

# The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

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## Garrison Common History: The John B. Smith Lumber Company

by Kevin Plummer

It was painted more than a century ago. But the advertisement for John B. Smith & Sons on the south side of the building at Strachan Avenue and Wellington perseveres. The fading paint adorns what was once a planing mill in one of the city's largest lumber yards, and stands now among a handful of remnants attesting to the King-Strachan neighbourhood's industrial heritage. Neighbouring Massey-Harris, other factories and meat packers, John B. Smith & Sons spent the final 79 of their 116-year existence at this location. Their yards at Callander, near North Bay, stayed open a few years longer.

Born in Scotland, John Bizzet Smith emigrated to Canada in 1850. After a brief stint in Brantford, he relocated to Toronto where he established a grocery business on Yonge Street opposite Shuter. In Scotland, Smith had been a shipbuilder and supervised construction of a railway bridge over the Bannockburn River. It was natural, then, that he added a small lumber yard behind his grocery store. Before long, to promote his yard, Smith was taking work as a contractor. He formed Smith, Burke & Co. with William Burke—the father of Edmund Burke, later a famed architect. Smith, Burke & Co. were building contractors for the Crystal Palace (1858)—the iron and glass structure that housed the Provincial Exhibition for many years—and supplied the timber-work for Gooderham's distillery (1859).

About 1856 Smith and Burke opened a full-scale lumber yard and planing mill on a two-acre site at the corner of Adelaide and Niagara. With state-of-the-art equipment noted in *The Hand-Book of Toronto* (Lovell, 1858) the company "manufactured lumber in all its forms — keeping always on hand a large stock of framing timber, flooring, doors, sashes,

blinds, with window and door trimmings, base mouldings, and everything else connected with the trade."

A devastating fire on the evening of 11 June 1859, razed the Niagara Street mill and yard—including a two-storey house where Burke lived. Sparked in the engine-house, the fire spread rapidly—fanned by an unlucky wind—setting ablaze and destroying between 200,000 to 300,000 feet of lumber, the engine-house, equipment and workers' tools, the counting house and company records.

Despite the heavy toll of the fire—and the added burden of an economic downturn—Smith, Burke & Co. prospered and continued to grow. At about this time, Smith removed himself entirely from the grocery business, passing that firm to his brother-in-law, Robert Jaffray, (later owner of *The Globe* and a Senator) who'd been a partner since 1857.

According to city directories, Smith and Burke moved to the south side of Front Street West, near the foot of Bay Street, in 1864-65. The partnership was dissolved by 1867-68, when Burke was listed as operating his own contracting business and yard at 57 Richmond Street West.

Although apparently no longer acting as a contractor, Smith maintained the Front Street yard and mill, which he shifted to the Esplanade in 1875.

In May 1888, John B. Smith & Sons once again relocated, moving its operations to the corner of Strachan and Wellington. Leasing the property from the Corporation of the City of Toronto at an annual cost of \$976.30, Smith took over the lease from George Gall (who had himself assumed it from John Oliver and Thomas McCracken).



John Bizzet Smith, c. 1860's, by J.T. Upson of Buffalo, a leading photographer there. (Courtesy of Graham Simons, Berkshire, England)

It's not clear whether the previous tenants had made any improvements to the property or erected any buildings. Before long, noted *John B. Smith & Sons Limited: Hundredth Anniversary Year* (1951), the property contained "offices, a large planing mill and carpenter shops, storage sheds, [a] new wallboard warehouse, three dry-kilns and a paved storage and timber yard" that was three acres in size. The new site—as had each of the company's previous locations—was situated in close proximity to Toronto's rail corridors that connected the Smith factory with its sources of timber in northern Ontario.

With a sawmill at Angus, near Barrie, Smith had been harvesting timber from Essa, Tosorontio, and Sunnidale, since the Northern Railway first passed through the area in 1853-54. The company continued to acquire new timber limits and parcels of land between the 1850s and late 1870s. When the availability of timber in the area declined, the company moved its operation further north. The sawmill was established at Frank's Bay at the mouth of French River on Lake Nipissing in the 1880s, then across the lake to Callander by the turn of the century. According to its centennial publication, the company was "unique in the annals of Canadian lumbering because...it carries out its own operations from the tree to the finished product."

By the mid-1890s, when the Strachan lumber yard and planing mill was extensively described in *Toronto, The Queen City of Canada* (1893), "it [was] one of the largest and most important in its line in Canada." It employed 75 workers (along with another 125 in northern Ontario). The factory occupied a three-storey building, measuring 50 x 225 feet, that was equipped with state-of-the-art machinery to develop the raw timber into "dressed lumber, doors, sash, blinds, mouldings, boxes" shipped to market across North America. More raw wood was used for bridges, hydro-poles and cross-arms, and in railway construction. In particular, the company supplied the Toronto Street Railway for fifty years, and the Grand Trunk Railway. Smith lumber was used to build the Great Western Railway Station at the foot of Yonge, as well as the Crystal Palace and Gooderham's mill, already noted, and for new homes and other construction. The company even provided hardwood flooring for bowling alleys. A second retail stock shed was later operated at Dundas Street and St. Helens Avenue.

John B. Smith died at his Grenville Street house on 7 March 1894. Of Smith's twelve children from three marriages, three of his sons had been actively involved in the business since at

least 1887 (when the firm began operating as John B. Smith & Sons, although it would not be incorporated as such until 1904). One of the sons, William J., headed the company after his father's death. Upon William's death in 1925, his brother Robert succeeded him. Their brothers, John M. and James H., managed the sawmill in Callander. After Robert's 1938 death, Jaffray Smith—the founder's grandson—took over, followed by his brother Christie in 1950.

Their centennial publication in 1951 boasted of the thriving company's success and its cutting edge machinery and production techniques. When John B. Smith & Sons ceased operations in 1967, the property was used for a variety of purposes, including as a storage facility for the Toronto Historical Board.

By the 1990s, there was a proposal to reuse the John B. Smith factory for a novel approach to housing the homeless. However, the Homes First Society's rather innovative idea fell outside the scope of the Ministry of Housing's strict guidelines. So it took some time for the provincial government to

commit the \$4 million required for the project.

In 1996, the John B. Smith building was reborn as Strachan House. "Half-demolished unpainted brick walls frame the hall," Rae Bridgman writes in *StreetCities* (Broadview Press, 2006). "The timber columns and beams, rough lumber, and exterior lighting fixtures all reference the outside brought in." Within the building, twelve houses contain five to seven private bedrooms, and a shared kitchen, bathroom, and common area. From a front door and porch, each house looks out over an interior street that meanders—widening and narrowing—along the length of the building. Its gypsum concrete floor mimics an exterior roadway, stained, cracked, and embedded with an old screwdriver, a broken bicycle wheel, and other found objects donated by potential tenants. The street leads to a Town Hall, near the old smokestack at the building's east end, where a glassed-in atrium provides a gathering space for residents. Strachan House's design, by architects Janna Levitt and Dean Goodman with extensive consultation with those who would be living there, won a Governor General's Gold Medal for Architecture in 1999.

"The industrial remnants make for a setting both dignified and serene," Adele Freeman observed in *Toronto Life* (June 1997), "as if the past were lingering on the premises to provide a shoulder to lean on." The building's derelict roughness now provides comfort to those used to living on the street as they transition to mainstream housing.



Strachan House, formerly the J. B. Smith planing mill, seems humbled today by swankier neighbours. In the foreground preparations are under way for a bridge to eliminate the railway level-crossing on Strachan Avenue. (Credit: David Spittal, Toronto Culture)

As an innovative housing solution, Strachan House—still marked with the painted advertisement for the John B. Smith & Sons lumber company—is both a symbol of the neighbourhood’s industrial heritage and also of the neighbourhood’s future.

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*The author would like to thank Grant Head and Stephen Otto for help with this article.*

## Henry Ross: Renegade at Eureka

by Stephen Otto

Twenty-two miners and five soldiers died in an armed uprising at the Eureka goldfield at Ballarat, near Melbourne, Australia, in 1854, including Toronto-born Henry Ross, who had an important role in the rebellion. The event enjoys mythic status in Australian history for its unusual violence, its place in the development of democracy Down Under, and the debut of a miners’ flag incorporating the ‘Southern Cross’ and five stars. Ross is said to have designed the flag and had it made locally. His links with Fort York are interesting but less well known.

Henry was the tenth of James and Elizabeth Ross’s eleven children, having been raised on a 200-acre farm which James, a former tailor in York (now Toronto), settled about 1821 in Lot 3, Con. 2 west of Yonge Street, York Township. Located in midtown Toronto today, the land runs from Bathurst to Dufferin Streets midway between Eglinton and Lawrence Avenues. It was largely undeveloped until after World War II, but is now blanketed by light industry and modest housing. Here Henry was born in 1829. Probably he was educated at a primary school within walking distance from home, and when he was older was expected to help his father on the farm. Unlike some of his other siblings he seems to have had neither a profession nor a trade, which may account in part for his going to Australia. With six older brothers, his chances of being given land or inheriting the farm were slim.

Reports on Australia’s gold discoveries first appeared in Toronto’s *Globe* in April 1852, followed by dozens of notices for clipper ships and packets heading there from American ports. Groups of “merry Canadians” were said to be seen everywhere along the New York docks preparing to depart for what was described as “a new Jerusalem.” Ross left there on 27 July 1852 as a first-class passenger aboard the *Magnolia*,

arriving at Melbourne four months later. The ship’s manifest listed his occupation as “Farmer”; he brought with him two trunks. Presumably he went directly to the ‘diggings’ which spread across a huge kidney-shaped area 100 km northwest of Melbourne, and settled at Ballarat, the main camp. Some ten thousand miners had already preceded him there.

The Colony of Victoria faced challenges maintaining order in the goldfields not unlike California before and the Klondike later. Matters were made no easier, however, by the Victoria government’s decision to administer the area through a quasi-military Gold Commission. The miners were angered by its unrepresentative makeup and heavy-handed efforts to raise revenues through Miners’ Licenses. Inspired by British Chartists, their protests were voiced at a series of ‘monster’ meetings held on Ballarat’s Bakery Hill in the Fall of 1854. Ross emerged as one of meetings’ principal speakers, addressing three thousand miners on November 1, and ten thousand on November 11. Another ex-Torontonian, Henry Bowyer Lane, Clerk of Works for building the Government Camp at Ballarat, left an eye-witness account of the latter meeting but took scant notice of Henry Ross’s speech. It is unlikely they ever met face-to-face.

As events unfolded over the next two weeks Ross’s views hardened and became militant. Also, he seemed to develop an uncanny sense of where things were headed. For example, he had the huge (8 ft. by 12 ft.) flag made to be raised at a

meeting on November 29 even before the gathering opted for more aggressive tactics. It was there too that he was elected a ‘captain’ of one of their twelve armed divisions, explaining the rank by which he is referred sometimes.

Ross’s activities the following day can be traced by the path of the flag, from which he was inseparable. He brought it to a meeting at Bakery Hill at noon then carried it at the head of a parade of miners to the Eureka Lead (pronounced ‘leed’) where a large stockade was built from timber and carts. Late in the afternoon he returned to Bakery Hill and again raised the banner. Their leader Peter Lalor then asked everyone to “swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend their rights and liberties,” which is now a canon of Australian culture. The diggers finally marched back

to Eureka to hoist the flag over the stockade.

Over December 1-2 their efforts to parley with the authorities and secure the release of some jailed comrades in return for renouncing violence were rebuffed. Meanwhile, Ross and his armed brigade scoured the countryside for intelligence, arms and supplies. For its part the government played for time while awaiting military and police reinforcements. At dawn on Sunday, December 3, it launched an attack on the stockade. The battle was over in less than twenty minutes after it had begun.



Henry Ross, c. 1852, in a rare daguerreotype taken probably in Toronto. (Courtesy of a Canadian relative of Henry Ross)



Charles A. Doudiet, Swearing allegiance to the 'Southern Cross', 1854, watercolour, pen and ink on paper. (Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ballarat, purchased by the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery with the assistance of many donors, 1996)

Unfortunately, Ross took a shot in the groin during the fray. Four comrades carried him to the nearby Star Hotel where he died two days later. One of them was Charles Doudiet, a digger and amateur artist who had been a fellow-passenger on the ship from New York and stayed to comfort him to the end. Ross was buried in the now-forgotten Eureka Burial Ground. Somewhere between 250 and 300 mourners marched solemnly in the cortege to his grave. Three years later his remains were exhumed and reinterred among his comrades near the diggers' Monument in the Ballarat Old Cemetery. His grieving mother may have wished that, "Henry's name be put on the monement in the Necroplas with the rest and his time of death. James first and Thomas and then Henry and when he was killed in that fattle cuntrey." But no marker stands today on the Ross plot in Toronto's Necropolis

cemetery, let alone one that notes Henry's passing.

No fewer than five people writing later about the rebellion singled him out and paid him tribute. "A Canadian, bold, brave and trusty . . . one of the best loved of those who fell." (W.B. Withers). "A gentleman in manners, and in appearance young, ardent." (H.R. Nicholls). "Highly esteemed by all who knew him. He was beloved of the diggers for his good qualities and sterling character." (Richard Allan). "Our lamented friend" (Frederick Vern) and "a fine man" (Thomas Pierson).

He remains nonetheless an enigmatic figure whose motives in joining the rebellion at Eureka are a mystery. Little in the loyal traditions of his family or his upbringing explains them. His grandfather, John Ross, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and sometime Barrackmaster at Fort York. His father, James Ross, a private and later a corporal

in the 3rd Regiment of York Militia during the War of 1812, fought at the Battle of York and became a prisoner of war under the Terms of Capitulation. Henry's uncle, John Ross, served at both Detroit and Queenston in 1812 and assisted with the burial of Sir Isaac Brock after the general's death on Queenston Heights. He described that melancholy task to Benson J. Lossing, an American historian who visited Toronto in 1860 gathering material for his *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812*. Lossing left no record of what the father or uncle, both of whom outlived Henry, thought of his rendezvous with history.

*The author would like to thank the Rev. David Neelands and Mrs. Fay Johnson for their assistance with this article. Also Ian Macfarlane whose "Defending Victoria" website was so helpful.*



## Help Us Recruit New Candidates for the Fort York Guard

The Friends of Fort York fund and operate the Fort York Guard who provide the colourful historic demonstrations at the fort during the summer months. Our recruiting process for new candidates starts in May. For 2011 we are looking for secondary school students ages 16 to 18 to join the Guard for the period commencing June 27 to Labour Day. Students with musical aptitude will be considered for the Fife and Drum Corps. We also accept students aged 11 to 15 as volunteers in the Fife and Drum Corps.

If you know of young men or women interested in this opportunity, or if you wish further information, please contact Joe Gill at 416.361.6081 or [joseph.gill@rogers.com](mailto:joseph.gill@rogers.com).

## *In Review:*

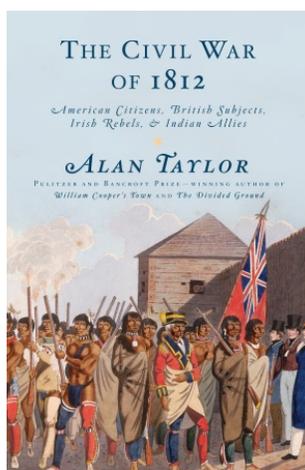
# *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels and Indian Allies*

by John R. Grodzinski

Alan Taylor. *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels and Indian Allies*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010. 620 pages, two maps, 77 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth. \$25.50 CA ISBN 9781400042654

The *Civil War of 1812* presents the Anglo-American conflict fought between 1812 and 1815 as a series of civil clashes along the frontier of Upper Canada. According to Alan Taylor, who teaches American and Canadian history at the University of California, the War of 1812 has four dimensions, each a contest in its own right. The first was the continued struggle between Loyalists and Americans for the control of Upper Canada; next was the political partisanship in the United States that nearly ignited a war between the states; the third was the importation of the struggle for Irish independence from Britain to the frontier of British North America; and the final contest was between the Native peoples living on either side of the border. At 620 pages, the book is a hefty and sometimes dense study that seems not as deeply researched or as clearly written as the jacket notes suggest.

To demonstrate his case, Taylor concentrates on events along the borderlands of Upper Canada. He believes that through the three campaign seasons neither Britain nor the United States was capable of asserting its vision of North America, either imperial or republican, over the other and both decided to co-exist. This argument assumes that Britain's ultimate goal was to smash the new republic, which is false. Because the author limits the British perspective of the war to events around Upper Canada, much of the British context of the war is lost. For example, British political leaders are reduced to an anonymous group known as the "Imperial Lords," (examples appear at pp. 78, 150, 172, 403, and 435). George III, who was ill at the time and had no direct bearing on the war, is mentioned four times, while the Prince Regent, who assumed many of the monarch's responsibilities in 1811, only appears in passing. Prime Minister the Earl of Liverpool is missing while Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies and the cabinet official responsible for the conduct



of the war, is mentioned once (p. 290). Unlike their nameless British counterparts, American political and military leaders, such as James Madison, James Monroe, James Wilkinson, Jacob Brown, Thomas Jefferson, and even George Washington appear throughout the text.

Thus British strategy, at least until 13 October 1812, is presented as a struggle between the dashing and powerfully built Major-General Isaac Brock and the cautious Captain General and Governor-in-Chief of British North America, Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost, while the rationale of the massive reinforcement of 1814 is not fully explained. The war in Europe against Bonaparte is barely mentioned. The Prince Regent's instructions to Prevost written in 1811 were clear in that he was to avoid any situation that would cause a large-scale diversion of resources from Europe and when the circumstances dictating that strategy changed, Britain did send substantial reinforcements to North America in 1814, not so much to humble the Americans (p. 413), but to secure the frontier of the Canadas in anticipation of the coming peace talks.

While Upper Canada was certainly the cockpit of the war, the author's decision to restrict the discussion to Upper Canada ignores the remainder of British North America. Little consideration is made of Lower Canada's largely French population, which totalled about half of British North America's 600,000 people. Lower Canada is described as "a Catholic country occupied by British troops" that "resembled Ireland with a French twist" (p. 77). Yet that province played an important role in the war effort. In the Maritimes, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick shared strong cultural and economic ties with New England, so why is there no consideration of the republican-imperial dynamic that occurred in that region?

The Native peoples figure prominently in the text and as the author acknowledges, were instrumental in defeating American plans during 1812 and 1813 (p. 435). With the peace, many of Britain's Native allies found themselves in American territory and the author contends that the Americans exploited the "ambiguous" (p. 437) peace treaty to consolidate their dominion over Natives within their territory, ending British influence over them, allowing the Americans to gain continental predominance. The apparent abandonment by Britain of its Native allies is a common theme in War of 1812 historiography, however little acknowledgement is made of British efforts to secure Native rights in the ninth article of the treaty and the American decision to ignore them.

There is a nagging host of minor errors throughout the book. None is terribly serious but there are enough to distract the reader's attention and to question the author's understanding of the British perspective of the war. Quebec's defences did not include a citadel in 1785 (p. 14); Guy Carleton would certainly not have described himself a "loyal Irishman" (p. 17); the number of British subjects in "Canada" in 1785 is said to be 100,000 people (p. 27), but the geographic extent of this territory is undefined. Why not use census data from the early 1800s? Peter Hunter is wrongly identified to as the governor-general of Canada, when he was in fact, lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada between 1799 and 1805 (p. 87); the wrong

date is given for the repeal of the Orders in Council in 1812 (p. 134); and it was the Prince Regent and not parliament who ratified the Treaty of Ghent on 27 December 1814 (p. 419).

While this book is disappointing from the British perspective, it offers several interesting insights: a population that had not been completely separated by the American War of Independence became more distinctive in the aftermath of the War of 1812; the only quantifiable outcome of the conflict was the confirmation of the existing border between America and British North America. The author also provides interesting examples of contrasts between Upper Canada and the American republic before the war, such as the lower tax burden carried by Upper Canadians as compared to Americans. Taylor's descriptions of the interactions between soldiers and civilians are vivid and in contrast to other works.

For example, the operations of the two fine American divisions in the Niagara Peninsula during the summer and fall of 1814, while valiant, did little towards securing American victory and actually "wasted the nation's finest troops in futile battles" (p. 407). The tactical successes achieved by American arms during 1814 could not make up for strategic failure, and the effort to present the outcome as otherwise appears to be the author's lesson of the war, in that superficially at least, the postwar American idea of victory was a crafted mirage.

*Major John Grodzinski teaches history at the Royal Military College of Canada, where he specializes in North American colonial warfare and navies in the age of sail. John regularly leads battlefield study tours to Seven Years' War, American War of Independence, and War of 1812 sites.*

## We Invite Your Support!

From reports in this newsletter, in the public press, and on several websites you will know of the new \$23 million Visitor Centre planned at Fort York. The design by the prominent Vancouver architects John and Patricia Patkau in partnership with Kearns, Mancini of Toronto was chosen after a Canada-wide competition. It will make an impressive contribution to how the site functions and to Toronto's array of cultural attractions.

The Visitor Centre will be built with the support of the federal, provincial, and municipal governments working with individuals, foundations, and business corporations. The Fort York Foundation has taken the lead for raising \$6 million from the private sector and is aided by a well-connected team of two dozen volunteers chaired by Andy Pringle. We are fortunate in having five prominent Ontarians as Honorary Chairs: four former Lieutenant-Governors of Ontario (Their Honours Lincoln Alexander, James Bartleman, Henry N.R. Jackman, and Hilary Weston), as well as the distinguished historian, Dr. Margaret MacMillan.

Some \$700,000 in gifts has been raised to date, but we're just getting under way. You may have been asked already for a donation, or are about to hear from one of the campaign volunteers. We apologize for any duplication, but don't want to overlook anyone who wants to help make Fort York better. Therefore, we invite you to make a gift by sending a cheque to the Fort York Foundation at the address below, or by using the 'Canada Helps' button on the Foundation's website. <http://www.fortyorkfoundation.ca>

Tax receipts will be issued electronically by Canada Helps if you donate using the 'button,' or will be mailed to the address you give us if you prefer to send your donation to the Foundation's office directly. Unless you wish to remain anonymous the names of all donors will be published and recorded on both the Foundation's web site and within the Visitor Centre.

Fort York Foundation  
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*News From*

# *The Birthplace of Toronto*

*Contributions from the Staff at the Fort*

## **Administrator's Report**

*by David O'Hara, Site Administrator*

Having finished the detailed design of the Visitor Centre, the project team (Patkau Architects & Kearns Mancini Architects Inc., O.P. McCarthy, staff of Toronto Culture, and others) has spent the last few months preparing the project for construction tender. Final costing has recently been completed to ensure that the project comes in on budget and a short list of general contractors has been established to bid on the work. The final package to be tendered includes the Visitor Centre, the adjacent parking lot, and a very modest first phase of landscaping in the area directly adjoining the building.

Pending a firm commitment on the part of the province, which has given every encouragement so far that it will contribute funds for the construction of the Visitor Centre, the project is scheduled for tender by 1 May, with an award of contract to follow shortly after. This schedule will allow us to meet the required deadline for using the federal funding committed towards the project by 31 March 2012.

The fabrication and installation of exhibit components within the Visitor Centre will be completed under separate contract and installed once the building is complete. The exhibit design team continues to focus on the details of the main exhibit areas: the Exhibit Gallery, Vault, Time Tunnel, Orientation Theatre, and lobby orientation material. Interior and exterior signage for the building is currently being designed as part of an overall master plan for the broader 43-acre site. A series of signs will provide a framework for expanded guided and self-guided interpretation. This framework will also allow for future expansion of the audio tour currently offered at the fort and discussions are underway with Parks Canada regarding the possible implementation of a handheld GPS-triggered location-based tour of the entire site (Explora, see <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2009/papers/tarasoff/tarasoff.html>).

Completion of the Visitor Centre, combined with the recent relocation to the Portlands of the Garrison Nursery and the planned construction of the Fort York Pedestrian Bridge, now allow us to develop a plan for the restoration and rehabilitation of the Garrison Common. Once detailed plans are finalized and the land becomes available, and depending on the status of both the Visitor Centre and pedestrian

bridge construction, a first phase of improvements will be undertaken over the remainder of the year. Although this phase will likely be very basic, given timing and funding constraints, the impact should be significant as the simple establishment of an expanded central 'Common' in what is now the nursery/parking lot area will provide new opportunities for programming, interpretation, and revenue generation. Longer term improvements to be phased in over a number of years will include the implementation of an overall lighting master plan.

Landscape improvements at the east end of the national historic site will be minimal over the next couple of years as longer-term improvements hinge on the reconstruction of the Bathurst Street bridge as well as developments by Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Context Developments, and the Toronto Public Library, which won't be complete until 2014-15 and beyond. Working closely with the Friends of Fort York, the staff at the fort continue to participate in the planning processes for several other residential initiatives surrounding Fort York in order to evaluate potential impacts and ensure that all of the good work that has gone into planning the broader public realm in and around the fort continues to be top-of-mind.

Within the walls of the fort, several projects to be undertaken within the next couple of years will enrich the visitor experience. In addition to completing exhibits in the Stone Magazine and enhancing those in the North and South Soldiers' Barracks, one of the more significant proposals is the development of a new archaeology exhibit. It will be informed, in part, by fresh archaeological work at the site of the Visitor Centre as well as by work conducted on adjacent areas for residential construction projects. For greater accessibility it may be located in the Blue Barracks.

The fort's dedicated staff continue to advance all of these projects, and others, while at the same time placing a priority on expanding the schedule of events and programs on site. The early part of 2011, beginning with the Lieutenant Governor's New Year's Levee, marks one of the busiest starts to a year in quite some time.

# Gift of an “extremely rare” Survivor of 1812: The “Upper Canada Preserved” Medal

by Richard Gerrard, Historian, City of Toronto Museum Services

On the table before me were two small tissue-wrapped packages. Opposite sat the donor, Mrs. Patrick Vernon, and her family. All of us were in a high state of excitement and anticipation. Even unopened I knew what the packages held: two “Upper Canada Preserved” medals, one silver and one gold, whose survival is so improbable that it seemed like fiction.



Front and back of the medal. (Credit: Toronto Culture)

Their story begins in 1817 when the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada (LPS) ordered a second medal to honour the commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Upper Canada militia. In 1814, the LPS had received 50 silver medals from the Royal Mint’s engraver, Thomas Wyon, jr. (1792-1817). His beautiful creation met all the specifications of the commission, yet the LPS Directors rejected it almost immediately. The identity of the craftsman who produced new dies for the second series of 62 gold and 500 silver medals is a mystery.

Why the LPS Directors never issued any of either the first or second medals is also a matter of conjecture. They claimed that there were too many qualified recipients and not enough medals. This scandal came to a head in 1840 when the question was investigated by a select committee of

the Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately a resolution by the Assembly to distribute the medals failed to save most of them. The LPS Directors had all but three of the 612 medals defaced and sold for scrap to Toronto watchmakers, with the funds donated to the Toronto General Hospital.

Two of the three survivors—both of the second design—now lay before me. They were saved for posterity by an LPS Director, William Allan (c1770-1853). They would pass to his son, George William Allan (1822-1901), and ultimately by descent to the Vernons. An object’s provenance, its history of ownership, is crucial to authenticating a work, and the fact that these medals could be traced back nearly two hundred years in the same family was just about perfect. Thanks to the Vernons’ generous gift, both are now part of the City’s Historical Collection.

The first medal is known as LeRoux 866 and the second as LeRoux 866a, after their catalogue numbers in Joseph LeRoux’s 1890 *Supplement to the Canadian Coin Cabinet*. In his great listing of Canadian historical medals, LeRoux rates the second design as “extremely rare,” 7 on his 10-point scale. However, I know this to be an understatement: today the medal would be rated at least “very precious” (9) or “extremely so, almost unique” (10).

Both the first and second medals have been reproduced at various times, either as re-strikes from the original dies or in some other form of reproduction. While preparing an application to the Canadian Cultural Property Review Board to have our medals certified as being of “national importance” I discovered other examples from the LeRoux 866a dies: one in lead given to the British Museum in 1860; an electrotype version at what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1877; a bronze version at the sale of a Toronto collection in 1920. Two medals were exhibited at a meeting of the American Numismatic and Archaeological Society, New York, in 1886, and one was sold by a New York dealer in 1890. None of these is in silver or gold however, and the LPS makes no mention of other metals being used. The history of these medals challenges us to further research into our “extremely rare” survivors of 1812.

For a more detailed history of the LPS and the “Upper Canada Preserved” medal, see Carl Benn’s article at <http://www.fortyork.ca/history.htm>



*New Year’s Day Levee* In 2011 the Lieutenant-Governor’s New Year’s Day levee was held at Fort York. Carole Snow (l.) and her daughter, Madeleine Smith (r.), flank His Honour David C. Onley and David O’Hara, Administrator for the Fort York National Historic Site. Almost 750 people came out in rainy weather to enjoy a custom that has been carried on in Canada since 1646. (Credit: Photo by Nick Kozak)

# Cawthra Artifacts Illuminate the War of 1812

by Wayne Reeves, Chief Curator, City of Toronto Museum Services

With roots in this city extending back over two hundred years, the Cawthras come close to being a founding family of Toronto. Joseph Cawthra (1759-1842) arrived here in 1803 or 1806, set up an apothecary shop and then brought his family over from England. He became a mercantile success story; in 1873, Henry Scadding wrote of “the great wealth (locally proverbial)” of the Cawthras. This prosperity arose from the War of 1812, when Joseph amassed profits by selling supplies to the British army.

The Cawthra story to be told here concerns the War of 1812, but is not about Joseph’s business acumen (or his medical aid to the Battle of York’s wounded). The focus is on his sons Henry (1787-1854), Jonathan (1791-1868), William (1801- 80), and especially John (1789-1851), and their involvement in the conflict. Thanks to a generous gift from Anne Coneybeare, a Cawthra descendent, City of Toronto Museum Services has acquired three artifacts—a medal, a sword, and a silhouette—which relate to John and possibly his brothers.

As war clouds gathered over the town, John tried to get a commission in the York militia. Due to his father’s unpopularity with the Upper Canada establishment, he instead enrolled as a private in Capt. Duncan Cameron’s Company of the 3rd Regiment of York Militia. He was at the York garrison on 30 June 1812, then volunteered to join Major-General Isaac Brock’s attack on Detroit in mid-August. He fought again with Brock at Queenston Heights, helping Brock’s dying aide-de-camp, John Macdonell, from the battlefield.

At least two of John’s brothers also figured in the war. Jonathan was a private in the same flank company as John and served with him at Queenston Heights. Young William witnessed the coming of the U.S. fleet in April 1813; he helped pull ropes up the Fort York flagstaff used to signal the battery at Gibraltar Point, until American cannon fire prompted him to scamper home. (Henry, who suffered a serious head injury as a child, receives little mention in family records.)

What is the connection between the brothers and our newly acquired artifacts? The Military General Service Medal with Fort Detroit clasp has its edge stamped “J. CAWTHRA. CANADN MILITIA” and is clearly John’s, marking his service at Detroit. This campaign medal was approved in 1847 for issue to officers and men of the British army for military actions between 1793 and 1814. As it was only awarded to surviving claimants who applied for it, John’s medal dates from some time between 1847 and 1851, when he died a merchant at Newmarket.

The sword is a key part of Cawthra family lore. Dating from the early 19th century, it is said to be a trophy taken at Detroit by John following Brock’s victory. The sword itself is curious. It features an unusual medusa- or gorgon-headed pommel, and does not follow approved British or American military or naval patterns. Possibly it is of English manufacture for the American market or the fur trade. Who carried it before John remains an open question.

The silhouette is equally intriguing. Three Cawthra silhouettes are known. Each depicts a young man wearing a high collar and lace cravat, facing left, and all seem to be cut by the same hand. Two appear in printed family histories, where they are said to be of John and his father, Joseph. The third, now added to the City’s collection, is unmarked. If the printed histories are correct, could ours be of

Jonathan, or even Henry or William? Perhaps silhouettes were made of the three older boys (and not their father) at the outset of the war, once at least two of them had decided to join the militia. Alternatively, given that our three artifacts have been carefully kept together for decades, our silhouette may represent John Cawthra.

Taken together, the Cawthra artifacts give us a new view of York’s role in the War of 1812. The story is neither about Fort York nor the town’s invasion and defence—no Cawthra is on any militia list relating to the Battle of York. Instead, we think of how York’s men marched bravely away to fight battles in other places, and how mementoes tie us to people and events.

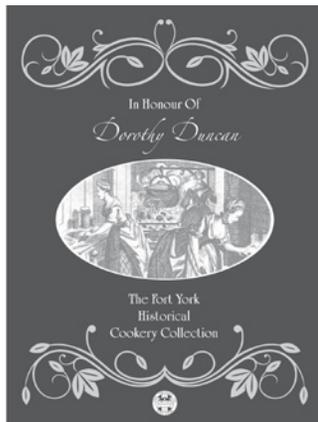


*Silhouette portrait, c. 1810, thought to be John Cawthra. (Credit: Toronto Culture)*

# An Evening to Honour Author Dorothy Duncan

by Bridget Wranich, Programme Officer, Fort York National Historic Site

On 6 December 2010, Fort York National Historic Site in association with the Friends of Fort York, as part of the Parler Fort series, was pleased to host a book launch for Dorothy Duncan, author of *Feasting and Fasting: Canada's Heritage Celebrations*. Dr. Carl Benn, former curator of Fort York and now Chair of the Department of History at Ryerson University, joined us in honouring Dorothy for this newest work and for her long association with the fort, which he recalled in some remarkable anecdotes of her early years.



Bookplate of the Fort York Historical Cookery Collection designed by Ted Smolak

Dorothy Duncan was preceded over the years at Fort York by many other cooks. One of the earliest references we have is Mrs. Chapman, best remembered for her reluctance to evacuate the garrison in the face of an American invasion during the battle of York in 1813. Apparently, she was a truly dedicated cook and one can only wonder what was on the menu that day. A little more than 150 years later the fort welcomed another dedicated cook to develop museum programmes that would help tell the story of the people who lived at the garrison. That cook was Dorothy Duncan and she was instrumental in the birth of the successful Fort York Foodways Programme.

Brigadier John McGinnis, managing director of the Toronto Historical Board, was familiar with the food programmes implemented by Duncan at Black Creek Pioneer Village. In 1968 he hired her as curator of Historic Houses. At that time none of the houses or the fort was delivering any heritage food interpretation. Duncan's first task was to research and develop a programme for Fort York. This request was prompted by new structural clues that had been uncovered revealing that not only was there a kitchen in the basement of the Officers' Mess, but also one on the main floor. Restoration of this kitchen included the hiring and training of historical interpreters Ruth Keene and Jean Lomas. Brigadier McGinnis invited the mayor and city council to preview the new Officers' Mess exhibit and asked Duncan to provide a luncheon for each of the two days they would be visiting. Helen Gagen, food editor of the *Telegram*, described the bill of fare: "prepared on the hearth and in the newly restored brick oven, including ham glazed with dry sherry, ginger and celery seeds; scalloped potatoes;

old fashioned relishes, green salad with a hot mustardy dressing, homemade bread and butter; Indian pudding with hot rum sauce, cider, black and green tea."

The success of these luncheons sparked further expansion. Duncan developed popular cooking classes for the public at both Fort York and Mackenzie House called, "If You Can't Stand the Heat... Stay out of the Kitchen." The expanding programme at the fort included daily animation of the kitchen with a fire in the hearth, biscuits on the griddle, meat roasting in the reflector oven, and yeast making from hops and potatoes.

These early initiatives laid the foundation for our current Foodways Programme. With food as a tool in the interpretation of history, we are still telling the story of the people who once lived at the fort by offering cooking classes, animating the Officers' Mess kitchen for special events, and developing historical recipes. Today most of this work is carried on by a loyal group of Volunteer Historic Cooks.

In recognition of Dorothy Duncan's dedication to the fort over the years, Fort York and the Friends of Fort York have created an honorary cookbook collection: the Fort York Historical Cookery Collection which consists of primary source cookbooks from the late 18th and early 19th century, as well as relevant secondary source food history books. Stephen Otto, a director of the Friends, presented Dorothy with a framed bookplate that will be used to distinguish books in the collection. Publisher Dundurn Press added congratulations by donating a copy of each of Duncan's books to the collection.

Her friends and colleagues agreed that it was an honour to mark the contributions Dorothy Duncan has made to Fort York National Historic Site as well as to Canada's food heritage.

A recipe from Dorothy Duncan's *Feasting and Fasting: Canada's Heritage Celebrations* (Dundurn Press, 2010), pp 87-8.

(This recipe is similar to the Derby Cakes recipe from *The Cook Not Mad; or Rational Cookery*, 1831, that the Fort York Foodways Programme often uses when baking on the griddle by the hearth fire.)

## Welsh Cakes

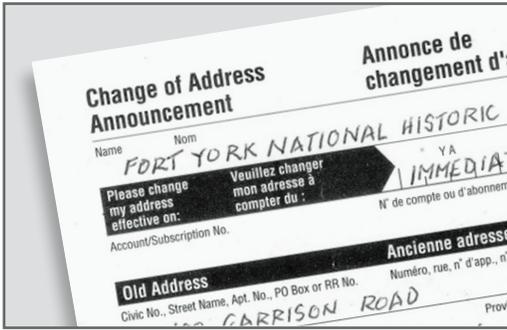
Dorothy attributes this recipe to the late Dorothy Grove of Toronto who brought her favourite Welsh Cake recipe with her when she left Wales for Canada in the twentieth century.

2 cups flour	½ cup currants
1 teaspoon baking powder	½ teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar	½ teaspoon allspice, nutmeg, or mace
2/3 cup lard	1 teaspoon vanilla
1 egg	

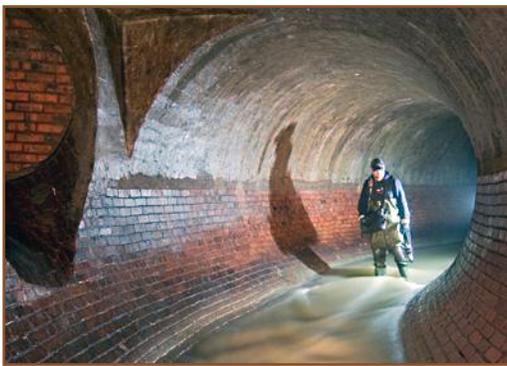
Mix all ingredients well, roll out about ¼ inch thick, cut into circles, and cook over medium heat in a greased cast-iron frying pan until brown on both sides.



**Food Fight** Chef Scott Vivian (left) and pastry chef teammate Bertrand Alépée get down to business as one of two teams during the afternoon finale of the Fort York Food Fight Chef Competition on Saturday, January 29. The chef battle was one of the event's three components. Contestants were given sixty minutes to dazzle more than seventy attendees in the Blue Barracks by preparing recipes incorporating a secret ingredient that would have been available in the Town of York in 1812: venison. A panel of judges crowned Vivian the Fort York Food Fight Champion and the recipient of a \$2500 grand prize. (Credit: Photo by Nick Kozak)



**Fort York's Not Moving!** – but the City Surveyor who assigns property numbers throughout the municipality has given Fort York a new address: 250 Fort York Boulevard. This will make it easier for taxis and tourists to find us, or those unfamiliar with our busy quarter of the city. The old address of 100 Garrison Road will continue to function to avoid confusion on the part of emergency vehicles who may not have updated their records. And the postal code M5V 3K9 remains the same.



**Garrison Creek** There's something very satisfying about Toronto's ability to surprise us over and over. An example is The Vanishing Point, a website where some daring urban explorers describe their visits to "the least visible margins of our constructed landscapes," notably the city's sewers. Their accounts are accompanied by clear, stunningly-lit photographs. Here is their post on the burying of Garrison Creek: <http://www.vanishingpoint.ca/garrison-creek-sewer-history>

## 2011 | Upcoming Events Historic Fort York

Compiled by Alok Sharma

### APRIL

#### Historical Food Tasting and Tea Sun. April 3, 1 to 3 pm

Taste food from historical recipes tested in Fort York's kitchen.

Cost \$15 including tax

Tickets available by phone (416) 392-6907 ext. 241

#### Citizenship Ceremony

Wed. April 27, 11 am to 12 noon

Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, in partnership with Fort York's volunteer Citizenship

Committee and Fort York National Historic Site, will host candidates for citizenship at a special community ceremony at the fort. Prior to the ceremony, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship will hold another in its series of community roundtable discussions designed to strengthen the connection between new Canadians and their communities, and to remind all in attendance of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. The event includes guest speakers, music, and a reception.

### MAY

#### Newfoundland Commemoration of the Battle of York Victoria Memorial Square Sun. May 1, 1 pm

Act of Remembrance and Wreath Laying to honour the soldiers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment who fell in the Battle of York, 27 April 1813. For the first time Newfoundland will be sending four soldiers from the Royal Newfoundland Regiment to join the Old Comrades of the 48th Highlanders of Canada, active soldiers of the 48th Highlanders, and the Fort York Guard in period uniform.

## Battle of York Commemoration

**Sun. May 1, 10 am to 5 pm**

Join us for the 198th anniversary of Toronto's most traumatic day. Take tours of the site or a special Battlefield walking tour. Children can join an 1812 drill class.

*No registration required*

*Regular admission*

## Fort York Historic District Walking Tour (in association with Jane's Walks)

**200 Years of Lakefront Development**

**Sun. May 8, 1 to 2:30 pm**

Explore the history and evolution of Fort York, the Garrison Common, and the nearby Lake Ontario shoreline from the early British colonial era to the present day. Hear about the origins of the fort, the fortification of the harbour, and subsequent transportation, industrial, and recreational development.

*Free admission to Fort York following tour*

## TDSB History Fair

**Fri. May 6, 10 am to 2:30 pm**

History project displays from the West District of the Toronto District School Board.

*Regular admission*

## Victoria Day

**Mon. May 23, 10 am to 5 pm**

What better way to celebrate Victoria Day than to visit the birthplace of Toronto. Join us for tours, kids' drill, baking in the kitchen.

*Regular admission*

## Doors Open

**Sat. and Sun. May 28 and 29, 10 am to 5 pm**

Enjoy special tours of some of Toronto's oldest architecture and Canada's largest collection of original War of 1812 buildings.

*Free admission*

## Doors Open Fort York Historic District Walking Tour

**Fort York and the Garrison Common: Battlefields,  
Graves, and Urban Development**

**Sun. May 29, 1 to 2:30 pm**

Starting at the canteen at Fort York National Historic Site, this special walking tour explores the evolution of Fort York's Garrison Common area. This almost forgotten corner of the city has witnessed some of the most dramatic events and substantial change in the evolution of modern urban Toronto. Rain or shine.

*Free admission to Fort York following tour*

## Parler Fort: Exploring Toronto's Past, Present, and Future Struggling toward Democracy in 19th-century Canada and 21st-century North Africa

**Mon. May 30, 7:30 pm (doors open at 7)**

Acclaimed thinker John Ralston Saul, an expert on current events in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia will reflect on the similarities and differences

between the struggles for democracy in 19th-century Canada and what we watch unfolding in North Africa and the Middle East today. How did responsible government emerge in Canada? And how can understanding these events help us appreciate the challenges faced today.

*Cost: \$8.85 + tax*

## JUNE

### The Ultimate Block Party

**Sun. June 5, 11 am to 5 pm**

In celebration of play-based learning, tour and participate in interactive games and activities at play centres throughout the site. Enjoy performance centres and keynote speakers. A site map, as well as "Play Doctors," will guide parents through the eco-friendly activities. Appealing to children aged 1 to 81. Presented by Fort York National Historic Site and Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

*Free admission*

### Ontario Model Soldiers' Society Show

**Sat. June 11, 10 am to 5 pm**

Children of all ages will enjoy Fort York as it hosts the Society's 49th annual show and competition. Demonstrations of casting and painting; displays of connoisseur figures, dioramas, and tableaux. Many vendors will be offering toy soldiers for sale.

*Regular admission*

### Fort York Historic District Walking Tour

**200 Years of Lakefront Development**

**Sun. June 12, 1 to 2:30 pm**

Explore the history and evolution of Fort York, the Garrison Common, and the nearby Lake Ontario shoreline from the early British colonial era to the present day. Hear about the origins of the fort, the fortification of the harbour, and subsequent transportation, industrial, and recreational development

*Free admission to Fort York following tour*

### National Aboriginal Day

**Tues. June 21, 7 to 10 pm**

In cooperation with national Aboriginal organizations, the Government of Canada has designated June 21 National Aboriginal Day. This date was chosen because it corresponds to the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, and because for generations, many Aboriginal groups have celebrated their culture and heritage at this time of year. A spiritual ceremony in honour of the summer solstice and the summer season will be conducted by a native elder from the Mississauga of the New Credit. This is an opportunity for visitors to the fort to participate in an Aboriginal ceremony and learn more about First Nations spiritual traditions honouring the land, the season, and the environment. There will be music and Aboriginal food.

*Free admission*

*Fife and Drum is a quarterly publication of the Friends of Fort York  
and Garrison Common*



*Editor Emeritus* Stephen Otto  
*Editor* Patricia Fleming  
*Designer* Ted Smolak (Arena Design)  
*Circulation* Elizabeth Quance

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*Regular admission to Fort York: Adult: \$8.61, Senior (65+) & Youth (13 - 18 yrs.): \$4.31,  
Children: \$3.23, Children (5 and under) FREE (all prices include HST, where applicable)*