



# The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

Vol. 1 No. 1 January 5, 1998

**WE HOPE YOU ALL HAD A JOYFUL AND RELAXING  
HOLIDAY SEASON - AND NOW 1998 IS UPON US**



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF FORT YORK

Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> - Royal Canadian  
Military Institute (Library) - 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Military Uniforms and Military Music  
of the 1812-1814 Period - Peter Twist and  
Ken Purvis

Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> - Royal Canadian  
Military Institute (Library) - 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

The Story of the Portland Street and  
Strachan Avenue Burial Grounds - Stephen Otto and  
Michael Rudman

### THE FESTIVAL OF FORT YORK

May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>

*For further information call Joe Gill at 864-1300 or 969-8644*

### **Fort York Business Plan Approved**

The Fort York Business Plan has been approved by the Board of Heritage Toronto and by the Board of the Friends of Fort York. The vision-centred plan was a joint project of Heritage Toronto and the Friends. Geordie Beal, a director of the Friends, chaired the group which also included Don Gibson and Joe Gill from the Friends and Dr. Carl Benn (Curator of Fort York) and JoAnn Pynn of Heritage Toronto.

The Fort York Business Plan sets out an exciting vision for the future of Fort York together with the strategies for achieving that vision over the next 10 years.

The Friends of Fort York have been requested by the Board of Heritage Toronto to take on the responsibility of communicating to the 56 Councillors and the Mayor of Toronto, city officials, foundations and other stake holders the importance of investing in Toronto's heritage and future by proceeding with the Fort York Business Plan. Only then can Fort York take its rightful place as a central feature in the city and its waterfront.

Members of the Friends of Fort York will be hearing much more about the Business Plan in the coming months. We will need all the help we can get.

### **Fort York Festival - 1998**

Planning for the 1998 Fort York Festival (May 16 and 17) is underway. Don Brydges and his Steering Committee meet again at Fort York at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> (call Don at 247-1377 if you have questions). Once again we will have a steer roast for the re-enactors. We hope to draw over 200 re-enactors for this year's festival. We also plan to decorate our food and beverage tent to give it more of a period flavour, and perhaps add some music. Beyond that, we will be building on our successful program from last year.

Talk up the event with your friends. It is a fine family event. Major battle re-enactments will take place on Saturday afternoon and evening, and on Sunday afternoon.

Other family Festival activities include a pancake breakfast, Fort tours, pistol duels, a steer roast, fiddlers, musket drills, a town crier, a night re-enactment of the Battle of Lundy's Lane and an evening walk through the British and American encampments. Other educational activities are planned for the Fort during the weekend to provide fun for families with young children.

This is a chance to see the Fort at its best.

### **Members' Reception A Great Success**

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, about fifty of the Friends and their guests met in the main lounge of the RCMI for the first annual members' reception. It was a great function - good cheer, good company and fine conversation. Ken Purvis and Gavin Watt provided some fine 19<sup>th</sup> century background music and the Chair commented on the events of the past year.

## **The New Toronto**

The November, 1997 elections brought us a new Mayor, Mr. Lastman, and 56 councillors. We congratulate them and look forward to working with the new Council.

However, this issue of the Fife and Drum cannot go by without noting the loss to the Council of two very strong supporters of Fort York, Mayor Barbara Hall and Councillor Martin Silva.

In many ways, the government we enjoyed in Toronto under Mayor Hall was unique. The Toronto Council worked together positively to achieve much for the City. The Friends of Fort York were welcomed by both the Council and city officials at all times and as volunteers we felt our activities were nurtured and encouraged. It was this environment that energized the Friends. Mayor Hall never failed to support our efforts. Her participation in the Fort York Festival, dressed in a gorgeous white 19<sup>th</sup> century gown complete with parasol, will not be forgotten. We thank you, Barbara.

Martin Silva was, in the eyes of many of us, the ideal councillor and a politician to be respected and admired. Martin's support for the friends as a Councillor (he continues as a director and strong supporter post-council) was very important to us. Martin found time to attend at least part of every Board meeting and his enthusiasm is always appreciated. And while there was very little difficulty getting Martin into a General's costume for the Fort York Festival, getting him to take it off was quite a task. In many ways, the success of the festival was thanks to Martin's help and participation. (Is there any truth to the rumour that Martin is already recruiting a Portuguese regiment in case we re-enact Napoleonic battles?).

We will be fortunate indeed to find friends on the new Council as supportive as Barbara Hall and Martin Silva. But we will look to General Zebulon "Jakobek" Pike and our other friends on Council to help us find our way in the new Toronto.

## **Friends of Fort York Lecture Series - Historical Perspectives of Fort York**

The lecture series had a fascinating start in October with a presentation by Carl Benn on "Fighting the War of 1812. The Relationships between Weapons, Uniforms, and Tactics on the Upper Canadian Frontier". After a "hands-on" examination of muskets, rifles and other weaponry of the day, Carl explained how the characteristics of these weapons determined much of the strategy employed. Those of us who attended now know when the Thin Red Line needed to become a Square - and why!

Carl's November lecture discussed the nature of aboriginal warfare in the 1812-14 period.

As the series continues, Carl Benn will assume his main role as coordinator of the series, and we will show off other members of our growing faculty. Monday, January 19, Peter Twist's presentation is on military uniforms of the 1812 era and Peter will be joined by Ken Purvis who will discuss military music of the period. Wednesday, February 18, Michael Rudman will lead us through his research on the Portland St. Burial Ground and will be followed by Stephen Otto speaking on the Strachan Avenue Burial Ground and

his recent research thereon. Both of these lectures will take place in the library at the RCMC (see calendar for address). Ties are required for the gentlemen attending. We have invited members of the RCMC to both sessions and also hope that a number of members of the Ontario Genealogical Society will attend in February.

In March and April we return to Fort York as a venue. In March, Carl Benn will guide us through a review of the general history of the War of 1812. In April, Michael Quealey, a recently retired professor of history and humanities from York University, will discuss the environmental influences on Fort York in the 1820's. Among his many accomplishments, Michael's doctorate was in Upper Canadian history.

We wish to thank Carl Benn for his efforts in co-ordinating these lectures (not to mention presenting three of them!).

We also wish to give special thanks to the sponsors of the lecture series, namely:

Jones, Heward, investment managers and Paul Gratias, Senior Vice-President

and

Nesbitt Burns, and Rod Behan, Senior Vice-president.

Their generous contributions enabled us to present these lectures without additional costs to the members. Thank you.

Thanks also to Mihail Murgoci for helping arrange facilities at the RCMC and promoting our lectures in the RCMC SITREP.

### **Heritage Flagpole**

John Barclay has announced that the base for the Heritage Flagpole has now been poured. The 70 ft. flagpole which will fly the Union Flag (pre 1801 flag without the Cross of St. Patrick) will be dedicated in early May. We again thank George Weston Limited for the generous donation that made this important project possible and John Barclay and JoAnn Pynn for the many hours working on it.

### **Garrison Creek Linkage Project**

The Steering Committee for this important project has been very active, particularly to ensure that it is continued as City of Toronto Committee in 1998 and beyond. The Garrison Creek Linkage Plan seeks to re-establish a linked system from the now disconnected sites of the former Garrison Creek. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Creek, which ran from the Lake Iroquois escarpment south through the present Christie Pits and Trinity Bellwoods Park to Fort York, was buried as a combined sanitary and storm sewer. Land fill operations continued until the 1950s, separating elements of the topography, and burying several large bridges, further reducing the connections between open spaces.

The plan will establish linkages at many different scales. It will:

- link and enhance infrastructure renewal
- link and regenerate open and other green spaces
- improve public amenities on streets and in parks
- divert storm water from sewers which foul our beaches
- reveal important elements of the community's heritage.

The project is important to the Friends and we will work actively with the Steering Committee, particularly on the question of pedestrian bridges over the rail corridor and the water feature to the south of the Fort.

### **News of Members and Other Interesting Items**

- Gerry Murray, our treasurer, has moved to Thornbury. It seems being closer to the ski hills is more important than being close to the excitement of the city. However, Gerry is remaining as treasurer and commutes to Toronto regularly.
- Richard Dodds now can lift his arm most of the way to the sky! Here's to healing shoulders!
- Murray Philp has a much healed Achilles tendon and walks without a cane.
- We have filed our application for Charitable Corporation status and will be able to accept donations on a tax-deductible basis as of January, 1998. It took us longer than expected but the good news is we did it without outside professional services (no fees!). Many thanks to Pat Vernon for reviewing the final product and coming up with several key suggestions!
- John Barclay and the Fundraising and Membership Committee are getting their membership renewal mailing ready. Start saving your loonies. We need you!
- Simcoe Hut - news of archeological significance is to be found in a Heritage Toronto news release, dated October 31, 1997. Evidence of a military hut of log construction dating to the early 1970's has been unearthed. Further excavation will tell us more.

### **"Hey, what are they doing about the Gardiner anyway?"**

In 1986 Toronto Council established the Gardiner/Lakeshore Task Force as a coordinating body to discuss and review proposals as to how the Gardiner Expressway and Lakeshore Boulevard might be better integrated into the fabric of the City. From the beginning the Task Force has been a citizen-driven committee dedicated to improving the pedestrians, vehicle and bicycle access. While the Task Force is ever mindful of the critical role the Gardiner Expressway plays in the Metropolitan Toronto transportation system with a traffic flow second only to Highway 401, at the same time the objective is to restore at least some of the community sense and opportunities for connectivity

experienced in an area such as the Beaches which does not have to deal with an expressway through its heart.

The Task Force has been composed of 4 politicians, two adjacent land developers, 8 local residents groups (e.g. Niagara Neighbourhood Association), 5 other interested groups, and two interested citizens.

Ian Keith has represented the Friends and reports to the Executive Committee as to the progress of the Task Force.

The future of the Task Force is now up to the new City of Toronto Council. Old City Council has recommended to the New City Council that a Task Force, "similar to the one presently in place ..... be created ..... including appropriate staff support and an operating budget."

The Friends will want to see this Task Force recreated as it represents our best opportunity to make substantive improvements in the area surrounding Historic Fort York, the birth place of the City of Toronto.