

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August-October 2017
1960-2017 – 57th Year

www.nyhs.ca

From the President

The North York Central Library will not be re-opening for some time – our September and November meetings will be at Fairview Public Library, 35 Fairview Drive (Don Mills Rd/Sheppard Ave E) on the 3rd Wednesdays – see below. The October meeting is on Thursday, October 19th and will be in the North York Council Chamber, North York Civic Centre. See page 2.

Our contribution to the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, together with the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, the North Toronto Historical Society and MomenTO, is a heritage walk on October 1st, heritage lecture on October 19th and a display in the Locke Library. See below and page 3 for details.

Also don't forget the Fall Festival at the Gibson House Museum on Saturday, September 23rd from 11 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. see page 8 for details.

Glenn Bonnetta

Wednesday, September 20th 7:30 p.m. (Fairview Library)

THE EARLY AIRFIELDS OF TORONTO: From de Lesseps to de Havilland and Beyond
Dr. Robert Galway, author

Sunday, October 1st, 2.00-3.45 p.m. Heritage Walk, led by the North Toronto Historical Society
A JOURNEY THROUGH PRE-CONFEDERATION NORTH TORONTO

Thursday, October 19th 7.00 p.m. (Council Chamber, North York Civic Centre)

WILLIAM McDOUGALL: DREAMS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS OF A CONFEDERATION-ERA POLITICIAN: Christopher Moore, Governor-General's award winning author

Wednesday November 15th at 7:30 p.m.(Fairview Library)

DEADLOCK IN KOREA: CANADIANS AT WAR 1950-1953: Ted Barris, award winning author, journalist and broadcaster.

Meeting locations: Sep 20th & Nov 15th: Fairview Public Library, 35 Fairview Mall Drive (Don Mills Road/Sheppard Avenue East), Meeting Room #3, 4th floor. Oct. 19th (Thurs): North York Council Chamber, North York Civic Centre), 5100 Yonge Street.

September & November meetings are co-sponsored by the Toronto Public Library

North York Historical Society is an affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society.
A non-profit organization.

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SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER CALENDAR – more information

Wednesday, September 20th at 7.30 p.m.

The Early Airfields of Toronto

In 1965, two members of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society (CAHS) launched a project to gather information about Toronto's earliest airfields. Notes turned over to the author many years later enabled him to add to their historical bequest. Although the original list of earliest airports of Toronto, prior to the site selection for Malton in 1937 was comprehensive, there were notable exceptions. The aviation training that took place on the campus of the University of Toronto – other centres that justify inclusion include those that would not be considered formal aviation centres: one at the CNE grounds, the delivery of Santa Claus to the Eaton Christmas Parade in 1919 and the Imperial Flying Club of Scarborough, which has a claim to being the airfield with the shortest existence in the history of Canadian aviation; all of one weekend!

This book, a pictorial essay on the Early Airfields of Toronto, in the main owes its very existence to the rich imagery available at the Archive of the City of Toronto & at the Library and Archives of Canada.

Saturday, September 23rd

Gibson House Museum: Fall Festival – see page 8

Sunday, October 1st

A Journey Through Pre-Confederation North Toronto: Heritage Walk – see page 3.

Thursday, October 19th

William McDougall: Dreams and Disappointments of a Confederation-Era Politician

Lecture and displays – see page 3.

Wednesday, November 15th

Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War 1950-53

Between 1950 and 1953, nearly 30,000 Canadian volunteers joined the effort to contain communist incursions into South Korea and support the fledgling United Nations. All the services were there and all served with distinction. The Royal Canadian Navy led a daring rescue of troops from the port of Chinnampo in 1950; members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry won the highest US battle honour at Kap'yong in April 1951; the Vandoos turned the tide at Hill 355; and twice – at Hill 355 in October 1952 and Hill 187 in May 1953 – members of the Royal Canadian Regiment held firm against forces that greatly outnumbered them.

Meeting locations: Wed. Sep. & Nov. at the Fairview Library at 7.30 p.m.

Thurs. Oct in the North York Council Chamber at 7.00 p.m.

CANADA 150 HERITAGE WALK, HERITAGE LECTURE AND DISPLAY
North York Historical Society, together with
Dictionary of Canadian Biography
North Toronto Historical Society
and MomentO

HERITAGE WALK

Sunday, October 1st, 2:00-3.45 p.m.

A JOURNEY THROUGH PRE-CONFEDERATION NORTH TORONTO

Discover the rural past in a walking tour conducted by the North Toronto Historical Society. Learn about early farms and estates such as Glengrove and Kingsland and the families of the area including the McDougalls, Sniders and Lawrences.

Meeting Place: NW corner Lytton Blvd. and Yonge St. (Snider Parkette). Ending at the Plaque to Hon. William McDougall, Father of Confederation, Lawrence Ave south side just east of Yonge St.

HERITAGE LECTURE

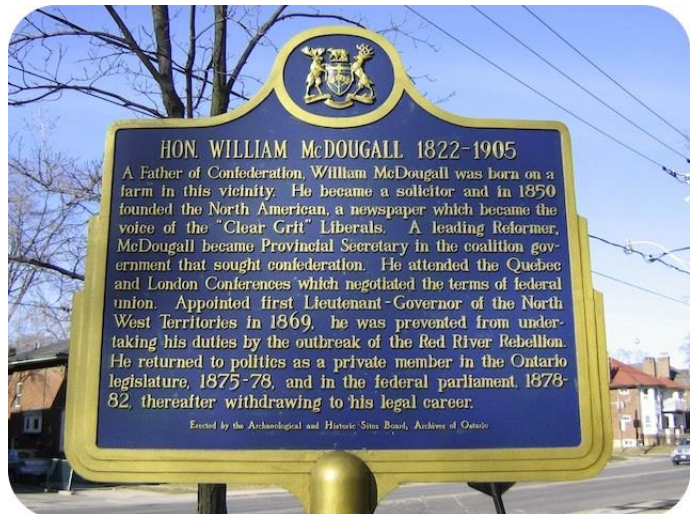
Thursday, October 19th 7.00 p.m. in the North York Council Chamber, North York Civic Centre, 5100 Yonge Street, North York.

**WILLIAM McDOUGALL:
DREAMS AND
DISAPPOINTMENTS OF A
CONFEDERATION-ERA**

POLITICIAN: Presented by Governor-General's Award-winning historian Christopher Moore, author of 1867: *How the Fathers Made a Deal* and *Three Weeks in Quebec City*

"His public life has been a peculiar one," a contemporary wrote of Toronto's William McDougall. "His bitterest enemy will not deny that he is one of our ablest public men. [But] his influence

for some years past has not been commensurate with his abilities." McDougall participated in all the confederation conferences of the 1860's, sat in the new nation's first cabinet, and was a key advocate for Canada's westward expansion. A radical spokesman for the plain farmers of Canada West at one moment, a John A. Macdonald Conservative at another, McDougall was present at the great moments of the founding of the Canadian state, yet he never quite took charge of them, and sometimes lamented he had wasted his life and talents. William McDougall was among the most intriguing of the makers of Confederation, and he has never had a major biography. Governor-General's Award-winning historian Christopher Moore uses the stormy life of William McDougall to explore the whirlpools and riptides of political life in Toronto and the Dominion of Canada 150 years ago.



DISPLAY (PHOTOGRAPHIC)

September/October in the Locke Library at 3083 Yonge Street (at Lawrence Ave E). Display will relate to both lecture and walk.

IN MEMORIAM

BARBARA KANE

August 5, 1921-April 4, 2017

Long time NYHS member, served as Secretary to the Society for many years. Also, member and volunteer of the Ontario Historical Society. (see article on page 7)

Our condolences to her family.

MOLLY PELTON (YOUNG DORAN)

1931-2017

Past member and one of the original Gibson House Volunteers

Our condolences to her family.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS 2017 Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration & THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY CRUIKSHANK MEDAL 2017



Elizabeth & Robert McQuillan, on the left, and Edith & Geoff Geduld on the right, were all presented this year with a 35-year award for service in the North York Historical Society. Edith & Geoff Geduld were also presented with the Cruikshank Medal for 2017 by the Ontario Historical Society. This picture was taken at the AGM of the OHS. Edith and Geoff are proudly wearing their Cruikshank Medals. (Photograph: Glenn Bonnetta)

DONATIONS 2017

General Operating Fund Sheryl Adelkind, Donald Booth UEL*, Janet Batchelor, Betty Brannen, Margaret Cameron, Mary Frost, Linda Gargaro, Marion Kinch, Lillian Methven Patricia Macnaughton*, Elizabeth Minaker, Kathleen Reader, Tony Ricci, Gunild Spiess

Plaquing Fund Donald Booth UEL*, Marion Kinch, Lillian Methven

Miriam Jackson Memorial Fund Donald Booth UEL, Lillian Methven, Eleanor Pyke, Tony Ricci

SOME INTERESTING EARLY YORK MILLS RESIDENTS

The **Thomas Mercer** family drove from Pennsylvania in 1794 in a wagon with a cow tethered behind, and when requesting land Mercer was offered one hundred acres in exchange for his wagon.

Cornelius Anderson, with his family of nine children, settled in York Mills around the time the Mercers did. During the War of 1812 he lost a horse pressed into service by the government and many years later he received \$13.00 in compensation.

In 1812 **Thomas Humberstone** moved into the district. He operated the first York County pottery on his farm. During the War of 1812 he served under General Isaac Brock at the Battle of Queenston Heights and helped to carry the wounded general off the battlefield. Humberstone was taken prisoner while commanding a large boat full of American prisoners from the Battle of Beaver Dam on their way to Kingston. He was sent to the United States where he was kept as a prisoner until exchanged.

James Hogg, after whom Hogg's Hollow is named, emigrated from Scotland in 1824. In 1832 he challenged George Gurnett, editor of the *Courier* and a future mayor of Toronto, to a duel over an article in the paper regarding attempts by a York committee to swell attendance by inviting in people from rural areas.

The Courier wrote: "Every wheel of their well-organized political machine was set in motion to transmute country farmers into citizens of York. Accordingly about 9.00 in the morning, groups of tall, broad-shouldered, hulking fellows were seen arriving from Whitby, Pickering and Scarborough, some crowded in wagons, and others on horseback; and Hogg, the miller, headed a herd of the swine of Yonge Street, who made just as good votes at the meeting as the best shopkeepers in York."

The duel did not take place although a burlesque account was published in which it was pretended that Hogg was saved from a mortal wound by an accumulation of flour under the lapel of his coat in which his antagonist's bullet buried itself. Hogg later organized York Mills Presbyterian Church.

He died in 1839. The story in the *British Colonist* about his funeral indicated that the tension continued, even after the 1837 rebellion, over the clergy reserves. The final paragraph said; "The church was built by public subscription, and it was at first designed as a place of worship to which preachers of various denominations of Christians would have access. By some means or other, which have not as yet been satisfactorily explained, Dr. Strachan managed to secure the exclusive possession of the church for an Episcopal minister, contrary to the original design of the inhabitants of the place, who contributed towards its erection, and as we are informed without the sanction or knowledge of many of them."

Cornelius van Nostrand owned a combined house and store as of 1832. In this early period, the barter system was used by farmers who were his customers, and he settled his account once or twice a year. At the time of the 1837 rebellion, a young girl, 16-year old Anna Maria Marsh, was left in charge of the store when some rebels entered and commandeered all the ammunition they could find. A fur cap caught the eye of one of the men and he carried it off, promising to pay for it later. Much to the surprise of the van Nostrands, he kept his word. In 1840 Cornelius turned the store over to his 16-year old son, John, who opened the York Mills post office in the building four years later.

The van Nostrands and others who operated flour mills were hard hit by the repeal of protection-ism, known as the Corn Laws, and the replacement with free trade in 1846. The world market for Canadian flour dried up and millers like van Nostrand suffered huge losses. The situation was so dire for van Nostrand that he auctioned much of his holdings including farm stock and implements, dry goods, hardware and 40 barrels of whiskey. In a private sale, he disposed of his large grist mill, distillery and about 180 acres of land. He moved to Springfield, now Erindale, and opened a small grist mill. Son John continued to operate the store under the creditors and was able to pay the family's debts.

250 YEAR OLD BUR OAK TREE

This tree sits beside the Hillcrest Library on Leslie Street, north of Finch Avenue East, just south of the Pickle Barrel Plaza. It is 24 metres high. Its companion White Oak is as old and sits 32 metres high. What did they see during pre-settlement times? And, when people arrived? What are their stories? Why is it important that we know their yarns? Simply put they, and others like them, chart our development as a country.

Ashton Monture, a student at a school on the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation Reserve, tells of trees and the sacred birch. "As long as the Anishnaabeg lived in harmony with the land they have always used the white birch tree. It was used to make bowls, containers, canoes and for starting fires. When the sap would start running in the spring they made birch bark containers to catch sap for making medicines. It was also used as art - the women would bite designs into the bark as decoration.

For my people we always understood that the trees were living and had to be treated with respect because they carried so much knowledge and wisdom. We were told that without trees we could not breathe because trees take in pollution and replace it with clean air. The elders say we have lost our connection with the land and must regain this connection to help us with self identity, to remember who we were, and our ancestors....."

The eastern larch or tamarack found in the village of Elmvale Ontario measures 19 metres high with a crown spread of 16 metres. Records indicate that it was planted by William "Miner Bill" Richie in the 1870s - his nickname because he worked for 13 years as a carpenter in the Sudbury mines. Many of the homes and barns in Elmvale were built by Miner Bill. This tree later became known as the "McGuire tree" since it was on the site where the McGuires built their house in 1915. They operated a drug store which was later operated by their son, Donald McGuire.

Old growth trees in Romanian folklore are considered brothers and sisters of people living in their midst. It is believed that ongoing life of these trees absorbs peoples' stories therefore Romanians continue to honour them for their importance to human life for all time.

This kind of spiritual connection with trees can be found in legends across nations. The maple tree brings success and abundance; the oak is endowed with powers of protection, health, healing, wisdom; the hawthorn symbolizes caution; the fir, a clear vision of what is to come; the elm dignity and grace; and the elder, compassion.

What are heritage trees? They could be notable specimens because of size, form, shape, beauty, age, rarity; or prominent community landmarks; or specimens associated with an historic person, place, event or period; or trees associated with local folklore, myths, legends or traditions; or specimens identified by members of a community as deserving heritage recognition.

Few heritage trees in Ontario have received protection. Much work has been ongoing to enact municipal and provincial legislation to this end. Currently trees identified as having heritage value can be documented and this information submitted to Forest Ontario. Staff would review the information and include the tree in its database and online map. This process does not ensure "designation" but will help towards protection. The City of Toronto agrees to take protective action for trees listed with Forest Ontario.

So, if members of the North York Historical Society have information about how settlement developed in and among the bur oak and white oak at the Hillcrest Library you are invited to forward the information to nyhs@bell.net.

Fran Moscall, member (*edited*) Previously printed in the North York Garden Club Nov-Dec, 2016 Newsletter.

BARBARA KANE

August 5, 1921-April 4, 2017

(Excerpt from the North York Historical Society's Oral History interview with Barbara Kane)

"I grew up in Windsor, Ontario and came to Toronto in 1939 and lived here ever since. I married a chap who was born and lived in Toronto and we moved up to Upper Canada Drive in 1951 and I lived there until 2011. We had two children both of whom were school teachers, now retired, and unfortunately my husband died many years (ago). I don't think there was a North York Historical Society then but our next door neighbour was Dorothy Duncan so that is how I got involved in a way in the North York Historical Society through her and through Penny Potter. Penny was the President. I think and I said to her one day when you become the President I will be your Secretary... Eventually she was the Secretary when I first joined the Society and then she became the President and I was typing up minutes for her... So that is how I got involved through Penny and Dorothy. They really don't have any connection with the society except for being members now.

Penny was the President for a couple of years (1986-87) (followed by) Ed Ralph (among others). (I was) Secretary for all of those people. I did the minutes for the executive meetings.

Then after I had to retire from my job as secretary in the public school, and which I enjoyed, but when you get to a certain age you have to resign whether you want to or not. So, then I worked for the Ontario Historical Society for a while (and) that was interesting as well too. That was of course under Dorothy and then, well for medical reasons I had to stop and no longer work which I didn't really want to do but I didn't have any choice. I was kind of in the background.

It was interesting when I first worked for the OHS. We had very small working quarters at 5151 Yonge at the corner of Empress and Yonge, and we had just the upper floor of that building there. Then Rob (Leverty) and Dorothy worked (it out) and we moved over to 34 Parkview Avenue and it was a big difference because it was so much bigger and so much more space and it was really great. That was interesting. It was a nice move to 34 Parkview. We published a couple of books about the 1837 Rebellion...

Well different people wrote articles for the book but we had to type it up and had it printed. I was involved in workshops which were great because you met a lot of people that way too, and the workshops weren't just in Toronto they were outside the city in some cases too which was interesting and you meet more people. And also, I was involved in the Ontario Historical Society's conference meetings that they had. They would have an (annual) general meeting every year and it was at a different place or they would hold workshops in different places and it was interesting work.

Before I met Dorothy Duncan I wasn't particularly interested in history, but Dorothy made it more interesting. Doing the kind of work that we did with and for her made it kind of interesting too."

Photograph by NYHS: Linda Gargaro, NYHS Vice President and Barbara at the oral history interview.



AT THE GIBSON HOUSE MUSEUM

5172 Yonge Street (entrance off Park Home Avenue, west of Yonge Street)
Toronto.ca/gibsonhouse 416-395-7432 gibsonhouse@toronto.ca

REBELLIOUS WOMEN Tea & Matinee

Saturdays, August 19 and 26, 2 to 4 p.m.

Discover the aftermath of the Rebellion of Upper Canada through the perspective of three women whose lives were touched by the turbulent events of 1837. Join playwright and actor, Adrianna Prosser as she portrays Mrs. Gibson and her guests Mrs. Cummer and Mrs. Sheppard, gathering for tea in 1851. Includes a Victorian-inspired tea after the performance. \$25 per person plus tax; not recommended for children under 12 years of age. Pre-payment required.

1867: REBELLION & CONFEDERATION

Exhibit to September 3.

Don't miss this opportunity to explore the turbulent events of the three decades leading up to Canada's Confederation. Through this exhibit visitors can follow the struggles for responsible government and the national discussions that brought Canada into being during a time of social upheaval. Learn about Toronto's role in this national story through a special display featuring artifacts from the City of Toronto's collection, which highlight Toronto personalities and events.

GIBSON HOUSE PRESERVES

Launched at the anniversary garden party on June 3, Gibson House Museum has been providing canning jars, guidelines and suggestions for North York residents and community organizations to create their own Canada Memory Jar for inclusion in the Museum's fall 2017 exhibit: *Gibson House Preserves*. Participants are encouraged to assemble items in their jar to depict a favourite memory of being or becoming a Canadian. Submitted jars will be displayed in the Discovery Gallery of the Gibson House Museum as part of an exhibit exploring the different notions of preserving – food, memory and family heirlooms. If you would like to contribute a jar please email gibsonhouse@toronto.ca for guidelines and suggestions.

FALL FESTIVAL on Saturday, September 23rd from 11.00 a.m to 4.00 p.m.

Featuring local community groups, vendors, heritage demonstrations, hands-on activities and games, a farm animal petting zoo, it's sure to be a day of fun for all ages. Meet your neighbours, tour the museum and try your hand at our games of skill and chance! Be sure to check out our new exhibition *Gibson House Preserves* and find activities, demonstrations and displays featuring the art and craft of preserving, as well as performances by Fixt Point based on their community interviews gathered earlier this year. Admission free.

AT THE MARKET GALLERY

THE MAPLE LEAF FOREVER, exhibit highlights how Toronto helped shape the maple leaf into a national symbol. Until November 25th. 2nd floor South St. Lawrence Market, 95 Front Street East. Tues-Fri 10/4 & Sat 9/4. Admission is pay-what-you-can donation.

These events are presented as part of TO Canada with Love, the City of Toronto's year-long program of celebrations, commemorations and exhibitions honouring Canada's 150th birthday.