



North Toronto Town Hall

NORTH TORONTO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 33 NO. 4

DECEMBER 2009



Winter Programme

Wednesday, 27 January, 7:30 p.m.

THE HISTORY OF CHINATOWN IN TORONTO

The arrival of Chinese people in Toronto, and the development of Chinatown, began with the completion of the CPR railway in 1885. Hostility in British Columbia drove Chinese immigrants eastwards in search of employment and a more welcoming place. Archival photographs will bring to life the history of the Chinese in Toronto in this programme presented by **Arlene Chan**. Arlene grew up in Chinatown, where she attended school and worked at her parents' restaurant on Elizabeth Street. She is the author of one adult book and three children's books. Her fourth book will be on Toronto's Chinatown.

Wednesday, 24 February, 7:30 p.m.

FROM HERE TO QUEBEC CITY: ONE MAN'S TANTALIZING TREK THROUGH MULTICULTURALISM

In celebration of Black History Month, writer and broadcaster **Robert Payne** describes his own and his family's history within the larger cultural realities of Canadian society. Payne, with family roots in New Brunswick going back five generations, was born in Montreal, raised in Quebec City and moved to Toronto to pursue career opportunities.

NOTE: A brief Annual General Meeting will precede the February programme.

Wednesday, 31 March, 7:30 p.m.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ARCHIVES: A CLIP OF ONTARIO'S PAST

This audio-visual programme chronicles the history of the Ontario government through a variety of entertaining film clips from government produced films and ads from 1922 to the 1980s. Presented by staff from the **Archives of Ontario**.



Join us at 7:10 for refreshments before the programme.

The Society meets at the Northern District Library, 40 Orchard View Boulevard (one block north of Eglinton, just west of Yonge) at 7:30 pm on the last Wednesday of each month from September to November & January to May. Programmes are free and are open to the public. Our co-sponsor is the Northern District Branch of the Toronto Public Library.

President's Message

Best wishes for 2010, as the North Toronto Historical Society enters its 35th year.

Our annual general meeting will be held at the beginning of the monthly programme in February. If you are interested in taking a more active role in the Society, please contact a member of our executive committee. We will be happy to welcome new members and ideas.

I would like to thank our executive for their contributions during 2009 - Hilary Dawson, newsletter editor and speaker for Black History Month; Bill Dawson, treasurer; Alex Grenzebach, membership secretary and website co-ordinator; Joan Sampson, publicity co-ordinator; Donald Duncan, recording secretary; and Marta O'Brien, Doug Campbell and Ken Pon, members-at-large who contributed to programmes, the annual walk and sale of publications.

Special thanks to Marjorie Fritz and Janet and Brian Dunfield who helped serve refreshments during our monthly meetings. John Medcof and Robert Baillie added a special feature to our walk in October by providing family history and information on houses on Blythwood Road.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our programmes in 2010.

Lynda Moon, President

Heritage News

Heritage Building Destroyed by Fire

In October 2009 fire engulfed Chedington, at Bayview and Lawrence Avenue East. The property was given by E.R. Wood, owner of Glendon Hall, to his daughter Mildred on the occasion of her 1930 marriage to financier Murray Fleming. The Flemings used architects Molesworth, West & Secord to design their spacious Tudor-inspired home overlooking the valley of the Don.



Chedington had received heritage designation in 1994.

Keep Up With Heritage News

Ontario Heritage Connection

<http://www.ontarioheritageconnection.org/>

New NTHS website

www.northtorontohistoricalsociety.org



North York Historical Society is 50!

The North York Historical Society was established in 1960 to protect, preserve and promote built and natural heritage, and the cultural heritage of North York. In 2005, the Society opened a Heritage Resource Centre at the Miller Tavern, housing local history books, documents, maps and artefacts. In 2008, NYHS initiated a heritage plaque programme in cooperation with Heritage Toronto.



Congratulations NYHS!

Mail a Mill!

A new series of postage stamps features: Old Stone Mill, Delta, Ontario; Watson's Mill, Manotick, Ontario; Keremeos Grist Mill, Keremeos, British Columbia; Cornell Mill, Stanbridge East, Quebec; and the Riordon Grist Mill, Acadian Historic Village Caraquet, New Brunswick. Stamps will be available for purchase at Canada Post outlets on January 12, 2010.

For more information, visit the Canada Post website.



Items from the North Toronto Herald, 1959, contributed by Alex. Grenzebach. The Herald is available at Northern District Library.

As part of a 20-year subway construction programme, the Metro Planning Board approved the extension of the Yonge St. subway from Eglinton to Sheppard.



John Fisher students won the city soccer championship for the third year in a row.



The Big Three auto makers introduced compact cars for 1960 – the rear-engine Chevrolet Corvair, the Chrysler Valiant and the Ford Falcon.

According to Canada's new atomic survival policy, every "prudent" Canadian should provide his home with a fallout shelter.

In her column "Book News From The Locke Library", our member Helen McNeil recommended Bronte's *Jane Eyre* as an all-time favourite for teenagers.

Glengrove and Blythwood

In October, about thirty members and friends joined NTHS President Lynda Moon and other leaders for a damp walk through historic North Toronto. This year's outing focussed on the areas of Glengrove (west of Yonge Street) and Blythwood (east of Yonge Street), which were two of the earliest residential developments.

Glengrove Avenue was built through Lot 4 Concession 1 West of Yonge Street. That property was first granted to Jonathan Bell in 1801, and acquired some years later by John McDougall. His grandson, William McDougall grew up on this farm. The Hon. Wm McDougall was a Father of Confederation, and there is a plaque commemorating him behind the Locke Library at Lawrence and Yonge. In the 1850s the farm became a summer retreat for James Beaty, publisher and politician. Beaty named the farm "Glengrove".

Until transportation to Toronto improved, the area remained rural. In 1886, the Metropolitan Street Railway Company ran a horse car line as far as Glengrove, and in 1890 the electrified Radial Line reached York Mills. In 1888, the Metropolitan Street Railway Company registered plans for "Glen Grove Park," a residential development to be built on land purchased from James Beaty's heirs. The plan extended from Yonge Street to Avenue Road, and included Glenview, Glengrove and Glencairn.

Of the eleven interesting buildings we looked at in this area, only three are on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Buildings. Two are on Glengrove: number 23 (built for Nicholas Garland in 1891) is an outstanding example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture; and number 97 (originally owned by James F. Craig) is another Romanesque house. Glenview Presbyterian Church (dedicated in 1929) is also on Heritage Toronto's list.



23 Glengrove Avenue

Fall Walk continues on page 4

Across Yonge Street, Lot 3 was granted to Richard Gamble in 1803, and Lot 4 to William Weekes in 1806. Both lots were eventually owned by Jesse Ketchum, a prominent York citizen. In 1857, Jesse Ketchum, Jr. produced a subdivision plan that established Victoria Avenue (later renamed Blythwood Road) and large residential lots. Few of these lots were developed until the street railway was built in 1886. Several houses in the area have been designated over the years, and in 2003 Blythwood Road was recognised by Toronto City Council as a Heritage District.

Builder James Ramsay owned a one-acre property here, which he divided in three. In 1886, he built his own house on the eastern end of his land (now occupied by his direct descendant, NTHS member Bill Ramsay). On the centre lot, James Ramsay built for a widow, Mrs. Asenath Harrison. (She was the daughter of Elihu Pease and Catherine Cummer.) The last of the three houses on Ramsay property was built about 1891. These houses are 115, 123, and 129 Blythwood Road.



115 Blythwood Road

James Ramsay and John Fisher, North Toronto's first mayor, were partners in the firm of Fisher & Ramsay. They specialized in fine carpentry, and built "high class residences and substantial barns" as well as several of North Toronto's public buildings.

Interesting local characters were the three Boulton sisters. Descendants of D'Arcy Boulton (second Solicitor General of Upper Canada), Constance, Elizabeth and Marian's house at 154 Blythwood Road was designed by architect Charles M. Willmot. It was built in 1919, and the sisters enjoyed a rural life, growing fruit and vegetables, producing honey, and supplying eggs all year round by heating and lighting their henhouse with electricity.

This look at earlier days in North Toronto was led by Doug Campbell, Bill Dawson, Hilary Dawson and Lynda Moon.

SEPTEMBER Fighting Words: The Life and Times of Joseph Atkinson

The fascinating story of the Toronto *Star*'s legendary publisher, Joseph E. Atkinson, was told at our September meeting by retired *Star* news editor Michael Pieri. He introduced his subject with a video documentary, Fighting Words: The Social Crusades of Joseph E. Atkinson. (Viewable online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjAw5DhFgkg&feature>)

Joseph Atkinson was born near Newcastle, Ontario, the youngest of eight children. His father died when Joseph was an infant, and his mother when he was thirteen. Joseph's first job was in a woollen mill, but then he found a position as a clerk with the Port Hope newspaper. Soon he was writing stories for the paper, and went on to work as a reporter for several Ontario newspapers.

The hardships of Atkinson's early life and his strong Methodist beliefs influenced his opinions, and he sometimes found himself at odds with the management of more Conservative papers. This was noticed by Liberal supporters of Wilfrid Laurier, and in 1899 they helped him become publisher and part owner of the ailing Toronto *Star*. Its circulation at the time was only 7,000. To increase readership, Atkinson printed more sports, scandal and social gossip, while writing articles to awaken the public to important issues of social injustice. By 1913, the *Star* had the largest circulation of any Toronto newspaper, and Atkinson was the majority shareholder.

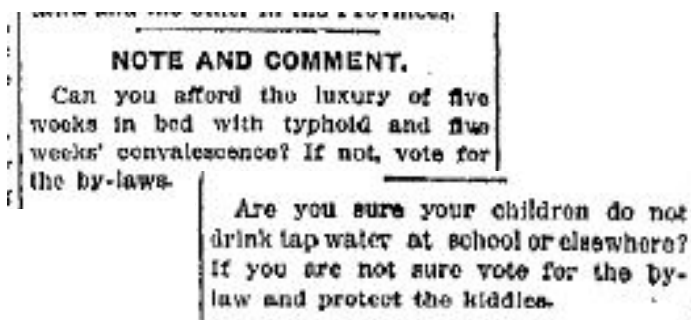
Joseph E. Atkinson was an ardent member of the Social Gospel Movement, advocating temperance, widows' pensions, workers' compensation and support for the poor when sick or jobless. He was distressed by the unfair treatment of immigrants, and particularly by the exploitation and unhealthy living conditions of children.

Toronto's Great Fire of 1904 exacerbated the problems of the poor. (Five thousand lost their jobs, and many of Toronto's poorest were left homeless.) Atkinson called out his entire staff to

Fighting Words continues on page 5

cover the disaster, then instructed his reporters to investigate conditions in Toronto's slums.

Atkinson was a stalwart supporter of the public health reforms of Dr. Charles Hastings, even before Hastings was appointed Toronto's Medical Officer of Health (1910-1929).



Campaign for municipal water filtration and sewage treatment, June 1908.

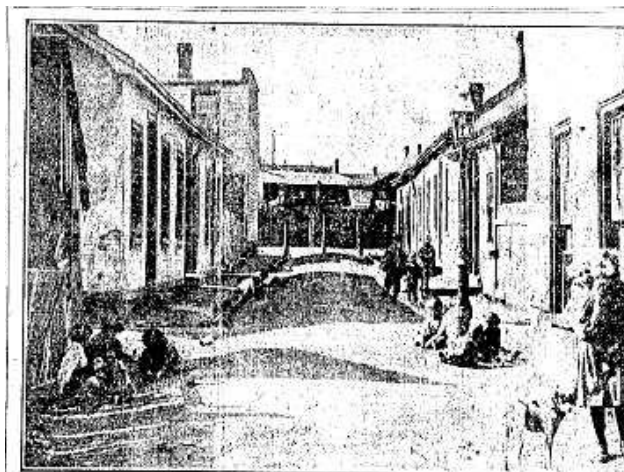
Articles in the *Star* were designed to whip up public support for such initiatives as the regulation of pasteurized milk, safe drinking water and sanitary sewage treatment. To educate the public about the connection between filth, flies and disease, the *Star* ran a "Swat the Fly" contest in the summer of 1912.

Running a successful newspaper and keeping his mission a priority was challenging. Atkinson tried to keep important stories on the front page, while still satisfying his investors and advertisers, but did not always succeed. When the *Star* supported wealth tax, Sir John Eaton pulled his advertising, and labelled Atkinson a "bolshhevik." (After Sir John's death, Eatons advertising returned.)

The commitment of Atkinson's *Star* to social change went beyond print. From 1901, the *Star's* Fresh Air Fund gave children the chance to escape the city slums for outings to the lake or the country. Today, the FAF sends disadvantaged children to summer camps. In 1906, the Santa Claus Fund first distributed gifts to any child under 12 from a destitute family, and continues to provide Christmas gifts to needy families.

The Atkinson Charitable Foundation (ACF) was established in 1942 to support institutions that encouraged his principles of social justice, civil liberties and the rights of working people. When Joseph E. Atkinson died in 1948, he left the

newspaper to the ACF with instructions that it continue to be run "for the benefit of the public." And it still is.



A SAMPLE OF DISTRICTS FROM WHICH CHILDREN ARE TAKEN BY FRESH AIR FUND.

Big Ideas: the Social Crusades of Joseph E. Atkinson, by Michael Pieri (Toronto: The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, 2008) pdf format can be downloaded from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation website: <http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca/>

OCTOBER The Lake Erie Shore: Ontario's Forgotten South Coast

The audience was delighted by the return of popular speaker Ron Brown. His multimedia presentation explored the distinctive area that is the north shore of Lake Erie.



Gordon House, Amherstburg, built in 1798.

Lake Erie continues on page 6

Lake Erie continued from page 5

The mild climate of this part of Ontario has produced flora and fauna not found anywhere else in the province. The region is home to a number of protected natural areas, like Rondeau Provincial Park, and the Long Point UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Human occupation of this area has tremendous variety, too. There are remains of a sixteenth century native village at Southwold Earthworks National Historic Site (near St. Thomas), and bikers gather in Port Dover every Friday 13th.

Fort Erie and Fort Malden (Amherstburg) are just two reminders that this region witnessed engagements between the British and Americans during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Proximity to the American border also made



Nazrey AME Church & North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre, Amherstburg.

this a destination for those fleeing slavery in the South. From Nazrey A.M.E. Church in Amherstburg to Bertie Hall in Fort Erie (reputed to have a tunnel leading from the Niagara River) fugitives could find safety. Farming communities



Point Abino Lighthouse, a beautiful Greek Revival tower built near Fort Erie, 1917.

like Buxton (south of Chatham) were developed by self-sufficient former slaves.

Transportation was essential to settlement and trade. The First Welland Canal was built in 1829, but survives only as ruins at Wellandvale, near St. Catharines.

Later, railway tracks criss-crossed the area for communication and movement of goods. They also allowed outings to the shore, attracted tourists and the development of lakeside resorts and cottage communities.



Crystal Beach, Fort Erie.

Times have changed along the Erie shore, but the history is still there, if you know where to look.

Plan a trip to Lake Erie's north shore

The Lake Erie Shore. Ontario's Forgotten South Coast, by Ron Brown (Dundurn, 2009)

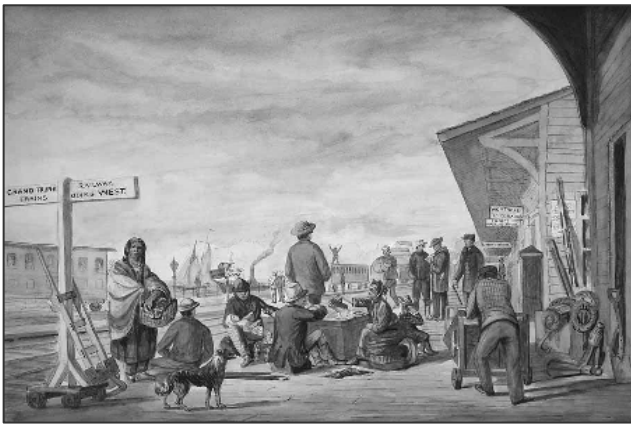
Or go with Ron Brown!

<http://www.ronbrown.ca/tours.html>

NOVEMBER 151 Years of Union Station

Derek Boles' generously illustrated presentation about Toronto's Union Stations was fascinating, even to those of us who are less passionate about railway history. His collection of digitized archival images was put together to show how Toronto's waterfront changed as the rail corridor expanded over the years. Derek skillfully "stitched together" contemporary adjacent views to produce panoramas which gave a feeling of "being there" as the railway lands advanced into the lake, and familiar landmarks gradually receded.

Union Station continues on page 7



The First Union Station, 1859. William Armstrong.

In 1853, passengers for Toronto's first locomotive (aptly named *Toronto*) waited in a wooden shed "station" on Front Street. Five years later, the first Union Station opened, a wooden structure built on reclaimed land below York and Front Streets. The Grand Trunk Railway shared it with the Great Western Railway and the Northern Railway (hence



The New [second] Union Station. Exterior View. Eugene Haberer.

Canadian Illustrated News, 2 Aug 1873

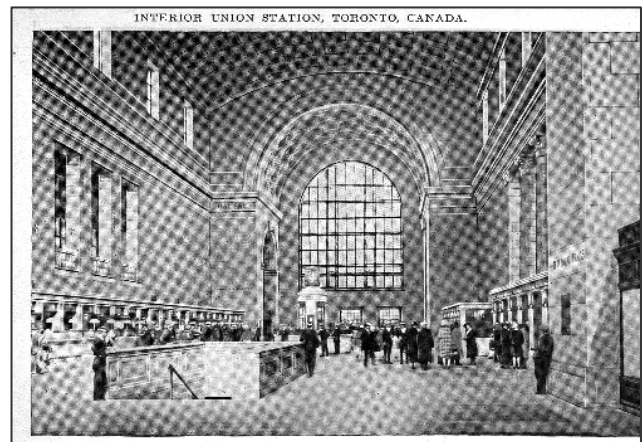


The clock from the Second Union Station found a new home atop Huntsville's Town Hall.

"Union"). The station became inadequate as rail travel gained in popularity.

In 1873, the GTR opened the second Union Station - a grand Italianate building designed by Thomas Seaton Scott. Unlike today's station, it faced Lake Ontario. In 1884 the new Canadian Pacific Railway moved into Union Station, but the two companies soon outgrew the space. In the 1890s it was extensively rebuilt.

The Great Fire of 1904 did not affect the railways, but did clear a nice parcel of real estate that would become our present Union Station. As the Old Union Station saw troops off to the First World War, construction began on the new facility. It was designed by architect John Lyle in a grand Beaux Arts. The new (fourth) Union Station opened in August 1927 for the visit of Prince Edward.



New Union Station Ticket Lobby, 1927.

More about Toronto's rail history

Toronto's Railway Heritage, by Derek Boles. (Arcadia Publishing, 2009)

Toronto Rail Heritage Centre
John Street Roundhouse
<http://www.trha.ca/>

The Toronto Union Station Experience
The Toronto Railway Historical Association, in cooperation with the Toronto Terminals Railway, conducts guided tours of Union Station on the last Saturday of every month throughout the year.

Information: <http://www.trha.ca/>
Contact: trha@trha.ca

Toronto Railway Historical Association
4003 Bayview Ave. Suite 214
Toronto, ON M2M 3Z8

Heritage Calendar

Some Black History Talks:

The Hanging of Angélique, Afua Cooper

Angélique was a Canadian slave accused of starting the Montreal fire of 1734. Explore this mystery with author Dr. Afua Cooper and director-writer Nadine Valcin. Includes viewing of the film, *Fire and Fury*.

Royal Ontario Museum, Level 1B Signy and Cléopée Eaton Theatre

Thurs 18 Feb, 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Public \$20.00, Member \$18.00

INFO: 416-586-5797 programs@rom.on.ca

I've Got A Home In Glory Land: Coming to Toronto on the Underground Railroad, Karolyn Smardz Frost

The remarkable story of Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, who began Toronto's first cab business, and were the subject of a major public archaeology project in 1985. Karolyn's award-winning book is the first original fugitive slave biography since the Civil War.

St. Clement's Church, Canon Nicholson Hall, 59 Briar Hill Avenue, (on Duplex, one block west of Yonge, five blocks north of Eglinton)

Sun 24 Jan, 10:10 - 10:50am

INFO: 416-483-6664

Slavery in the Town of York, Hilary J. Dawson

Several of early Upper Canada's families owned slaves. From information found in original documents, historian Hilary J. Dawson will introduce Henry Prince, Peggy and other people of colour who were regarded as property by such influential figures as William Jarvis and Peter Russell.

North York Historical Society, 349 Kenneth Ave., North York (east of Yonge and Church)

Weds 10 Feb, 7:30 pm

INFO: nyorksoc@can.rogers.com

We welcome contributions from members: heritage events and achievements, brief articles and photographs of local history interest.

Submissions for the next Newsletter by 20 March to dawsonbh@rogers.com or call 416-481-6622.



Email Addresses Requested!

Would you like us to remind you of upcoming meetings and heritage events, and send an electronic newsletter? We will not give out your email address.

Email me at alexg@alumni.uwaterloo.ca and I will add you to the distribution list. Thank you.

Alex. Grenzebach

Archives of Ontario Gallery, 134 Ian Macdonald Blvd., York University

INFO: : reference@ontario.ca. www.ontario.ca/archives

Ontario - On the Map

Continues to 26 February, Mon-Fri 9-5

An exhibit of original maps from the Archives of Ontario collection, showing people's understanding of the physical and cultural landscape changes in Ontario over the centuries.

Market Gallery, South St. Lawrence Market, 95 Front St. E.

INFO: 416-392-7604

<http://www.stlawrencemarket.com/gallery/>

The St. Lawrence Ward: A Pictorial View of Toronto's Oldest Neighbourhood

Continues to 13 March 2010

In celebration of Toronto's 175th anniversary, the Market Gallery presents a special exhibition focusing on the history of its original neighbourhood. Maps, photographs and art will provide a pictorial essay illustrating the architecture, economic development and political life of this area.



TTC Tours

In 2010 TTC staff will be conducting tours on the 4th Saturday of each month.

\$15 for adults; \$5 for children 12 and under.

Register by email.

INFO: TTC.ca

27 Feb

27 Mar

24 Apr

22 May

Queen Lower

Greenwood Shop

Mt. Dennis Garage

Harvey Shops

North Toronto Historical Society

An affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society, and a non-profit charitable organization.

% 129 Blythwood Road, Toronto, Ontario M4N 1A5

www.northtorontohistoricalsociety.org

Annual Memberships: Seniors & Students \$5, Adults \$7, Families \$10

2009 Executive (*Directors)

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Past President: John Hutchinson

Publicity: *Joan Sampson, 416-488-0939

Secretary: Donald Duncan

Research: Hilary Dawson

Walks: *Bill Ramsay