of Council and ask the City, as an owner of the fort property, to protect the easement in dealing with proposals for development on nearby lands. Giving early notice of the easement also seemed fairer to those who are preparing proposals for the lands.
As well, we wrote the Hon Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, to ask that the Government of Canada ensure that the letter and spirit of the prescriptive easement is not breached or compromised by the City. The Crown in right of Canada has a continuing property interest in the fort by virtue of its 1909 grant to the City of Toronto of the fort and most of the CNE Grounds, 184 acres in all, on condition that “the site of the Old Fort . . . shall as far as possible, be restored to its original condition . . . and the same shall be preserved and maintained in such condition forever . . . Provided that upon the breach by the Corporation, its successors and assigns of the trust and condition to which the Grant hereby made is subject . . . such Grant shall immediately become null and void.”

Only those who have a title interest in the property, the City and the Government of Canada, can protect the easement, by recourse to the courts if necessary.

The Friends have no reason to know yet that any of the developments projected near the fort will block its direct light. Studies must be undertaken first having regard to the location of buildings in the fort and the path of the sun through the horizon. In our opinion the City is the proper body to undertake these studies, not only because of its property interest in Fort York, but also because it must deal with applications for development on the lands affected by the prescriptive easement. Even then, however, it does not follow that the flow of direct light to the fort will be broken by any and all proposed new buildings. It may be that these structures will be neither tall enough nor located in such a way as to matter. This cannot be known until specific designs are submitted.

A New Membership Program for the Friends

For the past six years membership in the Friends has been based on the calendar year, with membership applications mailed out in January each year. We have recognized that this procedure created anomalies for those joining mid-year. However, given the low membership fee we decided to keep it simple.

Late last year your Board decided to streamline the membership program. Memberships will now be effective for the 12 months following payment of the membership fee and renewal notices will be sent out as memberships expire.

The Board also decided to create various categories of membership with varying benefits permitting individuals to choose the membership most suitable to their financial status and degree of commitment to the activities of the Friends of Fort York.

It has been the policy of the Friends to commit all funds raised for specific projects or programs at Fort York to those programs or projects. The costs of operating the Friends must therefore be funded totally by membership contributions. It is hoped that, over time, the new membership program will result in a funding level that will provide long term stability and continuity for the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common.

The first membership renewal applications under the new program will be mailed in the next few weeks.
Queen Charlotte's Birthday – A Birthday Ball Fit for a Queen

On January 18, the staff at Fort York under the inspired leadership of Melanie Garrison presented a magnificent heritage event in the Blue Barracks at Historic Fort York to celebrate Queen Charlotte's birthday.

Participants gathered at noon and spent the afternoon rehearsing various period dances and enjoying seminars on the history of dances and dress in the Georgian era. A break in the late afternoon provided time to dress in appropriate garb for an evening of an historic dinner and dancing in the 1812 style – a Birthday Ball to be remembered. You will not want to miss next year’s celebrations.

Please contact Joe Gill at 416-860-6493 for more information on either of the above.

The Fort York Drums

Now Recruiting!

Are you between the ages of 11-16? Do you have an interest in music and history? If so, the Fort York Drums might be for you.

Learn either the fife or drum, participate in demonstrations at Fort York and travel to other historic sites with the Drums throughout the summer.

❖ Music Lessons and drill instruction provided
❖ Uniforms and equipment provided
❖ Practices every other Saturday throughout the winter
❖ Daily programming all summer
❖ No cost to volunteers
❖ Future summer employment opportunities in the Fort York Guard (older than 16 years)

For further information contact Drum Major Mike Putnam at putnam68@yahoo.com or leave a message at (416) 392-6907 Ext. 555
THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

The Friends of Fort York is a volunteer citizen organization that exists and succeeds only through its many members, supporters and volunteers – all of whom believe in Fort York and in the importance of celebrating Toronto’s and Canada’s history. The Board thanks you all for the support of all our activities, for enabling the Fort York Guard to exist, for encouraging appropriate development around Fort York and for building an organization that will ensure a meaningful future for Fort York. Many thanks to the staff at Fort York, to the many supportive City Councillors and to staff at City Hall, particularly our friends in Culture, Parks and Recreation, and City Planning.

Our Members, Supporters and Volunteers

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<th>78th Fraser Highlanders</th>
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Harold Turner  Mariko Toda  Marie Trutt-Alper  Mark Twist
Peter Twist  Bill Twist  Keiko Twist  United Empire

Steve Utting  Justin Van Straaten  United Empire
Alan Vihant  Georgia Volker  Loyalists of Canada
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George Waters  Colin Watson  Branch
Gavin Watt  Margaret Weir  Debby Vernon
Ian Wheel  John White  Ruth Walmsley
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University of Toronto – Centre for Landscape Research
The Waterfront Regeneration Trust

H&R Developments
Markley Stearns Partners
Wittington Properties Limited

Concord Adex Development Corp.
Goldsmith Borgal & Co. Ltd.
The Ventin Group (Toronto)
Zeidler Grinnell Partnership

City of Toronto Culture Division
Heritage Toronto

Government of Canada
Human Resources - Summer Career Placements Program
Canadian Heritage - Young Canada Works in Heritage Institutions
- Young Canada Works in Both Official Languages

Councillor Joe Pantalone - Fort York’s member of Toronto City Council
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