

The Fife and Drum

Newsletter of The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

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Coronation Park is being restored

by Sandra Shaul

A century after the armistice of the First World War, a small group gathered to rededicate Coronation Park on Toronto's waterfront due south of Fort York. Standing in front of the King's Oak in the centre of the restored Empire Circle of seven silver maples, we reflected on the significance of this six-acre park. Its memorial grove of trees celebrated the coronation of King George VI in 1937 and the triumph of democracy by commemorating the sacrifice of tens of thousands in the Great War.

On November 10, 2018, as waves, whipped up by the bitterly cold wind, broke on the seawall at the southern border of the park, the sun shone through the autumn leaves. Led by their band, a company of the Royal Regiment of Canada marched in from Fort York Armoury and stood at attention along Remembrance Drive, their faces turning as red in the frigid air as their scarlet tunics. Against this dramatic backdrop, Mayor John Tory and Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell unveiled a map of the surrounding trees, which represent the units of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the formations they fought alongside.

The creators of Coronation Park during the Depression might have assumed that their living memorial would never be at risk, but they would have been wrong. In the prosperous decades after the Second World War, other uses for the park were proposed. These included a space-age design for a new CNE midway and Fred Gardiner's plan to make it the site of a relocated Fort York, so that he could maintain his intended route for the expressway.



Grandmother's cornbread was the topic of this presentation by Paulette Kelly (right) and her daughter Jaya at the annual **Hungry for Comfort** celebration at Fort York. Paulette was a professor in the School of Fashion at Ryerson for many years and is now a VP of the Ontario Black History Society, a co-sponsor of the event. See page 14. Photo: Harriet De Koven

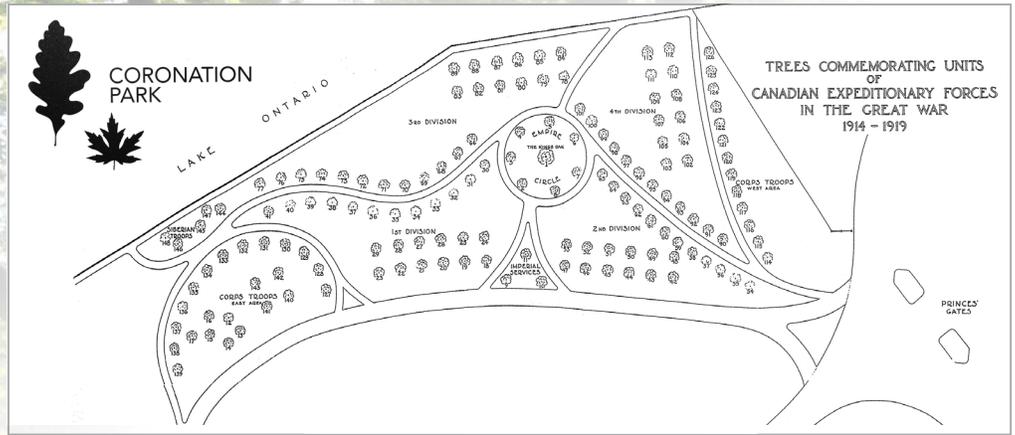
Fierce public opposition saved the park. Then, in 2010, four years before the centenary of the Great War, Gary Miedema raised the alarm again in *The Fife and Drum*. The park might have survived but the design and original intent were being increasingly obscured by random new plantings and the gradual loss of original trees and their markers. The space had been left to look like an undistinguished part of the Waterfront Trail. Joggers, dog walkers and cyclists passed through unaware of its significance. When Councillor Paul Ainslie learned of the park's origin, he became an advocate on City Council for its restoration.

The original design had as its centrepiece the King's Oak (for King George VI) surrounded by seven silver maple trees, representing the components of the British Empire. Around the Empire Circle maple groves represent the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, their Corps



Sir William Mulock unveils the marker at the King's Oak, August 1, 1938. Mulock was the retired Chief Justice of Ontario.

The park's designers in the mid-1930s were given ample empty space. Their graceful curving pathways were perfectly executed, for we can see them in the April 1947 aerial photo. To the left (east) of the park is the then-new HMCS York, the U-shaped Tip Top Tailors factory and the black diamond of Maple Leaf Stadium. Across Lake Shore Blvd on Bathurst is the Loblaws building, now being rebuilt. The rail yards on two sides of Fort York (bottom centre) have become part of the CityPlace and Fort York neighbourhoods. Images courtesy Parks, Forestry & Recreation



Troops, and units of the post-war expedition to Siberia (plus three more trees for the veterans of the South African War, the North-West Campaign and the Fenian Raids).

To plan the restoration, Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division turned first to landscape architectural firm DTAH. Then, ERA Architects would produce the design and execution of Phase One—the restoration of Empire Circle, paths to the circle, the interpretive map and additional signage. While the original design reflected the ideals of natural conservation, the team at ERA had to determine how to restore the park according to its historic plan while making it more legible – and once again meaningful – to contemporary park users.

What were the theories of nature conservation that drove the design of the park in the 1930s? John Bacher explored an answer in *Urban History Review* in 1991. "Coronation Park's emergence as a memorial grove would be a tribute to the imagination of Toronto residents inspired by new visions of conservation and imaginative approaches to the commemoration of wartime service," he wrote. "Neither a Victorian ornamental garden nor a self-perpetuating tree grove favoured by today's ecologists, the park is a vivid Canadian example of the public landscape of the great depression that sought to be infused with idealism forged from memories of an era of past sacrifice."

the original design reflected the ideals of natural conservation

The Toronto chapter of the Men of the Trees, inspired by the Toronto Field Naturalists, spearheaded the Coronation Park initiative. The Toronto Field Naturalists, founded in 1923, began with a mandate to educate the public about nature, but as the Great Depression took hold, their focus changed to conservation. The Men of the Trees, an international organization under the leadership of Richard St. Barbe Baker, brought together large groups of veterans to plant trees. They believed that the underlying cause of war was the thoughtless destruction of nature and the resulting loss of resources that brought about hardship, scarcity and poverty through ecological degradation.

The idea for a commemorative coronation planting was developed jointly by F. E. Robson, president of the Toronto chapter of the Men of the Trees, and Thomas Hobbs and Andrew Gillespie of the Toronto Ex-Servicemen's Coronation Committee. Once their concept was approved by City Council, they formed a stakeholders group and started to plan and execute.

On Coronation Day, May 12, 1937, a public holiday, veterans planted the Empire Circle and 144 maple trees, donated by the Men of the Trees, to represent the military units. It was considered to be the largest commemorative planting ever to take place in Canada. On August 1, 1938, granite stones with brass markers



The curving benches were created by Soheil Mosun, a custom architectural manufacturer in Toronto with clients around the world (they also made the benches in the Music Garden). Beyond the construction fence is the irregular shape of the Second World War monument; unseen is the giant pole that normally flies the largest Canadian flag on the waterfront. Above right is Empire Circle, with the maple of the British Isles in the foreground and branches of the King's Oak just visible behind it.

were placed before each tree by veterans of the respective units. The event was one of many on the long weekend of a massive reunion of more than 100,000 veterans.

Finally, on May 22, 1939, to honour the visit to Toronto of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, which included a drive through the park, 123 silver maples, each representing an elementary school in Toronto, were lined along the Royal Avenue of Remembrance (now Remembrance Drive). Each tree was held by a veteran, accompanied by a boy and girl. As the King and Queen passed by each tree, the children shovelled soil onto its roots.

Back to the present. The park restoration team from ERA was led by Brendan Stewart, landscape architect and assistant professor with the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph, and Rui Félix, landscape architect and arborist. “A contemporary approach to memorial is much more about experiencing the landscape and the symbols of paths, markers, trees, and so on,” says Stewart. “The landscape experience tied to memorial is the powerful relationship of landscape experienced by walking the paths, and seeing the trees with their markers.”

Félix prefers a field-naturalist approach that favours the power of trees over man-made monuments or statues. He admires how the silver maples grew to create a cathedral-like canopy, now

higher than the King's Oak, which allows in light so the ground cover can flourish. With the park built at the water's edge and sitting on lakefill, most of it is “flat as a pancake.” Félix and the team at ERA had a heritage landscape that had to be discreetly married to modern design.

Their main objective was to make the layout of the park more legible to today's visitors. While wanting to make the experience pleasurable, they did not want to lose the gravity of its theme. This was achieved in the area of the Empire Circle and Royal Oak in subtle ways. The circle is now bordered by a low hedge, a visual cue that there is something to explore. The benches draw attention to the circle and invite visitors to pause in quiet contemplation. Restored pathways will also draw visitors to the circle.

a heritage landscape that had to be discreetly married to modern design

At first Stewart and Félix wondered if the original paths could be used at all; test trenches revealed a dense tangle of roots that if damaged would kill the trees. They decided to find a way to restore the paths because they illustrate the arrangement of the trees. A new paving material seems sombre and suggests a slower movement, a contrast to the athletic pursuits of the adjacent Walter Goodman Trail and the baseball diamonds.

Some of the historic granite markers were found covered by soil and ensnared by roots. Surviving markers will be left in place. The new ones are embedded in the paths in front of the trees, rather than at their feet. They will also spell out words in full, rather than in the military abbreviations that were still familiar to post-war readers.

Benches likewise will more often be placed on the edge of the paths rather than next to the trees, avoiding a sense of clutter around



The original markers were at the foot of each tree, while the new ones are along the pathways adjacent to each tree. The new marker will not abbreviate 2nd Canadian Army Service Corps. Photos: Bob Kennedy

them. In this way, interpretation is pulled into the experience of following the paths, transforming them into routes of discovery and places to reflect on and enjoy this tranquil, living memorial. The construction of the paths through the groves and connecting to the Empire Circle will be part of the Phase Two work this summer.

In addition to the map of the park, three explanatory panels are being placed around the entrances. With text and photos supplied by Heritage Toronto, they were designed by Debbie Adams of Adams + Associates Design Consultants. The four panels together explain the landscape, the planting, the process of creating the park and the 1939 Royal Visit.

PMA Landscape Architects is the third firm involved, responsible for the second phase of construction. In addition to building paths outside the Empire Circle and placing the markers and benches, they will have to determine how to replace the 13 heritage trees that have been lost over the years and what to do about the trees that have been planted randomly around the park. There is always a risk in replanting the same species, but in this park the maples are part of its heritage and original design.

Another issue is the much more recent monument (called Victory/Peace) created by Canadian sculptor John McEwen, OC. It was dedicated by Governor General Romeo LeBlanc in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. As striking a memorial as it may be (and it is uniquely acoustic), its placement within the footprint of a First World War memorial is thought to be odd.

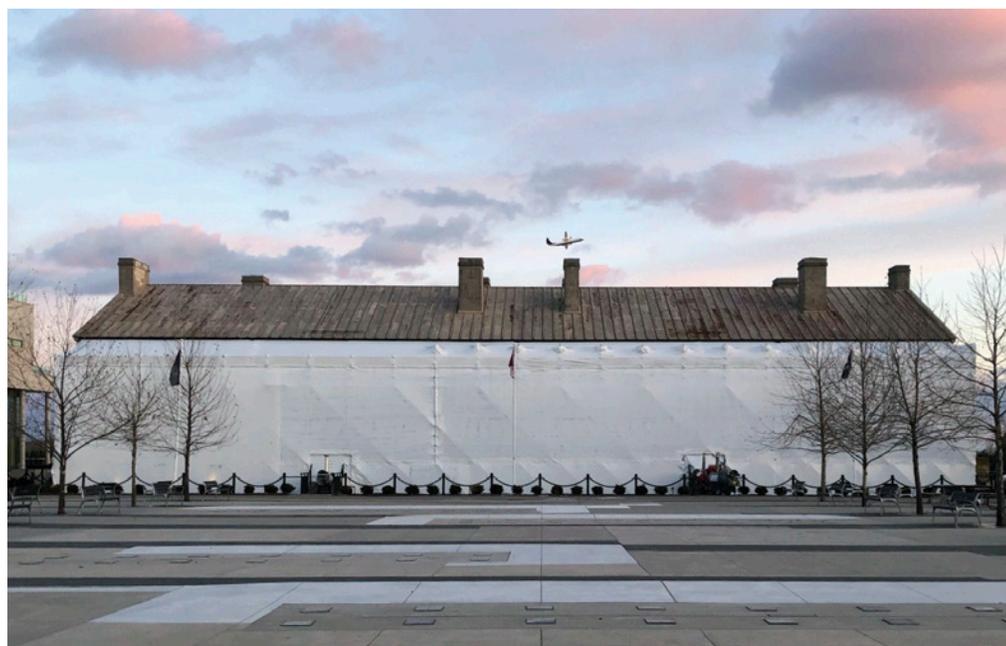
In all, the project from concept to completion will cost approximately \$800,000. Veterans Affairs Canada provided \$25,000 of that. The plan is to have the park ready for a celebration on August 1, the anniversary of the placement of the granite markers in 1938.

How far removed is our modern thinking from the philosophy of the Men of the Trees? Has environmental degradation not been a cause of strife and civil war and led to millions of refugees? And while the military history of Coronation Park may seem distant to us today, the restoration of the park as both a living memorial and a green space is as much city-building as the restoration of Fort York National Historic Site and the land under the Gardiner Expressway.

The restored park has a future as an educational asset as well. Doug Bennet, a business development and partnership officer with Parks, Forestry and Recreation, engaged stakeholders during the planning of the park's restoration and hopes that members of this group will evolve into educational programming partners. Coronation Park provides a welcoming space for students to learn about the First World War by researching a military unit and then coming to the park to find their unit's tree. The restored park is a wonderful green space and a way to learn about an aspect of Toronto's social history that resonates with our thinking about the world today.

Sandra Shaul managed the City of Toronto's Bicentennial Commemoration of the War of 1812 and Toronto's Great War Attic. Through those she learned of the story of Coronation Park and was invited to join the stakeholders. Now retired from City life, she promotes urban heritage as the vice-chair of the Toronto Preservation Board.

John Bacher's article "A Living Memorial: The History of Coronation Park" in *Urban History Review* (Vol.19, No.3) is available [here](#). Gary Miedema's article "A Landscape of Memory: Coronation Park" in *F&D* Vol.14, No.3 (October 2010) is available [here](#). There's an account of the 1934 reunion – as well as some searing glimpses of PTSD – in Ward McBurney's novel *£ after this our exile*, self-published in 2008.



The Officers' Quarters of Stanley Barracks are shrouded in mystery: is that tarp a new Christo, unnoticed by critics and fans alike? Is it modesty? Shame? Or is it actually a restoration and repurposing by the adjacent Hotel X of this long-abused edifice of Queenston limestone? The hotel on the Exhibition Grounds is opening its New Fort Hall Museum, an event space with archaeological cachet, this spring. So we're hoping the tarp really is sheltering restoration work, even if it means more weddings. Expect an answer in the next F&D.
Photo: Shawn Micalef

The hazards of renting period-room exhibits: the example of the Fort York Officers' Barracks

by Carl Benn

Historic site museums regularly face pressures to generate revenue beyond the income they derive from admissions, gift shop sales and other standard sources. One common response is to rent space for social events, film shoots and comparable activities. Often the grounds and some buildings are sturdy enough to withstand the associated wear, but period rooms that use artefacts to recreate interiors from the past are not, because those exhibits simply are too fragile. Thus, non-museum activities in period rooms present unjustifiable dangers to heritage resources that are supposed to be preserved for the public benefit.

The period rooms of the 1815 Officers' Barracks at Fort York National Historic Site were rented out extensively between about 1976 and 1986. The practice caused considerable damage and loss, and made re-restoration of the historical interiors during the 1990s more expensive and difficult than it should have been. While the rentals happened decades ago, and while the impact was worse than usual – largely because of the volume of rentals – the problems continue today wherever museums use period rooms inappropriately. Therefore, exploring that period in the fort's past is relevant to anyone concerned with the care of these kinds of exhibits today.

Hotels and banquet halls change their comparatively durable furnishings and redecorate their rooms every few years because of wear and tear, but somehow Fort York operated as if its Georgian-era antiques, displayed in a fragile heritage building, could stand up to similar use and survive unscathed. That, of course, was nonsense. To make matters worse, when the true costs of revenue-generating events during the fort's "party era" were calculated, the rentals actually lost money. Thus, public funds intended to run the site as a public museum subsidized damaging private endeavours – and this folly continues as a secret scandal in a large number of North American museums today.

We can see some of the impact of misusing period rooms in the Officers' Barracks through just two of many examples. They are drawn from a study staff did in the mid-1980s when



The officers' mess of the 1830s was the exhibit made of the dining room by curators in 1968. During the 1970s and 1980s, all of this period furniture was damaged or destroyed and more than half the smaller objects were lost. The mistake lay in allowing the space to be treated as a real Officers' Mess – where rambunctious dining is not uncommon – instead of the fragile museum exhibit that it was. Photo courtesy the author

I began to work at Fort York as its curator and, with my colleagues and our board, stopped renting the building. We compared the exhibit in 1968 when it opened to its condition at the end of the party era. First, almost 100 per cent of the large artefacts had been damaged, often beyond repair. Some of the early-nineteenth-century chairs, for example, had been reduced to bundles of sticks, to be abandoned in the museum's storage. We restored only some of the large objects for the replacement exhibit, at a cost of many thousands of dollars beyond the losses

already mentioned. This added expense was never part of the calculation of whether or not the events were turning a profit. Second, 60 per cent of the small artefacts had been broken, stolen, or otherwise had disappeared.

Not all of this happened during rentals but our investigations showed that by far most of the damage and loss had occurred during those events rather than through normal museum activities. These artefacts were not decorative frou-frou bought to meet rental clients' fantasies about the past; rather, they were

historical objects acquired from donors who believed their treasures would be looked after, or they were purchased with public money to serve educational and cultural imperatives. Naturally, as artefacts disappeared from the exhibit and

convincing decision-makers of the folly of ill-considered rentals ... requires plain speaking

as interior finishes deteriorated, the value of the exhibit for interpreting history degenerated. Changes made in order to host events further compromised the integrity of the period rooms.

Caterers, film crews and others who work in heritage structures during rentals present dangers because they (and their guests) usually know and care nothing about handling artefacts correctly. Efforts to limit caterers to those considered to be museologically "reliable" represent only a partial solution because of high staff

turnover in the food-service industry, while guests cannot be vetted for reliability. For instance, in pre-twist-top days some guests used the edge of an 1830s sideboard to pry the caps off their beer bottles! At least we can be thankful that the parties and film shoots did not lead to some irredeemable disaster, like a fire. The chances of a calamity increase intensely, however, when people focus only on shooting a film scene, or enjoying a party, and do things like overload the electrical system, prop open doors for hours at a time (letting in insects and rodents), bang their equipment into the furniture, spill drinks on the upholstery, leave lit candles unsupervised and otherwise behave ignorantly.

Beyond these physical threats, only rentals that do not degrade public perceptions of the institution's significance should be accepted, especially at places of exceptional importance and sites associated with battles, tragedies, burials or spirituality. Rentals can, however, be acceptable – even desirable – when they are non-destructive, genuinely profitable, and support either an institution's mission or its broader utility to the community.

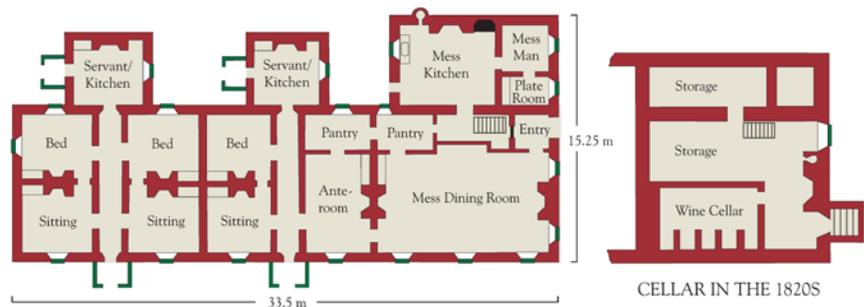
Nevertheless, achieving positive outcomes can be difficult. The fees required to be profitable, for example, may be too high; clients often look to museums because they are cheaper than commercial venues and they expect to pay less, partly because historic sites cannot provide all the comforts (such as air conditioning) of a modern facility. As well, pre- and post-event set-up and tear-down can diminish the experience for regular visitors or force museums to close exhibits during regular hours, thus undermining their core mission and disappointing visitors (especially tourists, who have only a limited time to explore a museum).

To accommodate events without endangering period rooms, several alternatives are possible. A purpose-built space for events might be created, but the necessary capital and operating costs are likely to impinge upon the resources of the museum – unless these facilities also serve the museum's core activities. Robust historical buildings within a site might be set aside for rentals (assuming they can be protected against disaster) but few museums have suitable surplus buildings. Outdoor areas might be used for events, provided that archaeological and landscape features can be protected. Yet, even exterior spaces present challenges in relation to the provision of power, washrooms and other services as well as continuous emergency-vehicle access. Furthermore, these solutions risk diverting heritage staff from their primary functions and placing them in problematical and even demoralizing situations. As well, a site's insurance coverage might not be valid when damage occurs because of activities that insurers would regard as commercial rather than museological.

Generating revenue through means other than renting period rooms (and other vulnerable areas) makes more sense. However, convincing decision-makers in many organizations of the folly of



The Officers' Barracks was built in 1815 and enlarged in 1826 (this 1993 photo puts the viewer closest to the east-end dining room). At the west end are small suites for three officers; at the east end is the messing establishment for all garrison officers. Restored in the early 1930s, the building underwent re-restorations in the 1950s and 1960s. When further restorations were completed in 1993, the interior comprised 13 period rooms, a basement archaeological display, and a five-room administrative area for the site as a whole. Photo courtesy the author; plan by Kevin Hebib 1993, Toronto M&HS



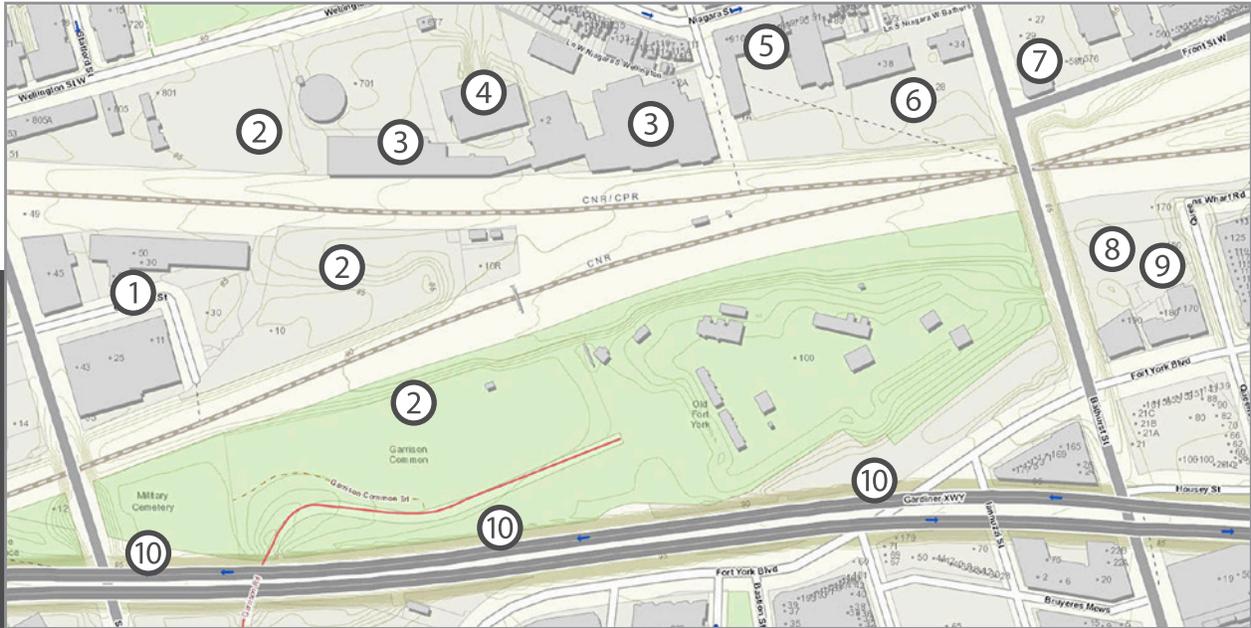
ill-considered rentals, and the need for increasing public support or seeking other forms of income, requires plain speaking by staff and friends of a museum. Even just abandoning destructive rentals can be profitable, given how often they lose money when all of the true costs are calculated. Running a smaller, more economical but high-quality historic site would be better than trying to earn money through rentals to pay for a larger operation when doing so demands inappropriate compromises to an institution's mission and security.

The errors of the party era in the Officers' Barracks are typical of those that happen at heritage sites when financial pressures lead people to make poor choices. Modern stewards of period rooms and other museum resources ought to be mindful of Fort York's experience as they preserve, exhibit and interpret the histories of their sites to the broadest public benefit. Observing those costly lessons will assist them in fulfilling their fundamental obligation to safeguard through the generations irreplaceable resources; and will help to ensure that their management, curation and programming are the best and most appropriate they can offer.

Dr. Carl Benn is a professor in the Department of History at Ryerson University. He worked for 34 years in the museum field (including as Curator of Fort York from 1985 to 1998) and was the Chief Curator of Museums & Heritage Services, Toronto, from 1998 to 2008. Among his publications are The Iroquois in the War of 1812 (UTP 1998), The War of 1812 (Osprey 2002), Mohawks on the Nile (Dundurn 2009), Native Memoirs from the War of 1812 (Johns Hopkins 2014) and Historic Fort York, 1793-1993 (Natural Heritage 1993). Forthcoming this summer from UTP is A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812: John Norton – Teyoninhokarawen.

Surrounded

Change is all around Fort York and Garrison Common



Text: Bob Kennedy, April 2019
Map Source: City of Toronto



1 Ordinance Triangle (Garrison Point): Five towers are rising, all by Hariri Pontarini. Condos of 29 and 35 storeys will finish in early 2020; three rentals of 25, 35 and 39 (with a grocery store) will follow. Bentall Kennedy, one of the developers, will build Ordinance Park (by Claude Cormier) on the triangle's tip, where there will also be new electric-train gear.



2 Tecumseth: At the old City abattoir, developer TAS has assembled KPMB, Public Work and ERA on a complex five-acre site stretching 300 metres along the tracks. In late 2017 they proposed offices, homes and a greenhouse, all organized around the shadows of Garrison Creek. TAS and the planners have talked ever since, and there's another LPAT hearing on May 1.



5 National Casket Factory: A Core Architects design puts two cubic structures side-by-side on a common podium behind – matching the massing of – the old factories. The funky brick buildings at 89-109 Niagara were listed heritage in October 2015. Currently in live/work spaces, their tenants are being asked to leave. Site Plan Approval has been pending since late 2017.



7 Minto Westside: A 1200-unit condominium by Wallman Architects is only slowly being finished but will see its first life this summer. There are two volumes of 18 and 20 storeys on a full-site podium. On the corner by the bridge, expect to see a big grocery store.



9 Block 36 North: Zeidler has designed a nine-storey, 80-unit colour piece for Toronto Community Housing to stand beside two KPMB towers and the planned park. But a developer chosen in 2016 to build the mid-rise backed out, leaving the City searching once more for a partner.



2 Garrison Crossing: Two curving spans are in place over the tracks. The approaches are being finished and the Stanley Park addition on the north side has been roughed in. Designed by the Spanish firm Pedelta, the crossing will be ready this spring when the bike and pedestrian pathway through an unfinished (but coming) Ordinance Park is paved.



4 Wellington Destructor: This long-abandoned, much-studied garbage incinerator, still owned by the City, will remain public space. Engineers have stabilized the grand heritage structure for a still-undefined future. Public input was gathered. Enveloped by the irregular shape of 2 Tecumseth, it's waiting to see what happens there.



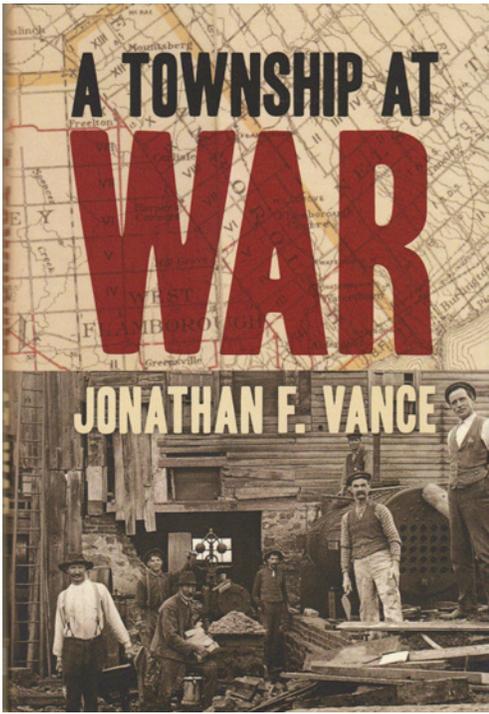
6 Stack Container Market: These groovy black piles of sea containers are coming alive as a crazy temporary market. Expect a brewery, cafés, women's clothing, food, a florist and even a bank, plus galleries, studios and video. A remediated brownfield site with a perfect view of Fort York, it will some day be a 2-acre park.



8 Lower Garrison Creek Park: Delay is imposed while the City assures itself that this park's eventual connection to Rail Deck Park will be seamless. A waiting design by Public Work sees a landscape of creek bed, marshland and bluff, with pathways from CityPlace to Garrison Crossing. The grim news: it's also a potential staging area for railroad work.



10 Bentway: The Strachan Gate is nearly finished; its landscape is. At the Fort York Visitor Centre, their Zamboni garage is still in cheap siding, waiting for the steel panels needed to repair the design. An innovative bridge to span Fort York Blvd, overlooking the fort from under the Gardiner, remains unfunded.



IN REVIEW

Jonathan F. Vance *A Township at War*
(Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019)
308 pages, illustrated, \$27.99

The historian as a really good listener

by David Roberts

A professor of history at Western University, Jonathan Vance has already given us two probing studies of the Great War: *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (1997) and (with other editors) *The Great War: From Memory to History* (2015). He is also a native of the town of Waterdown, in the old and still largely rural township that was East Flamborough, which stretches north from the west end of Lake Ontario. It is this township at war that he respectfully and elegantly examines here with a dedication to his Vance grandparents, “whose childhood was lived in the shadow of war.”

He is well aware that *A Township at War* bucks a trend: “Local history and rural history have not been popular topics of late,” though his list of local history publications, and the proliferation elsewhere of many superb local websites on the war, suggest otherwise. Instead, through a local lens, *A Township at War* is a creative expression of one historian’s lifetime of interest.

The book moves chronologically through seven chapters, from “Before,” into and out of the years 1914–18, to the “After.” An introduction and closing envoi features Clare Laking, whom Vance had talked with in 2001, the last of the surviving Flamborough-area residents to have gone away to the war. With great originality and a constant local focus, Vance does not allow himself to read the township’s experience in terms of the “traditional flashpoints” in Ontario’s history during this time: the national politics, votes for women, temperance, and the like, many of which did not surface much in everyday life. The election of 1917 and conscription do appear, but in a local context.

Instead, with great sensitivity, he lets his sources speak, and what a rich mine they are: archival and museum documentation (especially the military service records); family collections; wartime correspondence including the soldiers’ letters published in the region’s newspapers; and the author’s own impressive trove of photographs, which nicely illustrate the book. As we would expect, he knows the people, the families and the places of East Flamborough.

As the story told by these sources unfolds, it is skilfully interwoven with Vance’s questions, insights, and concise context where necessary. Briefly explained, for example, are the European operations of the battalions and divisions in which Flamborough’s boys served and died, and what they wrote about from the front. This author knows just how much military history is needed. Refreshingly, the story is not burdened by sterile academic analyses of patriotism, motivation, class, or by tables of casualties and military honours. For Vance’s purposes, there is no need for demographics and statistics.

He lets the boys and home folk speak, often through the many

amazing letters reproduced here. So too with his reconstruction of rural and small-town life and sentiments in the township. Urban fervours were distant; the placid “innocence” of 1914 was slowly “transformed” and hardened as rural isolation was partly broken down, even as the flow of “continuities” crept along, with memories of “lives that had been cut short, places that once rang with laughter, futures that would never be.”

A Township at War is done well, engagingly so, by a gifted writer mindful of his roots. It is a geographically limited story, to be sure, but Vance is good with that: “I chose to write about East Flamborough in the First World War partly because it means so much to me, but mostly because its experience was replicated countless times across Canada” (which should be read as English Canada). We are asked to accept his cryptic conclusion, that there were “fundamental commonalities.” The publisher’s exuberant dust-jacket copy stretches this point: “East Flamborough was like a thousand other rural townships in Canada, broadly representative in its wartime experience.” The reader would have benefitted from some consideration of these “commonalities,” which Vance’s past works explore.

For better or for worse – and it is not his goal, and would not fit into this kind of book – he avoids any consideration of work on wartime experiences in other rural communities by Elizabeth Bloomfield (on Waterloo Township), Glenn Lockwood (on Montague) and Whitney Lackenbauer (co-author, on North Norwich, South Norwich, and East Oxford), among others. Rather, in addition to his many documentary sources, he gives us a short list of publications on East Flamborough.

It is to the personal that Vance returns in his concluding envoi. After “years of thinking about the profound changes that the

He lets his sources speak and what a rich mine they are

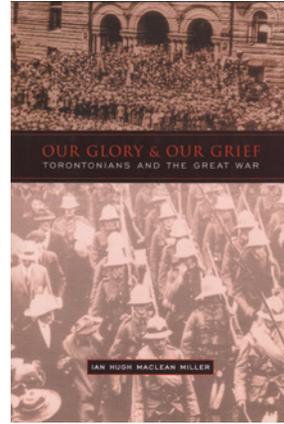


In his brand-new uniform, a soldier poses with an ambivalent companion – a wife or a sister – in a Waterdown garden sometime in 1916. This photo of an unknown couple by Will Reid is one of many by the local photographer that richly illustrate Vance’s book. Photo courtesy of the author

Great War brought to Canada,” he was glad he had the opportunity to talk with Clare Laking. Asked how the war had changed him, the aging veteran replied: “I’ve lived with that war for most of my life. How did it change me? I know what I am now, but what was I before the war? I’m not sure I can say. All I know is, that war is part of me.” From there, the author ends with this short generalization, which is as unexpected as it is gripping: “The Great War is part of what we are, even if we can’t say precisely how.” Now *there’s* a topic for discussion.

David Roberts is a former editor of the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. He is working on a book-length study of how Canada financed, including through extensive public engagement, its role in the First World War.

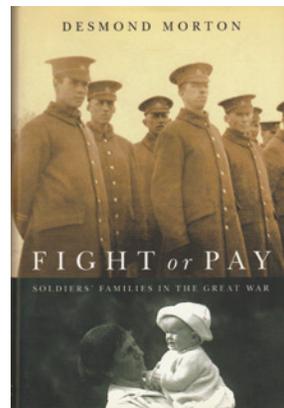
Further Reading



An urban counterpoint is *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War*, by Ian Hugh Maclean Miller (UTP 2002). Jonathan Vance on the dust jacket calls it “a sensitive and nuanced account” of life in the city during the war. “We sense not only the energy and industriousness of the people, but the range of emotions that gripped them – joy, sorrow, excitement, anger, pride, fear, exhaustion.”

Declaring we know too little about ordinary life in the villages, towns and even the cities of Canada during the war, Vance says Miller provides “a model for future historians of the Canadian experience in war.” When he wrote this he had already gathered much of the material that would become *A Township at War*. Miller was then a policy officer at the Department of National Defence.

The Champlain Society in 1977 published *Ontario and the First World War 1914–1918*, edited by Barbara Wilson, a revealing collection of documents on aspects of the home front ranging from the first weekend of the war through schools to the province’s Black volunteers. Daphne Read edited *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History* (New Hogtown Press 1978), a collection of interviews (200 in all) illustrating society “from the viewpoint of those Canadians whose voices are seldom heard.” The other end of the social spectrum is treated by Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Harper Collins 1992).



Desmond Morton’s *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War* (UBC 2004) examines how families managed with so many men away. It illuminates the lives especially of women during the war and the beginnings of a social welfare system in Canada. Baird and Wranich, *Recipes for Victory: Great War Food from the Front and Kitchens Back Home in*

Canada (Whitecap 2018) sheds some useful light on the same topic. A project of Fort York’s own culinary historians, it’s available in the fort’s Canteen.

The mortifying intelligence of the Capital's untimely fall

This is the beginning of the letter that confirms – and tries to explain – the capture of York by American forces on Tuesday, April 27, 1813.

Major-General Sir Roger Sheaffe, the British officer responsible for Upper Canada and in command that day at York, retreated

with his remaining Regulars toward Kingston. He sent a short note to his boss – Sir George Prevost, the governor of British North America, who was in Montreal – along the way. By the following Thursday, he had composed a report that put the best possible face on a perfectly dreadful day.

Kingston 5th May 1813

Sir,

I did myself the honour of writing to Your Excellency on my route from York to communicate the mortifying intelligence that the Enemy had obtained possession of that place on the 27th of April, and I shall now enter into a fuller detail ...

In the evening of the 26th of April I received information that many Vessels had been seen from the Highlands to the eastward of York, soon after daylight the next morning the Enemy's Vessels were discovered lying to not far from shore of the peninsula in front of the town; they soon afterwards, made sail with a fresh breeze from the eastward, led by the Ship lately built at Sacket's harbour, and anchored off the point where the french fort formerly stood; many boats full of troops were soon discerned assembling near the Commodore's Ship, apparently with an intention of effecting a landing

Our troops were ordered into the Ravine in the rear of the Government Garden and fields; Major Givens and the Indians with him were sent forward through the wood to oppose the landing of the Enemy – the Company of Glengary Light Infantry was directed to support them, and the Militia not having arrived at the Ravine, The Grenadiers of the King's Regiment and the small portion of the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles belonging to the Garrison of York were moved on, led by Lt.Colonel Heathcote of that corps ...

... the Enemy being aided by the wind, rapidly gained the shore under cover of a fire from the Commodore's ship and other vessels, and landed in spite of a spirited opposition from Major Givens and his small band of Indians; the Enemy was shortly afterwards encountered by our handful of troops, Captain McNeal of the King's Regiment was early killed while gallantly leading his Company which suffered severely; the troops fell back, I succeeded in rallying them several times, and a detachment of the King's with some Militia, whom I had placed near the edge of the wood to protect our left flank repulsed a column of the Enemy which was advancing along the bank at the Lake side; but our troops could not maintain the contest against the greatly superior and increasing numbers of the Enemy ...



It may already be clear why so few have warmed to Roger Sheaffe in the 206 years since he wrote this report. He had saved the day at Queenston the previous October but this report cannot be read at face value. "Disagreements over his actions at York," notes the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, "continue to this day."

Sheaffe describes the explosion of the western battery's magazine, and the even greater explosion of the fort's magazine, and praises the superior quality of "some" of his troops. No one (except a friend of his) recalled his rallying soldiers during their retirement to the fort. Sheaffe explains at length why he was at York (instead of at Fort George, his HQ) but fails to mention the process of capitulation, which he had left in the hands of the local Militia.

The American squadron, which had come from the southeast, was first sighted off the Scarborough Bluffs on Monday evening. There were two modest warships and twelve armed schooners, all carrying troops. They made their way around what are now the islands (then still a peninsula) and anchored off "the french fort" – a clearing around the ruins of Fort Rouille, now on the Exhibition Grounds – first thing Tuesday morning.

Road between Kingston and York, Upper Canada, 1830, a watercolour by James Cockburn, illustrates the route of Sheaffe's retreat. His men were cold, wet, defeated, mourning their friends and probably hungry, but they may have been ahead of the black flies. The small portrait of the general is from a photograph taken many years later (he died in 1851, at 88); our version from a book published in 1870. Sources: LAC 1934-402 (Cockburn) 1997- 481 (Sheaffe)

A summer afternoon

Jean Geeson was a teacher, artist and writer who had just moved to Toronto from the Alma Ladies' College in St. Thomas, Ontario, where she had taught art for the past four years. A student of Frederic Bell-Smith (who was her department head), she had also studied at schools in New York and was exhibiting in the major group shows of the day.

Geeson was soon to resume teaching – this time at the teeming Parkdale Public School – and begin the advocacy that would preserve the original fort from the first encroachments of the city. There is no sign of industry in this gentle scene.

In 1901 there were several families living at the fort and in cottages on Garrison Common and there seemed also to be a few single lodgers. The army still had general and artillery stores there along with equipment of the Governor General's Body Guard, the city's cavalry unit. The families belonged to the soldiers and non-commissioned officers managing the place and the stores. Renters might work at the adjacent Grand Trunk Railway or in the factories north of the tracks, and were likely militiamen as well.

In the left side of the painting are the two whitewashed and sagging South and North Soldiers' Barracks, straddling the road heading west to the New Fort. In the distance is the 1838 Rebellion Barracks (designated Blockhouse D), demolished in 1933 as the site was cleared back to its wartime roots. In front of it is the Officers' Barracks.



Fort York, Jean Earle Geeson (1864-1907) This modest painting shows the lawn in front of the ageing barracks on a summer's afternoon in 1901. The work is an oil on canvas, 14" x 18" (TPL 979-19-2)

Leaning in the sunlight between the nearest two buildings are two of Simcoe's original cannon, now only proof against errant wagons. One woman stands in deep shade while another leans on a doorframe that's catching the setting sun; both, we can suppose, are watching the two children play. One child has a tiny dog on a leash, while the other sits holding what might be a cricket bat or a child-size lacrosse stick.

Jean Geeson was also the first (with Alexander Muir) to bring classes of schoolchildren down to Fort York. She wanted them as enthralled with the world of the garrison as she was, and wanted them to know that the place's history, the fort's history, was their own. For more on Geeson and the early preservation battles, see *Fort York: Stories from the Birthplace of Toronto*, ed. Adrian Gamble.

MORTIFYING continued from page 10

The "small band of Indians" was about 80 or 90 Mississauga, Chippawa and other warriors; Major James Givens was Sheaffe's liaison officer to several chiefs among them. They all had the misfortune to meet, at the water's edge and in the woods west of the fort, the best unit in the US Army: the greencoat Rifle Regiment, experienced in forest warfare and tasked with securing the landing site. It was an indicator that, for the first time in this war, the Americans had a winning plan.

The only modern book-length account of the battle is Robert Malcomson's *Capital in Flames* (Robin Brass 2008), which has complete appendices and excellent maps. More convenient accounts are in Carl Benn's *Historic Fort York* and the booklet

The Battle of Little York, by C.P. Stacey. Despite the attack being a rare example early in the War of 1812 of a well planned, resourced and executed operation by US forces, American writers do not highlight the victory but just place it in the war as a whole. Examples of American accounts may be found in Donald Hickey's endlessly entertaining *Don't Give Up the Ship! Myths of the War of 1812* (Illinois 2006) and Alan Taylor's *The Civil War of 1812* (Knopf 2011). All but Stacey are available in the fort's Canteen. Sheaffe's letter is from *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812*, Vol.II, ed. William Wood (Champlain Society 1923). His entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* is by Carol Whitfield and Wesley Turner.

At the Birthplace of Toronto **Notes from the Staff**

Manager's Report

by David O'Hara, Site Manager

It's already spring and the staff here at the fort is hard at work planning a full slate of warm-weather programs and events. But we've also had some memorable occasions this winter.

On Tuesday, February 5, the Royal Canadian Institute for Science held a private reception in the Fort York Visitor Centre. The subject was the globe-trotting life of Captain J.H. Lefroy, RCI Science's fourth president and the manager of Upper Canada's first major scientific experiment. The first installation of his Magnetic Observatory – later moved to the University of Toronto – was here at Fort York.

The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of a portrait (by George Berthon) of Captain Lefroy, which the institute has given to the City. The event also included presentation of the institute's annual William Edmond Logan Award (for popular scientific writing) and an opportunity to mark the 140th anniversary of Standard Time, an innovation brought to the world by Canadian engineer Sir Sandford Fleming.

On the Family Day weekend we partnered with The Empress Walk and hosted its Art'n'Soul panel discussion, with workshops, and a presentation by Giselle Wilson, founder of The Empress Walk. On Family Day itself, all the City of Toronto museums combined to bring a full day of free programming to Fort York. Some 1,500 people were here, including Mayor John Tory, who dropped by in the afternoon to see The Bentway at Fort York and all the kid-friendly happenings in the Visitor Centre.

On February 23, the second annual Hungry for Comfort: Surviving a Canadian Winter was a big success. Our spotlight this year was on the foodways of Black communities across the country, with speakers, demonstrations, workshops and tastings. The day was presented in partnership with the Ontario

Black History Society and the Culinary Historians of Canada. More than 100 people enjoyed the catered Caribbean lunch (there's a full report on page 14) and there were door prizes from publishers like Harper Collins. We were also grateful for the participation of Redpath Sugar, Bernardin, Mars, and the Ontario Apple Growers. I'd like to thank all the staff, volunteers and partners involved – particularly the Ontario Black History Society – for putting such a tasty event together.

Christophe Jivrag, Exhibit Coordinator from Collections & Conservation, this winter spearheaded the replacement of all the panels that form the Soldier's Trade exhibit in the Centre Blockhouse. Many thanks to Christophe and the team for so carefully refreshing a big part of the story we're telling here at Fort York.

A significant amount of construction is already underway on site this spring. Gordon Lok, Senior Project Coordinator from our Capital Assets team, has skillfully overseen the replacement of the roof on the North Soldiers' Barracks and the Blue Barracks. This work was partly funded by a grant from the Parks Canada Cost Sharing Program for heritage places.

Working with our colleagues in the Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division, the multi-purpose trail along the north side of the fort has been finished, along with a subtle new fence beside it. The opening of this trail that more-or-less follows the course of Garrison Creek is contingent upon the completion of Lower Garrison Creek Park (also part of Fort York NHS) on the east side of Bathurst Street (but see page 9).

Garrison Crossing is expected to open in late May or early June. This will really improve connections for cyclists and pedestrians in the area. Another new piece of the bicycle network will be a trail south-west to the bike lanes on Strachan Avenue. From there, it's south to the waterfront trail or north to the gates of Trinity Bellwood. That trail is being built beside Garrison Road to the west of the Armoury and is expected to be ready in June.

A sure sign of spring here at



At the RCI Science event are Sharon Lefroy, descendent of the scientist; Wayne Reeves, Chief Curator of Museums & Heritage Services; David O'Hara, Site Manager of Fort York NHS; and Andrew Stewart, Chair of the Fort York Foundation. Sharon and Wayne will be writing about Captain Lefroy and his portrait in the July issue of the F&D. Photo: Robert Bell

THE SOLDIER'S TRADE
1793-1870

The British army garrisoned Toronto from 1793 to 1870. During that time it evolved in fundamental conformity to developments in other western armies. We invite you to explore this exhibit and examine British military technology and practices in Canada in the realms of artillery, engineering, cavalry, command, infantry, medicine, and music.

Display panels in the No.2 (Centre) Blockhouse have been refreshed.

Fort York is always the story of the late-April arrival of the United States Navy, proudly carrying an entire brigade of soldiers intent upon seizing the capital of Upper Canada (they succeeded: check page 10). We'll be running two different tours of the battlefield – one following the fighting all the way back from the beach (on Saturday the 27th) and a shorter one on Sunday that looks at the battlefield from Garrison Common. Led by our own experts Richard Haynes and Ewan Wardle, the tours offer a fascinating way to imagine the nearby waterfront as it was 200 years ago.

Everyone who loves a fine craft beer has a real opportunity on the Victoria Day weekend. After an afternoon in the old fort's ambience, absorbing our new displays, you'll be able to retire to Garrison Common and the spring session of Toronto's Festival of Beer. It's only on Saturday and Sunday, when the fort is open as usual. On the holiday Monday we'll have a complete program going – including the historic kitchen – and there will be lots for kids to do.

Admission is free to the fort and the Visitor Centre again during the Doors Open weekend, the last one in May. Saturday here is Artillery Day, a chance to compare the technology of 1812, the 20th century and the present day. We're expecting to have examples of artillery now in service with the Canadian Army. (And speaking of the army, our planners are also looking farther ahead – to the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Watch for events to be starting in September, including those focused on the wartime industry that surrounded us here on the waterfront.)

The climax of the season at Fort York is the Indigenous Arts Festival, more diverse than ever and almost a week in duration. We're working with the Mississaugas of the Credit, Na Me Res, The Bentway, The Friends of Fort York and others to assemble an amazing program of music, dance, learning, food and the visual arts, ancient and modern. Watch our Twitter and Facebook accounts for detail as the festival approaches.

Fort York Foundation has a new Executive Director

Robert W. Bell is the new ED of the Fort York Foundation, the fundraising sibling of The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common that was instrumental in the creation of the Visitor Centre. He replaces Susan Perren, the faithful and talented ED since 2013. Now retired, she'll be an advisor to the foundation and her successor.

Robert comes to the foundation from the Royal Bank of Canada, where he was most recently Assistant General Counsel and Legal Knowledge Officer and, previously, Vice President, Law, of RBC Insurance. Robert is an active watercolourist with a long-standing interest in art history. He's also from a long line of the historically inclined: his

father, grandfather and great-grandfather (no less!) were all presidents of the Champlain Society – whose volumes are cited regularly in the pages of the *F&D* (including this one). He served on the committee for the tour of the Magna Carta across Canada in 2015, which included a well-attended appearance at the Fort York Visitor Centre.

Robert will also be helping The Friends as they support programming and activity at the fort. He brings experienced oversight to the management of both volunteer organizations – and that means our support of Fort York National Historic Site has been strengthened. Robert Bell can be reached at robertwalkerbell@gmail.com.

Hot winter flavours provide all kinds of comfort

The myriad foodways of Black communities in Canada were the focus of this year's **Hungry for Comfort**, the annual day-long celebration of food history at Fort York. Lively demonstrations, tightly focused workshops, an awesome Caribbean luncheon, a few brief and thoughtful addresses and even treats from the fort's own kitchen were all features of a satisfying day. And we learned who, exactly, makes the best apple cake and marmalade in all of Upper Canada!

Eden Hagos, the celebrated founder of the Black Foodie phenomenon, was a keynote speaker. So was Natasha Henry, leader of the Ontario Black History Society (next page). Dr. Jennylynd James, the food scientist (Trinidad & Tobago, degree from McGill) behind Bad Boy Sauces, led a panel that explored the great diversity of experience among our Black communities. Zanana Akande recalled her mother's cooking in the Toronto of the 1940s and 50s. Carl Cassels unpacked his Harlem restaurants; Jackie Halstead surveyed the West Indian scene; and Paulette Kelly shared a northerner's experience of food in the Southern States.

The Master Class of the day (it was a cold Saturday, Feb. 23) was given by Chef Selwyn Richards, whose legion of clients includes the Jamaica Tourist Board. Called "The Art of Catering," it was followed (confirmed, really) by a luncheon his company then served: among its eleven items were Rasta Pasta Salad, Jollof Rice, Boneless Jerk Chicken in a Mild Pepper Sauce, Curry Channa, and Escoveitch of Red Snapper Filet. A modest carrot cake and a feast of tropical fruit sprawled out for dessert.

And there was more to come: an unspeakably delicious Sweet Potatoe Pie was unveiled by Fort York's own culinary historians only an hour later. The recipe is from an American cookbook by Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking*, 1881 (below). It was served with ice cream made from a recipe in the oldest cookbook written by an African American, Malinda Russell's *A Domestic Cookbook*, 1866.

Afternoon workshops included Paulette Kelly's golden cornbread, Karol Barclay's necessary Breadfruit Chips, and Stacey Caswell's extraordinary Scotch Bonnet Jelly. Ray Williams explored the mysteries of Accra, the salt-fish fritters of the islands. Adrian Forte (recall Gangster Burger) showed off his



Eden Hagos, keynote speaker and founder of Black Foodie. Photo: Harriet De Koven

Sweet & Sour Tamarind BBQ Wings.

A team from the fort's own culinary scene opened an old household manual – *A House Servant's Directory*, by Robert Roberts – and worked through some revealing recipes. Appearing in 1827, this is thought to be the first book ever published by an African-American in the United States, and it was distributed here in Upper Canada.

Anticipation built all day for the celebration's final event: the naming of the winners of the **Redpath Baking & Preserving Competition**,

sponsored by the Canadian sugar firm and led by the **Culinary Historians of Canada**. Sally Kelly proved herself a leader in marmalade: 1st Prize in Pure Seville Orange Marmalade and the same honour, in the open Citrus category, for an extraordinary Blood Orange innovation. Susanne Tabur's exquisite Grapefruit was next.

In the often surprising (and occasionally alarming) Savoury Sauce competition were the already famous Scotch Bonnet Jelly (1st Prize plus the Judge's Choice); Sally Kelly's Apple Date Chutney; and Sherry Murphy's Tomato Catsup. The finest Apple Cake of the day was declared to be Pat Currie's elaboration of a certain French approach. Also winning ribbons in the annual Redpath competition were Jean Sterritt, Mya Sangster and Jeremy Carter. Hungry for Comfort at Fort York National Historic Site will return next year.



Sweet Potatoe Pie.

Two pounds of potatoes will make two pies. Boil the potatoes soft; peel and mash fine through a cullender while hot; one tablespoonful of butter to be mashed in with the potato. Take five eggs and beat the yolks and whites separate and add one gill of milk; sweeting to taste; squeeze the juice of one orange, and grate one-half of the peel into the liquid. One half teaspoonful of salt in the potatoes. Have only one crust and that at the bottom of the plate. Bake quickly.

Many traditions blend to keep us warm

by Natasha Henry



We are gathered today to experience, explore and discuss how African-Canadian communities continue to survive and thrive in Canada's bitter winter with wintertime comfort foods. These diverse experiences are rooted in the history of African Diasporic foodways that have been transported and transplanted from other locations during different points in time in the various migration waves of African peoples, forced and by choice.

In surfing the web for some examples for today, I came across two interesting things. The Abyssinia Restaurant in Calgary, which is focused on Ethiopian and Eritrean cuisine, serves shiro wot and describes it as "comfort food for the crispy cold Canadian fall and winter days." Shiro wot is a spicy stew that is made vegan with roasted chickpea flour and berbere (a spice mixture) or made with beef and is eaten with injera. And there is an Ethiopian restaurant in Yellowknife called Zehabesha that has received excellent reviews. In these examples we see newer African influences on Canadian winter eating.

One common winter meal that many cultural groups enjoy and eat to warm them up is soup. I am of Jamaican descent and one of my favourites is chicken-foot soup. My daughter also loves her grandmother's (my mother's) chicken-foot soup. This meal, like other common Jamaican dishes, was created during the days of slavery when plantation owners would take the best parts of cows, pigs, goats and chickens for themselves and leave the "fifth quarter" – the less desirable head, feet, tail, internal organs and skin – for the Africans they enslaved.

Yet they took those scraps and turned them into the delicacies we now know as Soul Food. For me, making soup and other winter comfort foods is about nurturing family and making memories. My husband makes the soup in our home and he has a routine that is practically a ritual. He always plays reggae music when he cooks and, when our daughter was younger, he would do this while sharing stories of his own father making soup, playing music and teaching him how to make it. As a little girl our daughter would stand on a stool beside her father, listening and watching him prepare the soup with so much care and love. And she would eagerly wait for him to make the dumplings, because he always gave her a few pieces to help roll the spinners.

Soup Joumou is made by Haitians in their native country as well as here in Canada during the middle of winter. It is a pumpkin-based soup prepared and shared on New Year's Day to mark the moment when Haiti declared independence from France on January 1, 1804. On that day, Marie Claire Heureuse, the wife of the military leader of the Haitian Revolution, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, asked everyone to prepare the soup in

celebration of their new-found freedom and independence – since it is believed that prior to this, enslaved Africans were forbidden from partaking in the soup that they had made for their enslavers. Other ingredients include beef, potato, plantains and vegetables such as parsley, carrots, green cabbage, celery and onions. Soup Joumou is traditionally made every year on January 1 to celebrate Haitian culture and to honour ancestors; it is a symbol of Haitian history, identity, resilience and freedom.

These soups include provisions that originated in West Africa and were transplanted to the Caribbean. The provisions – yam, dashene, and others – were used to stretch the food to feed the family. Soup is a common winter comfort food but is also eaten year-round in Jamaica and, of course, elsewhere.

Pepperpot is a South American meal that is a mainstay of Guyanese-Canadian homes and is eaten on Christmas Day in Guyana and on other special occasions. Pepperpot is an Amerindian/Creole meat stew. It is strongly flavoured with cinnamon, cassareep (a special sauce made from the cassava root) and other basic ingredients, including Caribbean hot

they took those scraps and turned them into the delicacies we now know as Soul Food



Chef Selwyn Richards leads a master class in Caribbean cooking (and that's Natasha Henry above). Photos: Harriet De Koven

peppers. Beef, pork, and mutton are the most popular meats used, though some have been known to use chicken. Pepperpot is popularly served with a dense Guyanese-style homemade or home-style bread, rice or roti.

Another common food ritual in many Black communities is black-eyed peas on New Year's Day. This is done by African Americans and on some Caribbean islands to ensure good luck in the incoming year. Black-eyed peas were domesticated in West Africa and carried to the American South and the Caribbean in the era of slavery. Dried legumes were looked down upon as poor man's food, but the economic scarcities of the Civil War severely affected the diets of both enslaved Africans and white Southerners. Black-eyed peas became more common and, it is said, people considered themselves fortunate to eat them during a time rife with food insecurity. Hoppin' John Stew is an American black-eyed peas dish with African/French/Caribbean roots.

"In cooking, the style of Southern food is more verb than adjective," says chef and culinary historian Michael Twitty. "It is the exercise of specific histories, not just the result. In food it becomes less a matter of location than of process, and it becomes difficult to separate the nature of the process from the heritage by which one acquired it." Cornbread, like that being demonstrated today by Paulette Kelly – a Vice President of the Ontario Black History Society – evolved from a food of necessity to a sort of delicacy. Cornbread originated among North American First Nations; enslaved Blacks added ingredients to give it more texture and flavour.

Many of the foods that we enjoy and savour in Black communities during the cold Canadian winter represent the invisible labour of generations of Black women and some men who, in slavery and in freedom, shaped how millions now eat



and survive in the Western world.

Today we were able to partake in and learn about a sampling of foods that bring comfort and that gather family and friends together. These foods embody so much meaning – bondage, resistance, and liberation. They are also key parts of African, Caribbean, American and Canadian traditions that are steeped in history and culture, struggle and freedom, creativity and innovation. The food we eat today is a creolized fusion of foodways from different groups that have interacted with each other. They strengthen and sustain, both physically and spiritually, the body and the soul. This occasion today is an opportune time to remember this history, celebrate our ancestors, and eat delectable food that is influenced by and in turn shapes identity, time, and place.

Natasha Henry is an historian, educator and curriculum consultant who is President of the Ontario Black History Society. This was her address to Hungry for Comfort on February 23, 2019.



Everything you need for an elegant handwritten letter may be found in the calligraphy stores of the fort's Canteen: quills, nibs, inks, seals, wells, manuals of instruction and even a portable desk (the original laptop). The paper and the inspiration must be yours. The officer with attitude is also available in the Canteen. Photos by Birgitte Nielsen

2019 | Upcoming Events Historic Fort York

Compiled by Erica Roppolo

The Spring Season at Fort York

Weekdays, 10 am to 4 pm

Weekends, 10 am to 5 pm

Daily Summer Hours, 10 am to 5 pm, begin May 21 (until Sept. 2)

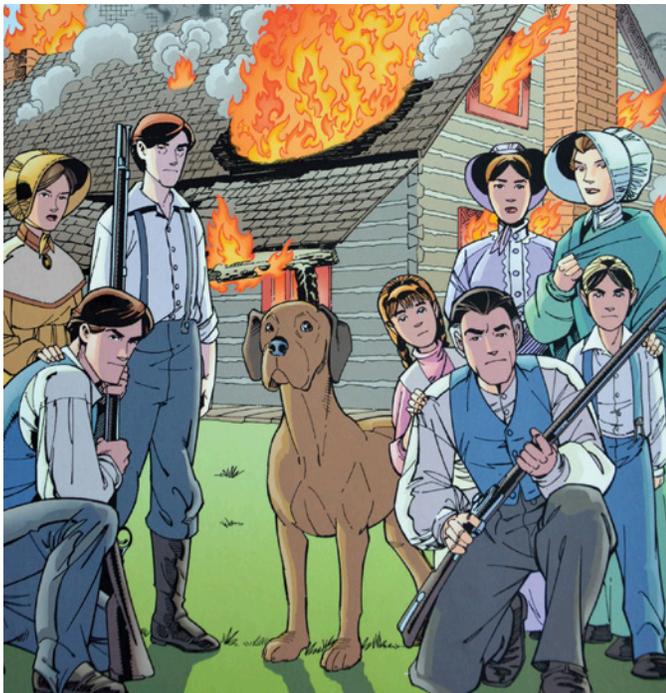
From Redcoats to rabbits, the spring season at Fort York has it all! Drop in for a tour of Canada's largest collection of original War of 1812 buildings. While you're here, see if you can spot the wide range of wildlife supported by our 43-acre site.

Regular admission: Adults \$12.40; Seniors \$8.85; Youths \$7.10; Children \$5.30 all plus tax; Children 5 and under are free.

APRIL

Community Cleanup Day at Fort York Saturday, April 27, 10 am to 12 noon

Clean Toronto together! Join 200,000 residents, students, businesses and community groups for the 16th annual city-wide cleanup of public spaces. Help the team at Fort York National Historic Site clean part of our 43 acres of greenspace, and enjoy complimentary same-day admission to visit the museum! This year's Community Cleanup Day at Fort York



falls on the Saturday of our Battle of York Weekend. We will provide garbage bags, water and coffee. Please provide your own boots, gloves, rakes and/or shovels. *FREE*

<https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/festivals-events/more-city-produced-events/clean-toronto-together/>

Battle of York Weekend at Fort York Saturday, April 27 and Sunday, April 28, 10 am to 5 pm

Honour the 206th anniversary of the Battle of York fought on April 27, 1813. The fort comes alive with musket-firing demonstrations, Georgian cooking in the Officers' Quarters kitchen, site tours, period animation and an 1812-era Kids' Drill. Make sure to include a visit to the original Regimental Colours of the 3rd Regiment of York Militia. Secreted away to keep them from American troops, the Colours are now on display in the Fort York Visitor Centre. *Regular admission*

Battle of York Walking Tour: *Walking in Their Footsteps* Saturday, April 27, 11 am

Meet outside of the **Palais Royale** (1601 Lake Shore Blvd West) to tread the ground of the American attackers and York defenders. *Walking in Their Footsteps* is a 1.5-hour walking tour that will trace the course and events of the battle which took place on April 27, 1813. Led by Fort York staff and volunteers, this rain-or-shine tour will feature five stops and talks relating the details of the battle along the way. *FREE*

Battle of York Walking Tours Sunday, April 28, 11 am and 2 pm

On the Sunday of Battle of York Weekend, enjoy a special walking tour in addition to the scheduled demonstrations and activities at Fort York. This Battle of York walking tour will begin at the Canteen and will use Fort York, Garrison Common and areas of the original shoreline to highlight the battle that took place here 206 years ago. *Regular admission*

MAY

The French and British Forts of Toronto: A Bicycle Tour Saturday, May 4, 11 am to 1 pm

Explore Toronto's early history in a unique and exciting way! Fort York, in partnership with Jane's Walk and Heritage York's Lambton House, will conduct a Jane's Walk Ride on Saturday, May 4. This free bicycle tour will begin at **Lambton House** (4066 Old Dundas St, 416 767-5472), at the edge of the Carrying Place Trail, and will end at Fort York, a British fort and the place where urban Toronto (then York) was founded. Enjoy complimentary admission to Fort York after the tour. *FREE*

The Loxleys and the War of 1812 is a cool graphic novel created by Renegade Arts Entertainment. The story follows the Loxleys, a Canadian family living on the Niagara peninsula, as they're torn apart by the American invasion of Canada. "British troops, Canadian militia and First Nation warriors," explains the jacket, "sought to thwart the expansionist plans of the American government." Approved for use in Toronto schools, it's available in the Canteen. The image is from the cover of the book.

Teachers! Have you brought your class to Fort York?

On offer is a unique, hands-on set of programs in social and military history. There are modules on pioneers, the fur trade, Simcoe and the birthplace of Toronto, the Rebellion of 1837 and the Canadian soldier in World War 1. They're inexpensive and aligned with the Ontario curriculum for Grades 3, 5, 7 and 10. To book a class trip, contact the museum directly at fortyork@toronto.ca or (416) 392-7742.

18th Annual Meagan's Walk and Hug Saturday, May 11, 8:30 am to 10 am

Meagan's Walk and Hug is a community event that welcomes participants of all ages and abilities. Meagan's Walk and its supporters raise hope and awareness about pediatric brain tumours and has directed more than \$5 million to research at the Hospital for Sick Children. Fort York is pleased once again to host the Meagan's Walk opening ceremonies and kickoff event. Registration required: <http://www.meaganswalk.com/>

Please note: this is a third-party event. Fort York will be open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm. *Regular admission*

Spring BeerfestT0 Saturday, May 18 and Sunday, May 19, 1 pm to 7 pm

The sixth annual Spring Sessions of Toronto's Festival of Beer returns to Fort York Garrison Common on the May long weekend. Featuring craft brews, great food, games and live music, this is the best way to celebrate May 2-4! <https://beerfestival.ca/spring/>

Please note: this is a third-party event. Fort York will be open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm. *Regular admission*

Victoria Day Monday, May 20, 10 am to 5 pm

Spend Victoria Day exploring Toronto's founding urban landscape, including Canada's largest collection of original War of 1812 buildings. Join a guided tour, take part in soldier's drills or watch historic cooking demonstrations in one of the oldest kitchens in Toronto. Visitors can also stop by the Visitor Centre and explore immersive and interactive exhibits on the history of Toronto, the fort and the Battle of York. *Regular admission*

20th Annual Doors Open Toronto Saturday, May 25 and Sunday, May 26, 10 am to 5 pm

Make sure to include Fort York on your Doors Open Toronto 2019 list! Fort York will once again take part in this annual celebration of Toronto's most architecturally, historically, culturally and socially significant buildings. Enjoy special tours of some of Toronto's oldest architecture and original War of 1812 buildings or simply stroll the grounds of the 43-acre National Historic Site. *FREE*

Artillery Day (part of Doors Open Toronto) Saturday, May 25, 10 am to 5 pm

Join us for Artillery Day at Fort York and see displays of historic and modern guns. There will be firing demonstrations and presentations throughout the day, weather permitting. Fort York is also participating in Doors Open Toronto, an annual celebration of architecture in the city. Don't miss Fort York's special tours of Canada's largest collection of original War of 1812 buildings. *FREE*

JUNE

Alma Foundation's Annual Party Thursday, June 6, 5:30 pm to 10 pm

Join the Alma Foundation with family and friends for their annual party at Fort York's Blue Barracks. Featuring a selection of great Peruvian and Bolivian food – from ceviche to saltenas – along with pisco sours, a fabulous silent auction, music and dancing.

The early-bird ticket price per adult is \$50 including dinner (before May 1, 2019) and \$30 for any guests under the age of 30. Advance tickets: <https://www.almafoundation.ca/>

Please note: this is a third-party event. Fort York will be open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm. *Regular admission*

7th Annual Indigenous Arts Festival June 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23, times vary

Moving into its seventh year, the Indigenous Arts Festival is an annual celebration of traditional and contemporary Indigenous music, drumming, dance, theatre, storytelling, film, crafts, and food. The IAF is presented by Fort York and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, with the support of the Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res), the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and many other partners. *FREE*

Na-Me-Res Annual Traditional Pow Wow Saturday, June 22, 12 noon to 4 pm

Join Na-Me-Res and Fort York for Toronto's Annual Traditional Pow Wow in recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day and the Summer Solstice. Every year, thousands of people attend the celebration to enjoy traditional food and watch more than 100 drummers and dancers perform. The day-long event includes a Sunrise Ceremony, a Grand Entry (12 noon), craft vendors and a community feast to end the day. After the Pow Wow stay for an evening concert featuring the best in contemporary Indigenous music. *FREE*



*Birchbark baskets from Acho Dene.
Photo by Birgitte Nielsen*

Visit our website at: www.fortyork.ca. Learn more about Fort York, subscribe to the [free newsletter](#), become a [member](#), [donate](#) or browse our [historical image gallery](#).



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