

The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of the Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common v. 10 No. 3 September 2006

Contents



- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 2 Garrison Common History: Garrison Creek | 5 Site-work Update |
| 4 The Great East Gate Of Fort York | 6 Upcoming Events |

Rebuilding the Bathurst Street Bridge

by Stephen Otto

Since our founding in 1994, the Friends of Fort York have always made a priority of long term planning for the lands within and around the Fort York National Historic Site. Thus it was when, after much study and discussion, *Fort York: Setting It Right* was published in June, 2000, it identified the pathway connections under Bathurst Street as important for city-building and for linking the fort to the east side of Bathurst, where the former Garrison Creek once entered Lake Ontario.

Again a year later, the wide, cathedral-like area under the Bathurst Bridge was seen as a vital link in the landmark report, *Fort York and Garrison Common Parks and Open Space Plan*, prepared for the City's Policy & Development, Planning and Culture divisions, with input from the Friends. Both reports were warmly received and endorsed by City Council.

Finally, the continuity of the historic site under the bridge was recognized by the Government of Canada in designating the bounds of Fort York in 2003, and by Toronto City Council in 2004 in passing a bylaw enlarging the boundaries of the municipal Heritage District at Fort York to coincide with those of the national site.

The Bathurst Bridge itself seemed an enduring fixture in the landscape, the northern steel-truss portion having been built in 1903 to span the Humber and moved to its present vicinity in 1916; the southern steelplate and concrete section dating from 1929-30 and having been designed to carry Bathurst Street, newly-extended between Front and Fleet, over the tracks into the rail yards. As of 2004 neither part of the bridge was near the end of its structural life, though maintenance on both--CN looks after the steel-truss; the City the steel-and-concrete viaduct--was wanting.

Therefore, it was with surprise and concern that we learned in June, 2005, that an Environmental Assessment (EA) Review aimed at extending Fort York Blvd. a few blocks east of Bathurst (it had been completed from Bathurst to Lakeshore Blvd. in 2002) was to be expanded to look into rebuilding the southern section of the Bathurst Bridge.

The bridge-rebuilding was proposed by the TTC as a corollary of its providing streetcar service along Fort York Blvd. in fulfillment of the City's Official Plan. To permit streetcars to turn 90 degrees at Bathurst, the intersection there would need to be rebuilt to a more level configuration, which would lead in turn to a lowering of the south end of the bridge and a decrease in vertical clearance underneath from 4.6 metres (15 ft +) to 3.1 metres (10 ft. +). As well, the bridge deck would be widened by half as much again from 20m. to 30m. to allow for dedicated transit lanes. If steps weren't taken to mitigate such changes, we believed



David Spittal, Toronto Culture

Visit our website at www.fortyork.ca

future pedestrian and cycling paths below the bridge might be neither pleasant nor secure.

While the Friends would prefer bus service on Fort York Blvd. because it would better serve visitors to the fort and not require rebuilding either the intersection or bridge, we reckoned our modest resources were better spent where our interests are vital, rather than in trying to reverse the Official Plan or the TTC's preference for streetcars. Hence, we chose to concentrate on (1) protecting the significant archaeological resources under and adjacent to the bridge; (2) ensuring good sightlines and generous headroom there for safe passage by pedestrians and cyclists; and (3) requiring excellence in the design of any new bridge, since it will lie almost entirely within the National Historic Site and municipal Heritage Conservation District.

The headroom issue goes to the heart of whether or not pedestrians' interests are taken seriously by the City. Travel surveys it undertook in 2001 among residents of the Kings and Waterfront neighbourhoods showed a remarkable 44-45% of them walked to work in the downtown while only 32-33% took transit and 2% used a bicycle. Transit and private cars came into their own when people had to travel further afield. The Friends believe a large proportion of the 7500 residents projected to live in the Fort York Neighbourhood will choose to walk to destinations in the city core. Moreover, for many years yet the only primary schools serving the area will be east of Bathurst Street and children walking to school may use the underpass to avoid crossing at grade. Both foot-commuters and kids deserve their walks to be safe and pleasant experiences.

Given TTC operating requirements, the only options to maintain the present 4.6 metres (15 feet) of headroom at the south end of the bridge are either to remove some of the sterile fill overlying the archaeological resources we expect to find there, or to design a lighter, structurally more progressive bridge than might be built otherwise, or both. The TTC has supported investigating how much fill might be removed under the south end of the bridge by funding archaeological test trenching, due to get underway this Fall. And when the City comes to design the bridge in detail, perhaps in 2007, the Friends will be advised by Prof. Paul Gauvreau, the present NRC Chair in Design Engineering in the Urban Environment at the U of T.

Meeting on Sept. 11 the City's Works Committee adopted and sent to Council for its approval the EA Study Report supporting a Preferred Option. The Report acknowledged a new bridge would affect views to and from the fort and that a wider and lower structure would impact on the future pedestrian-cyclist link beneath the bridge. But it went on to say, "Consideration will be given to the aesthetics of the bridge and its impacts on the heritage and cultural landscape in the detailed design phase," scheduled to occur in 2007.

Happily, the Works Committee went further, and passed unanimously two important, modifying motions. The first,

recommended by the Council-appointed Roundtable on a Beautiful City, required the proposed design of the new bridge to be reviewed by a three person panel including the Chief Planner and the Administrator of Fort York for appropriateness to its historic location, suitable aesthetic considerations, and the degree to which it enhances pedestrian and bicycle connections. The second motion the Committee adopted was based on a request from the city's Pedestrian Committee. It directed senior City and TTC staff to consult with the Friends of Fort York and others throughout the design process to examine all possible ways to maximize vertical clearance under the bridge and, in addition, to create a safe, functional and attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

We'll keep you posted as plans for the new bridge become clearer.

Garrison Common History: Garrison Creek

This article was adapted for this issue of the Fife and Drum by Dick Watts. It is based on the Garrison Creek section of the Lost Rivers website at <www.lostrivers.ca>.

Garrison Creek got its name because, when Toronto was young, it entered Lake Ontario at Fort York, the military garrison for the region. It is said that at the time that the mouth of the creek was suitable for mooring a few small boats.

Garrison Creek rose in two small streams north of St. Clair Avenue West. The eastern branch, the Humewood Reach, had its source near Vaughan Rd. at Valewood Ave. The western branch, the Springmount Stream, had its origin near Earls court Ave. and Morrison Ave., west of Dufferin St.. These branches joined just north of Davenport Road at Mount Royal Ave. and flowed south through what are now Christie Pits, Bickford Park, Fred Hamilton Park, and Trinity Bellwoods Park, to enter Toronto Bay at Fort York. It was 7.7 km long and had several tributaries. In the upper portions of the watershed where it passed through farms owned by members of the Bull family, it was also known as Bull's Creek.

The creek had its beginnings about 12,000 years ago when the last remnants of the Wisconsin Glacier melted off the Toronto area. The glacier had wiped the land clear of forests and left deep deposits of glacial drift (sand, clay, gravel and stones) perhaps 200 feet thick. At that time, the St. Lawrence valley was still blocked with glacial ice and Garrison Creek entered post-glacial Lake Iroquois, the forerunner of Lake Ontario, at what is now Davenport Road. Here the waves of Lake Iroquois washed against the glacial drift and created a steep shore bluff through which the creek carved a deep valley as it entered the lake.

As the great ice sheet continued to melt, the St Lawrence valley became free of ice and the waters in the Ontario basin dropped to a lower level. Garrison Creek then cut a longer course across the newly-drained lands to what is now Lake Ontario.

For thousands of years, rain and melting snow has run off the sandy drift. At first, heavy storms would have created roaring torrents that cut quickly and deeply into the soil because there was no vegetation to retard the flow. Recent history suggests that a storm of the intensity of Hurricane Hazel can be expected in this area once every hundred years. Thus, 120 storms of Hurricane Hazel's intensity may have occurred during the past 12,000 years. Each one would have deepened and widened the stream valleys until they reached the form we see today in Trinity Bellwoods Park and along streets such as Springmount Ave. north of Regal Road.

During those 12,000 years, vegetation slowly re-established. Eventually, forests of pine, oak, and locust covered the area. Aboriginal peoples hunted in the area and traveled on the beach trail, now Davenport Road. In the 1800's, land was cleared for farms and estates like "Earlscourt" (built originally for the Hon. John Ross), the Blake family's "Humewood" and Bartholomew Bull's farm. With settlement, and later with the subdivision of estates and farms, the creek began to suffer. By the late 19th century, it had become so polluted with sewage and refuse that for public health reasons parts of it were put in sewers. By the mid 1920's the creek had been completely buried.

Now the creek exists in new forms. A large part of the rain and snow that falls in the watershed drains off roofs and pavements into sewers and can be heard rushing along under the roads after a storm. But, because many sewers carry sanitary sewage as well as storm water, what we hear in dry weather is basically the flow of sanitary sewage from our homes. Any rain or snow that does not enter the sewers either evaporates into the air or percolates into gardens and green spaces to become part of the great ground water system that moves slowly beneath the city toward Lake Ontario.

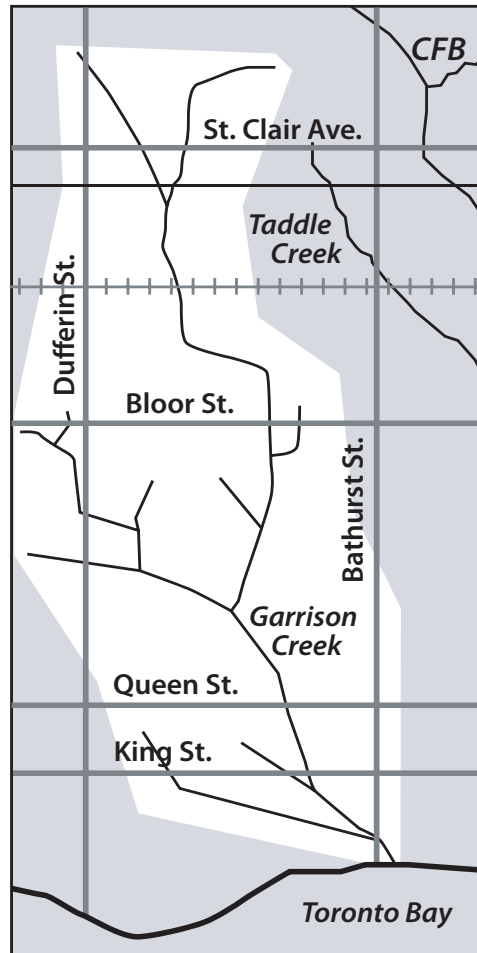
New interest in Garrison Creek arose in the 1980's and 90's when it became clear that the combined storm and sanitary sewers constructed beginning in the late 1800's were too small to properly serve modern development. During heavy storms, the combined effluent overloaded the sewers and treatment plants. Frequently raw sewage flowed untreated into the lake. Beaches became polluted and swimming had to be stopped after rainstorms. Recently, however, huge underground reservoirs have been constructed to temporarily retain sewer water until it can be let it out slowly to sewage treatment facilities.

Citizen groups and municipal councils have taken increased interest in the history of the creeks, rivers and sewers and possible means of reducing sewer overflows. In 1997, citizens in the St. Clair West area collected old maps and involved City planners, landscape architects, a civil engineer, a forester and others, to find traces of the old creek valleys in the headwater areas north of Dupont Street. As a result, new mapping was prepared showing that the east branch rose near the present site of Humewood School and the west branch rose in a shallow bowl of land south-east of the intersection of Earlscourt and Morrison Avenues.

Groups have formed to focus public attention on heritage, storm water, community planning and urban design implications arising from an increased understanding of Toronto's watercourses and "lost" creeks. Communities along the route of the creek are enhancing public understanding of the creek valley's place in our bio-region. Some are working to create stormwater management ponds that will recall the original creek; to restore buried bridges; to find ways of encouraging the public to enjoy greater use of the ravine system; and to plant trees and gardens along the course of the creek.

The Garrison Creek Steering Committee advises City Council on heritage and planning matters related to Garrison Creek. In 1997, City Council approved the Garrison Creek Linkage Project Status Report to provide guidance for developing and implementing initiatives for revitalizing the Garrison Creek area. Also, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation have produced the Garrison Creek "Discovery Walk" which traces the path of the buried Garrison Creek and explores parklands, neighbourhoods and streets along the way. See <www.toronto.ca/parks/index.htm>.

A more recent development that furthers revitalization of the creek area is the creation of a park where Garrison Creek originally entered Lake Ontario. As yet unnamed, this park is part of the Fort York National Historic Site and will be connected to Fort York under the Bathurst Street bridge. Over the next few years it will be developed as part of a large Toronto Community Housing project on the east side of Bathurst. Worth noting is that it will lead to a linear park running along the south side of the main rail corridor as far as York Street that will provide a safe, off-road pedestrian and bicycle path into the downtown.



Adapted from <lostrivers.ca>

News From

The Birthplace of Toronto

Contributions from the Staff at the Fort

The Great East Gate Of Fort York

by David Spittal, Archaeologist with the City's Culture division

When George Ramsay, the ninth Earl of Dalhousie and Governor-in-Chief of Canada, made a grand tour through Upper Canada in 1821, he took with him John Elliott Woolford as official draughtsman. Woolford made extensive sketches, recording the scenery and all the principal places along the Governor's route. Many of his pictures survive, including one of Fort York. This sepia-washed pencil sketch of 1821 is one of the earliest views of the fort known. Made from the east side of Garrison Creek, it records the fort's principal buildings including Blockhouse No. 1, the Guardhouse, Commandant's House and rear wings of the Officers' Brick Barracks. The ramparts at the east end appear with their wooden fraises. More importantly, the East Gate is clearly visible.



East gate, (NAC, C-99558 [detail])

When Fort York was rebuilt in 1813-16, its main entrance was at the east or 'town' end, overlooking Garrison Creek. The East Gate, built probably at that time, is almost unknown except for Woolford's sketch. He depicted it as an impressive square-topped structure with an arched doorway, approached on an inclined bridge or gangway with railings. The ascent from Garrison Creek up to the gate and into the fort was steep and difficult. It was made easier, however, by a long feature that appears within the fort on both Hughes' site plan of 1814 and on Nicolls' better known plan of 1816.

It has been interpreted as two retaining walls flanking an upward-sloping roadway that extended about 100 feet west from the gate. Archaeological excavations have twice unearthed there a roadway surface formed of logs like a 'corduroy road.' A few courses of unmortared flat stone found on the north side of the road are almost certainly evidence of a retaining wall.

Details about the gate itself are few. An estimate made in 1818 for repairs to Barracks requested funds "to renew the retaining wall on each side of the entrance to the Fort and to shingle the roof over the arched Gateway". A report on the state of defenses at Fort York in 1838 noted that the "Main Entrance Consisting externally of a Counterpoise barrier and internally of an 8 inch Oak folding door" was very much out of repair. This counterpoise gate, like the drawbridge at a medieval castle, would have used chains and a heavy weight to raise a section of the railed bridge shown in Woolford's sketch. Ordinary wooden gates provided a second means of closing. The counterpoise machinery and internal folding gates were housed in the gate head. Slits that the artist showed on either side of the portal may have been openings for the counterpoise chains.

Records from two other Canadian forts suggest what the Fort York gate looked like. A sectional drawing of the drawbridge at Fort Mississauga shows a wooden bridge crossing the ditch in front of the fort. The last part of the bridge was lifted up to close the gateway when a weight attached to chains was lowered into a pit inside the gate. Fort Mississauga also had interior wooden barrier gates.

Several historic photographs and drawings show details of the large northeast gate at Fort Lennox at Ile aux Noix, Que. It is strikingly similar in appearance to the gate at Fort York in Woolford's view. A plan and section of the Fort Lennox gateway shows a counterpoise attached by means of iron chains to the last 12-foot section of an entrance bridge. Cast iron weighing more than 700 pounds formed the actual counter weight of the drawbridge. Several excellent photographs of the Quebec fortification (minus the counterpoise) have survived and give a wonderful impression of what the Fort York gate may have looked like.

The stout stone gate at Fort Lennox measured about 26 feet in width and was about 20 feet high. Scaling Nicolls' 1816 plan, it appears the gate at Fort York was about 27 feet wide. And while no archaeological evidence has been found



Fort Lennox, McCord Museum.

yet to show the Fort York portal was built of stone, like Fort Lennox, the area where it stood has seen much disturbance over the years and may not have yielded up all its secrets yet.

The great East Gate of Fort York probably lasted from the fort's reconstruction at the end of the War of 1812 until just after the 1837 Rebellion. A report on the fort's defenses in 1838 states that there was a counterpoise and folding gate. An estimate made a year later seeks money to make an entrance through the curtain of the western front and to make and hang two barrier gates through the palisades to both east and west fronts. The old counterpoise gate may have been removed about this time. It does not appear in an 1840s lithograph by Hugh Scobie after a watercolour by John Gillespie.

In 1860, a large wooden trestle bridge was built from the foot of Bathurst Street at Front across the creek towards the east gate of the fort. At about the same time, new wooden barrier gates were erected at both the east and west entrances to the fort. They consisted of stout square posts with folding gates; the remnants of them can be seen in several late 19th century pictures of the fort. They seem to have decayed and finally disappeared around 1900.

The early 20th century saw the east entrance opened completely, with no barriers to stop traffic passing through the fort. In 1909 a well known Toronto architect, W. Ford Howland, designed impressive stone gatehouses in the gothic style for both entrances. Proposed to be named after Simcoe and Brock, they were never built.

After the Park-Blackwell meat-packing plant on the fort's east edge was demolished in 1929, the ramparts there were reconstructed, but for a short time there was no gate at all. Access was by means of a stile or set of stairs over the wall at the foot of the new walkway from Bathurst Street. However, when the fort was restored in 1932-34 as part of Toronto's Centennial celebrations, a new gate was built at the north-east angle. It was not located accurately, however, and in 1981 the south-east bastion and the entire east wall, including the gate, were demolished and rebuilt in their present positions.

The entrance today is built of stone to match the 1932 stone revetment wall, with a short stone retaining wall on the exterior. Aligned more or less correctly towards the corner of Bathurst and Front Streets, it has heavy barrier gates and a small watch-gate opening. But outside it the ground now slopes gently down to railway lands. Gone are the Garrison Creek, steep banks and wooden bridge. The present barrier only hints at the impressive gateway that once dominated this spot. *Fort York: Adding New Buildings* proposes that eventually the gate should be reconstructed in all its grandeur. This would make a significant contribution to the fort's appearance if done in concert with improvements to the surrounding landscape

Site-work Update

by David O'Hara, Site Administrator

Driveway & Archaeological Landscape

The new entry drive to Fort York is now open and steps will be taken to change the fort's municipal address from 100 Garrison Road to a Fort York Blvd. address. Having been turned down on our requests for #1793 and #1812, we've now asked for #200.

With the entry drive finished and the work on the 'Archaeological Landscape' nearing completion, the fort is more accessible by car, foot and bicycle. It also has a much stronger physical presence along its southern boundary. Peter Smith of du Toit Allsopp Hillier who has been managing the Archaeological Landscape contract, has been a tremendous help advising on the adjacent entry drive work. Over the next several weeks, work will focus on cleaning up the parking lot and installing new entry signs.

Victoria Memorial Square

After several delays, progress is evident. The park has been graded and new walkways are being installed. The phase II work is being tendered, likely for Spring construction, and work is ongoing on the interpretive plan, led by Gary Miedema of Heritage Toronto.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the City's agent for the development of the four city-owned housing sites in the Railway Lands, has submitted its application for an Official Plan Amendment and Re-zoning of the development parcels to the immediate east of the Bathurst Bridge. A report on the development will be going to Council for approval this September. Culture Division staff and the Friends of Fort York have been heavily involved to-date and look forward to continued participation throughout the next phases of detailed design.

With over 650 housing units geared towards lower income families with children, this development will be a welcome



Credit: du Toit Allsopp Hillier/TCHC

addition to the neighbourhood. The Toronto Public Library is also considering locating a new district branch at the north east corner of Fort York Blvd and Bathurst Street, presenting tremendous partnership opportunities.

The archaeological test trenching under the Bathurst bridge funded by the TTC and reported elsewhere will be coordinated with the Stage II archaeological work planned for the TCHC site. It will be undertaken by David Robertson and Ron Williamson of Archaeological Services Inc.

Fort York now a Registered Archaeological Site

In late August, the process of registering Fort York as an archaeological site was completed, giving it substantial protection under the provincial legislation. The boundaries of the archaeological site match those of the Heritage Conservation District.

Fall Clean-up

A fall clean-up of the fort is planned for Saturday November 4. Volunteers will meet in the parking lot at the west gates at 10:00 am (coffee will be provided). Please dress appropriately and, if possible, bring work gloves. After the clean-up, volunteers are invited to attend the illustrated talk by Bruce Cane at 2:00pm (see upcoming events).

Archives Project

A significant amount of work is underway with the organization of our large collection of photographs, documents, maps and books. Rosalynn Mackenzie was hired in June after Fort York was successful with its grant application to Young Canada Works and the Canadian Council of Archives. Nancy Baines, who wrote the grant application and has spearheaded the project, continues to work with Rosalynn, Heather Cirulis and Christine Mosser. Shelving is on order, phone and network cabling have been installed, and the library will be moved into its new quarters in the Blue Barracks at some point in the fall/winter of this year.

2006 Upcoming Events Historic Fort York

Compiled by Melanie Garrison

SEPTEMBER

Dance and Dance-ability – Annual Event

Fri. Sept. 22 7:30 p.m.

If you like to dance and enjoy the social history of the early 19th century, you will find a unique opportunity to explore these interests at this 11th annual English Country Dance workshop. Participants will be guided through delightfully fun and easy dances from real 1812-era dance manuals. If you can walk to the beat of a lively tune, you'll enjoy this insight into life in the early days of Upper Canada. Beginners welcome. No partners required.

Pre-registration Required. \$10.

OCTOBER

Ghosts of the Garrison – Annual Event

**Fri. Oct. 20, Sat. Oct 21, Fri. Oct. 27, Sat. Oct 28
7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

Family event with lantern tours and ghost stories from the past.

Pre-registration Required. \$10, Children \$5.

NOVEMBER

Fort York Clean-up Day, Sat. Nov. 4 10:00 a.m.

Volunteers will meet in the parking lot at the west gate. Please dress appropriately and bring work gloves if possible (coffee will be provided). After the clean-up, all volunteers are invited to attend the illustrated talk by Bruce Cane.

From Fort York to the Fields of France: A Toronto Soldier's Experience During The Great War Sat. Nov. 4 2:00 p.m.

An illustrated talk by Bruce Cane, author of *It Made You Think of Home: The Haunting Journal of Deward Barnes, CEF 1916-1919*. Cane chronicles Barnes' travels from his enlistment and training at Fort York in 1916, to his unenviable duty as a rifleman in a firing squad that ended the life of a Canadian deserter. Cane provides valuable insight into the Canadian Great War experience by offering insightful interpretation of Barnes' daily journal entries.

Free with regular paid admission.

Remembrance Day

Sat. Nov. 11, 10:45 a.m., Strachan Avenue Cemetery

Annual ceremony presented by the Municipal Chapter of Toronto IODE and the Culture Division, City of Toronto. Tours of the fort following the ceremony.

Free Admission until 12:00 p.m.

Old House Seminar & Forum

**A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Maintaining a Century Home
Sun. Nov. 12 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Fort York, Toronto Culture and *Edifice Old Home Magazine* present a full day seminar of old house maintenance and restoration. Uncover ways to maintain, restore and rehabilitate an old house. Hear about practices and historically-accurate ways of restoring, many pioneered by speaker Christopher Cooper, editor-in-chief of *Edifice Old Home Magazine*. Topics include: heritage roofing, masonry and siding, wood windows, paint, caulking 101, wood trim, plaster, insulating, damp problems and solutions, and much more.

\$80 per person. Pre-registration required: to register call 519-752-9801.

*\$15 from every ticket will be donated to the purchase of an authentic reconstruction of a British Engineer Officer's uniform for the fort's exhibit *The Soldiers' Trade: 1793-1970*. For more information visit <www.oldhome.ca>*

DECEMBER

Fort York is closed from Sat. Dec. 16 '06 thru Mon. Jan. 1 '07.

Inquiries regarding rental of the facilities over the holidays should be directed to Marna Ward at 416-338-0030.