



The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

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Dates to note

Fort York Lecture Series – Royal Canadian Military Institute

- Wednesday February 28, 2001 - 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, March 26, 2001 - 7:30 p.m.
- Monday, April 23, 2001 - 7:30 p.m.

Friends of Fort York Board Meetings

Thursdays, February 22, March 22, April 26 and May 24, 2001.

Georgian Mess Dinner – our major fundraising event, Fort York

Thursday, June 7, 2001

Friends of Fort York Annual Meeting, Fort York

Thursday, June 14, 2001

For further information please call Joe Gill at 864-1300.

Two Citizens Boards Working Together for the Future Of Fort York

The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common is an independent group of over 230 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 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 and charged by its governing by-law with the management and direction of the operations of Fort York.

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

2001 Friends of Fort York Lecture Series

We have now confirmed the remaining three lectures for the 2001 program. All lectures are held at the Royal Canadian Military Institute, 426 University Avenue (just south of Dundas) at 7:30pm. Dress Code for gentlemen for the evening requires jacket and tie.

Wednesday February 28 –7:30pm

Robert Henderson, former military curator for Parks Canada, will present a talk on the history and dress of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry. This regiment served at fort York during 1815 and participated in the battle at Chrysler's farm and in other engagements during the war of 1812. This lecture will be of interest to all the Friends of Fort York as the Garrison at Fort York (the Fort York Drums and the Fort York Guard) wear the uniforms of the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry.

Monday March 26, 7:30pm

Ron Ridley, curator at Fort Henry, will talk on "The Fortifications at Fort Henry" and also be available to discuss current successes and difficulties being experienced by Fort Henry.

Monday April 23, 7:30pm

We are fortunate that Margaret Archibald from Parks Canada has agreed to speak to us. Margaret is the director of the Systems Development Branch of Parks Canada. She has agreed to discuss the current Systems Plan at Park Canada, which essentially will provide a review of Parks Canada's plans for their system of the heritage sites and museums.

Peter Twist – working for authentic history

Peter Twist has been active in the Friends of Fort York from its beginnings and serves on both the Friends of Fort York Board and the Fort York Management Board. Peter directed all of the historical re-enactments at the Fort York Festivals. However, for Peter, military history is not just a hobby. For all of you who watched "Canada: A Peoples History" on CBC, you will have noted Peter's name in the credits where he was described as "Director of Historical Reconstruction". Readers of the Fife and Drum will be interested in the following excerpt drawn from an article on "Canada: A Peoples History" in the Globe and Mail on January 16, 2001.

Getting it right

At the other extreme from computer legerdemain is the rock-solid reality of what is called "materials history". In *Canada: A People's History*, the native war paint was made from coloured clay and the chiefs' armour from plaited reeds, exactly as they would have been centuries ago. "The reed armour looks bizarre," says Peter Twist, "but it worked against arrows."

Twist, an engineer by training, became a builder of museum displays and Parks Canada installations out of a passion for history. Asked by CBC to help out on one episode of *A People's History*, he soon became a fixture. He was the one who found out what caps and badges were worn by the Midland battalion which fought Louis Riel, and that the French cannons on the Plains of Abraham wore red coats. He fully expected to see them stuck in blue coats, like the French infantry, in order to avoid confusion with the red coats of the British, "but to my amazement the CBC was absolutely rigorous about historical accuracy." This contrasts with U.S. films he's worked on where the "historic sensitivity is laughable."

In Ontario-based episodes, Twist

also advised on native history, which sometimes caused friction with natives certain they knew their culture better than he did. "But a lot of natives' impressions of their culture have been corrupted by Buffalo Bill shows and so on," says Twist. "So I'd have to say 'No, you [your ancestors] didn't dress like that, they dressed like this.'"

He emphasizes that "most natives who participated "built up trust in us; they liked what was happening."

In the Quebec shoots, native adviser Marco Bacon, a Montagnais from Lac Saint-Jean, was in charge of historic accuracy. Not surprisingly, he sees the issue differently. White advisers, he says, find it hard to accept "when we try to validate things through oral tradition. And it's true that many of our rituals were condemned and people were afraid to practise them. But they remembered them and told their children. That's why a native can disagree with a historian. The historian presumes, but the native can feel in his bones whether something is right or not."

Bacon worked for many years as a film actor, playing native roles that were "more folklore than authentic. I found if I was going to argue with a

director, I needed authoritative facts to change his manner of seeing things." He became a self-taught researcher, and willingly used any European documents he could find. Today he laments the paucity of documentation of his own people, the Montagnais. "They weren't taken back to Europe like the Iroquois."

Bacon and Twist both agree that there were dark spots where no information exists, and here it was necessary to guess. "You try not to overdo it, or imagine too much," says Bacon.

"We'd take a best guess," says Twist. "A film isn't like a book, you can't leave a black box. When guessing, we'd go with the mundane."

And both agree that the world hasn't necessarily caught up with what the CBC was trying to do. Some U.S. reviewers, says Twist, "were horrified by our sympathetic treatment of the natives. They didn't like it that we quoted, say, an American who survived a native massacre of his shipmates and wrote that Americans like him had it coming to them. One of the things I liked about this series was that we could not change a word or sentence of an original document."

Georgian Mess Dinner Thursday –June 7th, 2001

Planning is well under way for this year's Georgian Mess Dinner, our main fund raising event. All of the proceeds from the dinner go to support the Garrison at Fort York, which includes both the Fort York Drums, and the Fort York Guard. Paul Fortier of Jessup Foods works closely with Bridget Wranich at Fort York and Fiona Lucas at Spadina House to produce a truly authentic 1812 Georgian meal. The ambience of the food and music takes everyone back to the early nineteenth century. For further information call Richard Dodds at 416- 231-1693, John Barclay at 416-486-0763 or Joe Gill at 416- 864-1300.

Apologies –Some Members Overlooked

In the last newsletter, we listed (or attempted to list) all the current members, supporters and volunteers of the Friends of Fort York. We have discovered that we somehow missed two valued members (and supporters) being Richard Dodds and Charlie Baillie. The editor apologizes.

Update on the Front St. Extension

Subsequently to the last newsletter, the Front Street Extension Review Committee met on Monday, January 29. We are pleased to report that the "rail underpass" alternative for the project is widely supported. There is no present indication as to when this major project will commence.

Upcoming events at Fort York

(for further information call Fort York at 416-392-6907)

March 12 - 16	Time Machine – special heritage programming for families
Sunday, April 29	Commemoration of the Battle of York
April 14 to May 12	"Displaced/Place" – an exhibition of watercolours in the Stone and Brick Magazines
Sunday, May 21	Victoria Day – an enhanced programming day at the Fort.
Sunday May 26	(1) Special tours at the fort as part of the Open Doors Festival (2) Duchess of Richmond Ball – an event presented by the Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada (for ticket information call Brenda Lightfoot at 905-607-1358)

Fort York Drums

The Fort York Drums is anxious to expand the number of recruits for the fife and drum corps. The ideal age for recruits is 11 to 15 years and joining the Drums will provide a wonderful heritage and music experience over the summer. Please help us seek out candidates for the Fort York Drums.



Dress in the uniform of a military musician from the War of 1812

*Instruments, instructions and
Uniforms provided.*

Perform regularly at the fort during the summer.

Practice Schedule:

Alternate Saturdays
Feb. 3rd, Feb. 17th, March
3rd, March 17th and April 3rd

Contact Mike Putnam at
416-392-6907 xt. 555
Or email: putnam@yahoo.com

*Sponsored by
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