

# The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common

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## Creating the Cult of Laura Secord

by Sandra Martin

More than 1000 enthusiasts, including Laureen Harper, the Prime Minister's wife, and Rob Nicholson, the Minister of Justice, set out on a 20 mile (32 km) trek, along a specially marked "legacy" trail, on Saturday, June 22. These contemporary hikers were commemorating the 200th anniversary of Laura Secord's desperate walk to warn British troops about an impending American attack during the War of 1812–14.

A solitary pioneer woman who risked her life for her country, Laura Secord walked into history and is now one of the most celebrated of Canadian heroines. She has been honoured with stamps, statues, and Heritage Minutes. She has even had a chocolate company named after her.

The opposite was true, alas, during Mrs. Secord's lifetime. That's when she needed the recognition as the unheralded and impecunious wife of James Secord, a soldier badly wounded at the Battle of Queenston Heights, and the mother of his several, mainly female, children. She was an eighty-five-year-old widow when she finally received some financial recompense from no less a source than Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of Queen Victoria. He toured what is now Ontario in 1860 and awarded her £100 in recognition of her singular act of bravery and resourcefulness.

So why has she been such a posthumous laurel winner, finding a renewable set of supporters and fans as the decades have passed? What is it about her that appeals to disparate generations of Canadians? In some ways it is her "malleability," says Cecilia Morgan, co-author with Colin M. Coates of *Heroines & History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord*.

There is very little documentation in Mrs. Secord's own hand—no diaries or letters have been discovered to help create a psychological portrait. (And speaking of portraits, there is only one known photograph of Mrs. Secord, depicting her as a grandmotherly figure in bonnet and voluminous black dress sitting in a rocking chair holding what appears to be a bible in



Valerie Pringle (l.) and Laureen Harper (r.) stop briefly at DeCew's Field near the end of the Walk on June 22. It was here Laura Secord came upon a force of encamped Native warriors who took her to Lieut. James FitzGibbon's headquarters in the DeCew House to warn him of the impending American attack. Staff Photo

her lap). However frustrating for historians and biographers, the lack of papers makes Mrs. Secord an "empty vessel" into which so much can be poured, says Prof. Morgan.

Consequently, Mrs. Secord's character and appearance have been adapted in plays, poems, and text books to nurture the cultural and social values of any number of groups and causes: symbolizing Imperial ties with Britain; idealizing pioneer resourcefulness; exemplifying women's duties and responsibilities to family and country; personifying the goals of the suffrage movement; invoking patriotic zeal in the First World War. No less a talent than Fred Varley, later an official war artist and member of the Group of Seven, depicted Mrs. Secord as young and apprehensive but nonetheless intrepid, in a 1917 newspaper campaign to induce women to buy Victory Bonds.

And then, of course, there is the candy company. Founded in 1913, Laura Secord Candy Shops used her as a symbol of domesticity and femininity. When the company reinvented itself with a slick marketing campaign after the Second World War, the dour pioneer image of Ms. Secord also underwent a makeover, losing fifty years and as many pounds to become a younger, more attractive, more upscale version of herself.

One of the reasons Ms. Secord endures as a heroine, is that she “serves as an example of how women can be part of history without transgressing boundaries,” says Prof. Morgan. “There is never any suggestion that she took up arms, she didn’t cross dress... she is a very respectable figure.”

The historical Laura Secord (née Ingersoll) was born in Massachusetts on 13 September 1775, the year before the American Declaration of Independence was signed. Her father changed sides during the Revolutionary War and moved to the Niagara region of Upper Canada in 1795 to take up a land grant from the British crown. That’s where his daughter Laura met and married another loyalist, James Secord. He served in the militia under Major General Isaac Brock and was badly wounded in October 1812 at Queenston Heights, the same battle that saw his leader felled by enemy fire.

In Mrs. Secord’s first registered act of bravery, she rushed to the battlefield where she found her badly wounded husband, and ignoring enemy soldiers, brought him home where she nursed him through a lengthy convalescence. After the Americans captured Fort George and occupied Queenston and much of the Niagara area in the spring of 1813, they rounded up men of military age and sent them as prisoners back across the Niagara River to the United States and billeted their own soldiers with local settlers, including in the home of the invalid James Secord and his family.

That’s presumably how Mrs. Secord heard about the American plan to attack the British forces under Lieutenant James FitzGibbon. With her husband unable to make the journey, Mrs. Secord herself set out early on the morning of 22 June 1813 to warn Lieutenant FitzGibbon of the danger. En route, she tramped through bush, swampy ground, forded Twelve Mile Creek and stumbled into the camp of some Iroquois warriors who escorted her to Lt. FitzGibbon’s headquarters at the DeCew House in Thorold. Thus forewarned, the Iroquois and their British allies repulsed the American attack at the decisive Battle of Beaver Dams on June 24.

Given all of the ways that Mrs. Secord has been represented over the last century, it seems only fitting in an athletic, environmentalist age that she is being honoured with a walk. “We are tracing the footsteps of one of the most famous women in Canadian history,” says Caroline McCormick, the



*In November 1917, while war raged in Europe, sixteen companies in the financial industry joined to ask Canadian women to lend their money to buy Victory Bonds. The invitation appeared in several newspapers under the heading, “Laura Secord Risked Her Life For Her Country,” illustrated with a sketch by Frederick Horsman Varley who would soon leave for the Front as one of Canada’s war artists. Credit: The Globe [Toronto], 27 Nov. 1917, p. 7*

great-great-great granddaughter of Mrs. Secord, and the organizer behind the legacy trail, the commemorative hike, and The Friends of Laura Secord association.

“Her story still resonates so strongly, because she represents courage and going the extra mile,” according to Ms. McCormick. “She was an ordinary person who did something extraordinary.” And that perhaps is the best explanation of Mrs. Secord’s enduring appeal: She provides a lesson in heroism that transcends class, gender, and ethnicity. Any of us ordinary folk can achieve immortality if we rise to the challenge—no matter the era.

*Sandra Martin is the author of Working the Dead Beat: 50 Lives that Changed Canada (House of Anansi Press)*



## SAVE-THE-DATE



**Thursday, 26 September 2013**—for The Friends’ 15th annual Georgian Dinner featuring a sumptuous array of dishes from recipes provided by the fort’s historic kitchens and served family-style as in the early 19th century.

The Dinner is by invitation to members of The Friends of Fort York, Corporate Sponsors, and their guests. If you’d like to join The Friends and receive an invitation, please visit our website [www.fortyork.ca](http://www.fortyork.ca). To become a sponsor, please enquire at [sponsor@fortyork.ca](mailto:sponsor@fortyork.ca).

# How Lower Canada Saved Upper Canada in the War of 1812

by Desmond Morton

Though Stephen Harper spent up to \$24 million helping us commemorate the War of 1812, little was spent in Quebec. Apart from the Battle of Châteauguay, which ended the only powerful American thrust at Montreal, Lower Canada's role in the war is forgotten, especially by its chief beneficiaries.

Upper Canada's war effort depended on convincing thousands of recent immigrants from the United States that a tiny British garrison could defeat the American invaders. Bishop Strachan's version of that feat has sufficed for Ontario textbooks: "never, surely, was greater activity shown in any country than our militia have exhibited, nor greater valour, cooler resolution and more resolved conduct ... they have twice saved the country." Such claims from the chaplain of the Family Compact fit Mr. Harper's purposes better than more complex truths.

From Michilimackinac to Queenston Heights, Lower Canadians, Native and French-speaking, helped win the battles that reassured Upper Canadians. They could do so because of the long warlike tradition in New France and because most British governors chose a conciliatory role in converting former French colonists to switch allegiances.

Before General James Wolfe's death, he persuaded his generals to respect the Catholicism of the King's new subjects. Governor James Murray complied. The Bishop of Quebec had died in 1760. Without a bishop, new clergy could not be ordained. Catholicism would gradually have died, to the delight of many British and Americans. Instead, Murray found a suitable candidate, paid his way to England, and persuaded English Catholics to smuggle him to France to be consecrated. On his return, Bishop Briand earned a salary from Murray's funds and became a dependable ally.

So did most seigneurs, after Murray defied English-speaking newcomers and used military courts to sustain New France's legal system from the British but alien Common Law. With clergy and seigneurs as grateful beneficiaries of his policies, Murray's successor, Guy Carleton, campaigned for a Quebec Act that sustained Murray's policies. American revolutionaries raged at this abominable provocation.

Murray and Carleton probably accelerated the American Revolution but when revolutionary forces invaded Quebec in 1775, seigneurs and their sons were prominent in the

resistance. The invaders left the hideous souvenirs of any untrained, undisciplined army: rape, murder, and pillage. By 1776 it proved much easier to find French-speaking volunteers to carry the war south of the border. France's 1789 Revolution helped convert Lower Canada's allegiance from Louis XVI to George III.

When Britain went to war with revolutionary France, the Duke of Kent, father to a future Queen Victoria and army commander in Lower Canada, formed two embodied French-speaking battalions. From his own pocket he purchased commissions for ten likely young French Canadians. One of them, Charles-Michel d'Armand de Salaberry, would be a major figure in the War of 1812. So were the embodied Royal Canadiens. Disbanded in 1802 as an economy, they returned to their parishes as instructors and junior leaders for the colony's militia.

By 1812, Lower Canada had the most efficient militia in North America. War came chiefly because Republican War Hawks, elected to Congress, wanted to regain the Indian Territory Americans had accepted in 1783 to satisfy a British concern for their Native allies. War Hawks, like the

modern "Tea Party," hated taxes and despised peacetime armies. They insisted that state militia were the best fighters in the world and would not have to be paid. This was war on the cheap!

As Alan Taylor reminds us in his splendid *Civil War of 1812*, some state militias were effective but most were too terrified of Native warriors to stand and fight. French Canadians knew the Native peoples as allies and neighbours. As war approached, British authorities created a new "embodied" regiment, the Voltigeurs Canadiens, and gave the command to a newly-promoted Charles-Michel de Salaberry. Companies of the new unit were sent to join Major General Isaac Brock's handful of soldiers in Upper Canada. Only early victories could save Brock's colony. The British at Amherstburg heard unofficially, before US Brigadier General William Hull, that a state of war existed. Hence, when he sent a ship, the *Cuyahoga Packet*, to transport sick, invalids, and baggage from a port on Lake Erie to Detroit, Lieutenant Charles-Frédéric Rolette commanding the schooner *HMS General Hunter* detained the *Cuyahoga* in transit, pending the arrival of the official declaration of war. Such boldness was



Nicolas de Salaberry stands with a portrait of his ancestor, Charles-Michel de Salaberry, at a ceremony at Fort York in June 2012 to launch the bicentennial commemorations of the War of 1812. Photo by Tanya Benard



*In this painting by Peter Rindlisbacher the American schooner Cuyahoga Packet is detained off Amherstburg in June 1812 by the General Hunter of the Provincial Marine of Upper Canada captained by Lieutenant Charles-Frédéric Rolette. Courtesy of the artist*

typical of Rolette, a francophone veteran of Nelson's victories at the Nile and Trafalgar, who had a distinguished career in the Provincial Marine during the war and in the British Navy on the St. Lawrence afterward.

Michilimackinac (now Mackinaw) fell to a handful of British troops and a battalion of voyageurs mobilized by Toussaint Pothier and including Rolette's older brother, Jean-Joseph, a prominent fur trader. Nervous neutrals began to have second thoughts about who would win. When Brock captured Detroit and an American army under General William Hull, Voltigeur companies formed part of Brock's assault force. Upper Canada's conversion was complete. In November, when Brock died, leading an assault on Queenston Heights, the tide might have reversed. Instead, a force of Iroquois, commanded by French-speaking officers from the Army's Indian department, closed in on the victorious Americans. They fled in terror, leaving a thousand comrades to surrender. The 1812 campaign ended with both Canadas secure, though already dependent for dinner on American cattle smuggled across the Lower Canadian frontier, in an operation managed in good part by Fleury Deschambault, once the richest man

in New France and now quartermaster-general of Lower Canada's militia.

There would be more battles and more contributions from Lower Canada in 1813. Laura Secord bravely brought news of an impending American attack but it was the Iroquois who fixed the road signs that sent the Americans into the vast swamp called Beaver Dams. War cries terrified them into seeking surrender—except that the Iroquois' commander, Dominique Ducharme, spoke no English. Lieutenant James FitzGibbon intervened to save the terrified invaders. Later he insisted that Ducharme's men deserved sole credit for the success. That year, the Voltigeurs fought their most costly battle, defeating the Americans at Crysler's Farm in 1813, a few weeks after Salaberry's half of the Voltigeurs and militia from Montreal and border townships stopped an American invasion up the Châteauguay River.

French Canadians were not invited to be part of the concluding battles of the war at Plattsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, and New Orleans that gave colour to American claims to have won the War of 1812. Once British regulars were available in quantity, Canadians were not invited, though their presence might have changed the outcome. The fact remains that Upper Canadians were far more entitled to Bishop Strachan's compliments after the victories of 1812 in which their French-speaking neighbours played a vital role.

In today's Canada of two grumpy neighbours, a little gratitude is a small price for peace, order, and cordiality.

*A graduate of College Militaire Royal de St-Jean, the Royal Military College of Canada, Oxford University, and the London School of Economics, Professor Morton served ten years in the Canadian Army before becoming a professor of history at the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto, and McGill University, where he is now Hiram Mills Professor Emeritus. He was founding director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada in 1994. The author of forty-two books on Canadian political, military, and industrial relations history he was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1996.*

## *Reporting on The Friends' AGM June 19*

About two dozen members attended the annual general meeting of The Friends of Fort York on June 19 in Blockhouse Number One. The first item up was to approve the minutes from the 2012 AGM. That was followed by co-chair Stephen Otto outlining the dual challenges of renewing the board in readiness for the post-Bicentennial era when the new Visitor Centre is open, and of investing our cash surplus to support the Fort York Guard & Drums now that we may no longer rely upon our parking operations to produce a sufficient income. The Treasurer Joe Gill then tabled for acceptance the organization's statements at 31 December 2012, showing its financial health to be in the best shape ever. He was followed by Geordie Beal proposing on behalf of the Nominating

Committee the re-election of twenty of the current directors, which carried. Only Rob Zeidler (who was thanked for his service) chose not to seek re-election, although several other places are expected to open up in the next two years. The Committee is taking suggestions for filling these as they occur, in light of the skills needed by The Friends to continue to function without staff as a hundred-percent volunteer organization. Finally, Joe Gill took those present through changes to the organization's by-laws drafted by our lawyers, some that are required to comply with the *Federal Non-profit Corporations Act*, and others, that if approved by the government, will simplify its governance. The meeting concluded at 9 pm.

## Bicentennial Timeline: July to September 1813

**July** Town of York saw its population drop since 1812 from 700 to 625; in York Township it fell from 756 to 669.

**Jul. 7** The Light Companies of the 1st Royal Scots, 2nd/89th Regt. ordered to proceed from Kingston to York by batteaux, together with the HQ of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and a small detachment of Royal Artillery.

**Jul. 14** Captain James Basden (2nd/89th Regt.) arrived about July 9 with a woman of “improper character” in his boat contrary to King’s Regulations. Deemed unfit “to be entrusted with the charge of a select company” Basden was removed from command for several months.

**Jul. 26** George Prevost acting as Commander of the Forces approved schedules of payment to the Natives for prisoners of war brought in alive (\$5 per head) and for injuries or deaths sustained in battle.

**Jul. 31** Americans capture York a second time. They burn storehouses, seize boats and guns before withdrawing a day later.

**Aug. 10** “The Enemy’s late visit to York” is front page news in the *Kingston Gazette*, the only newspaper being

published in Upper Canada after the destruction of the press at York. It was suspected that “traitors amongst ourselves” had furnished the Americans with information about troop movements.

**Aug. 10** Over the past month three soldiers with their wives had children baptized at St. James’s.

**Aug. 17** The *Kingston Gazette* reported on the “capture and loss of four of the Enemy’s Armed Schooners.” Captured were *Growler* and *Julia*; lost were *Scourge* and *Hamilton* “upset on the night of the 9th” with heavy loss of life. In 1975 *Scourge* and *Hamilton* were located, upright, on the floor of Lake Ontario.

**Aug. 26** Lt. Colonel Ralph Bruyeres, Commanding Royal Engineer (Quebec), arrived in York to make plans for Fort York’s rebuilding. He had ordered a detachment of Royal Sappers & Miners to proceed from Kingston with “a full proportion of Tools.”

**Sept. 10** Americans win Battle of Lake Erie at Put-in-Bay, near Sandusky, Ohio.

**Sept. 25** The cost of flour was 10 a barrel; a four oz. loaf of bread sold for 1s. 1/2d. or 20p NY currency.

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## City Accepts Generous Gift of Paintings from Artist Charles Pachter

On May 7 Toronto City Council voted to accept from Charles Pachter, one of the city’s best known artists, a magnificent gift of his 1812: *The Art of War* series. The artist himself wrote about it in *The Fife and Drum*, March 2012, where five of the works were illustrated. It is expected that the fourteen donated paintings will hang in the orientation theatre of the Fort York Visitor Centre when it opens in 2014. Some may also be available for loan and display elsewhere.

Widely-admired for his gentle humour and kindness, Pachter is known for his remarkable imagination in choosing his subjects, many of which are inspired by contemporary events and national institutions; for his recognizable style, freshness of colour, and good-natured titles. His outstanding talent and unselfish love for Canada were recognized when he was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1999 and promoted to the rank of Officer in 2011. He also holds an honorary doctorate from Brock University.

However, Pachter’s interest in Fort York doesn’t end with his paintings. In 2009 he was a member of a jury that chose the winning design for the new Visitor Centre, now under construction. And when the Fort York branch of the Toronto Public Library, being built currently on Bathurst Street

opposite the fort, is opened in late 2013 or early 2014, it will include a public art component by Pachter and his good friend, Margaret Atwood. His sketch for ‘The Planters’ from their joint work, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1980), will be etched on aluminum louvres along the exterior wall overlooking Fort York. Some of her poems will be inscribed nearby.



Artist Charles Pachter seen at his easel working on Brock’s Premonition, one of the works included in his generous gift. Courtesy of the artist

## Pictures of a Perfect Day

The 200th anniversary to the day of the Battle of York, 27 April 1813, was marked by an impressive stream of events starting at dawn that ended in the evening. It came off without a hitch and attracted record crowds. Peerless weather prevailed, the kind that was called 'Queen's weather' in the 19th century, with cloudless skies and perfect spring temperatures.

The Friends of Fort York would like to thank everyone who made 27 April 2013 a very special day. The many hundreds who turned out for the Sunrise Ceremony and 5 km trek from the American invaders' landing place to Fort York. The thousands who watched HRH Prince Philip present a new colour to the Royal Canadian Regiment at Queen's Park or who lined the route from there to Fort York as 1500 soldiers and sailors accompanied by fourteen bands paraded by. And the more than 7000 people who crowded into Fort York to join in impressive ceremonies involving the Lieutenant-Governor and other dignitaries, First Nations leaders and people, military re-enactors and current armed forces personnel.



Bands of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (in green) and the Royal Regiment of Canada (in red) step smartly down Portland St. towards Victoria Memorial Square in the Canadian Forces parade marking Toronto's bicentennial commemoration of the Battle of York, 27 April 2013. Photo by Sid Calzavara



Re-enactors in regular uniforms and a militia dressed more casually present arms at Battle of York Day ceremonies at Fort York on April 27. Photo: Department of National Defence

Particularly, we would like to thank those who put the commemorations together, notably the First Nations, men and women of the armed services, Sandra Shaul, David O'Hara, and the staff and volunteers at Fort York.

We've made an album of some of the best pictures taken on April 27 by several photographers. Captioned and credited, they can be seen here [https://picasaweb.google.com/strataconsulting/BattleOfYorkBicentennial?authuser=0&authkey=Gv1sRgCOzG2L3u0N6\\_wwE&feat=directlink](https://picasaweb.google.com/strataconsulting/BattleOfYorkBicentennial?authuser=0&authkey=Gv1sRgCOzG2L3u0N6_wwE&feat=directlink) Also, a number of good photos appear on a DND-sponsored Flickr site [http://www.flickr.com/photos/lfca\\_multimedia/8686776006/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/lfca_multimedia/8686776006/in/photostream/)

## York Pioneers Open Scadding Cabin on Battle of York Day

The York Pioneers celebrated Battle of York Day, 2013, by opening the Scadding cabin in Exhibition Place for a special pre-seasonal viewing by visitors. The cabin, built in 1794, was relocated there in 1879. <http://www.yorkpioneers.org/cabin.html> From the left: Ken Carter, York Pioneer President; Brooke Jarvis, Peter Ridout, Barry Mapes, wearing the garrison uniform of the Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada; Devon Jones; Audrey Fox, representing the Jarvis family; Cheryl Kennedy, representing the Playter family; Linda Kelly, representing the Flumerfelt family; David Jarvis and Diane Reid. Linda Kelly's ancestor, Cornelius Flumerfelt, wrote the well-known folk tune "Bold Canadian" that celebrated the victory of General Brock and the York Militia at Detroit in 1812.



Photo by David Raymont



## Kiwi Airmen at Fort York

Although Fort York was a popular attraction for airmen quartered nearby at the CNE during the Second World War, photos of aircrew trainees visiting the fort are rare. Here LAC R.B. Vernazoni (second from left) and fellow trainees from the Royal New Zealand Air Force pose for a photograph atop the south wall of the fort in April 1942. Visible are the Blue Barracks and the gasholder near Front and Bathurst Streets (left), and possibly the Bank of Commerce building in the distance (right). Vernazoni was later killed on operations over Europe in 1943. *Credit: Gareth Newfield*

## Historica-Dominion Heritage Minute Winners

Eamonn O’Keeffe of the Fort York Guard, aged sixteen, and his high school friend, Patrick Y. Lee, have won the Historica-Dominion Institute’s Heritage Minute contest for their dramatization of the 1100 km trek by the 104th Regiment from New Brunswick to Upper Canada in the winter of 1813. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8mWYjPHbVw> Nine other members of the Guard (Cameron Anderson, Conran Cosgrove, Pierce Cosgrove, Samantha Horne, Simon Li, Baknel Macz, Stuart Murray, Sally O’Keeffe, and Graeme Sylvia) acted in the film based on a journal of the march kept by Lieutenant John Le Couteur, himself only eighteen years old at the time. *The Huffington Post*, *CBC News*, *Sun News*, and *Global TV “Morning Show”* all reported on the prize-winning entry, which has been selected as a Toronto International Film Festival Next Wave finalist. It even attracted notice from *BBC Jersey Radio* and *The Jersey Evening Post* on the Channel Islands where Le Couteur was born.



*Eamonn O’Keeffe and Patrick Lee were interviewed on ‘The Morning Show’ on Global Television in connection with their taking first prize in the Heritage Minute contest. Courtesy of Global Television, “The Morning Show”*



## Walmart-Evergreen Green Grant to the Gardens at Fort York

Recently The Friends were granted \$5000 by the Evergreen Foundation and Walmart for upgrades to the community gardens along the north ramparts and to contribute to workshops, a couple of neighbourhood events, and a potluck-style ‘harvest-home’ gathering, all organized by the Fort York Garden volunteers. Six new garden boxes and at least three fruit-tree boxes will be built; the trees will be acquired; and the existing planting-boxes topped up with soil and compost. In his take on Guard-ener Gothic, Fort York Guardsman Matthew Wrigglesworth hams it up in front of a shed in the garden. *Photo by Mark D’Aguilar*

## Pat Fleming

Under the open-ended theme of “Boundless,” the University of Toronto has been fundraising since November 2011 towards a target of \$2 billion in gifts for new scholarships, fellowships and facilities. To date almost 81,000 alumni and friends have contributed. The University reinforces its pitch with a series of lamppost banners carrying pictures of distinguished faculty, alumni and graduate students. Among those honoured thus is Dr. Patricia Fleming, professor emerita in the Faculty of Information and a director of the Friends of Fort York since 2007. Pat was the first director of the iSchool’s Book History and Print Culture program, but readers of *Fife & Drum* may know her better as the editor of this newsletter. Her banner hangs in front of Robarts Library. She is amused that it looks down on one of the ubiquitous sausage wagons there. *Photo by Matthew Blackett*



*News From*

# *The Birthplace of Toronto*

*Contributions from the Staff at the Fort*

## Administrator's Report

*by David O'Hara, Site Administrator*

On April 27th some 7000 people descended upon Fort York National Historic Site to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of York. With the weather cooperating fully, the day began at 6:15 am with a Sunrise Ceremony led by the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. Approximately 800 people then joined 'Walking in Their Footsteps,' a walking tour from the point of the American landing near the Palais Royal to Fort York. Meanwhile, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was at Queen's Park presenting a new Regimental Colour to the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. This ceremony was followed by a military parade of more than 1500 sailors and soldiers of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Army from Queen's Park to Fort York. Following an afternoon Service of Remembrance at Fort York, a new plaque honouring the First Nations warriors who died in the Battle of York was unveiled. Visit <http://www.toronto.ca/1812/events.htm> for more information.

Our annual Doors Open Toronto program brought approximately 2500 to the fort on May 25-26 and well over 10,000 attended 'Field Trip' on June 8. Field Trip, a music and arts festival, was tremendously successful—a family-oriented, free for children event in celebration of the 10th anniversary of Toronto-based music label Arts & Crafts.

On the heels of Field Trip, we moved into the War of 1812 Festival weekend on June 15-16. Fort York staff worked closely with narrator and director Peter Twist and our core supporters from the Re-Enactment Regiments of the Crown

Forces and U.S. Forces of North America to dramatize the events of 27 April 1813. This was the first time a re-enactment of that scale has taken place at Fort York in over a decade. Other components of this festival included a Sutlers' Row marketplace, music from the Drums of the Crown Forces and Gin Lane, and performances by the York Regency Dancers and Anishinaube performers Morningstar River. Special thanks go to Peter Twist and to Kevin Hebib, Richard Haynes, and all staff and volunteers for pulling together such a unique event as we wind down our bicentennial events at Fort York.

The lineup of Aboriginal programming for the June 20-22 Indigenous Arts Festival included the Métis Fiddler Quartet, the launch of Donald B. Smith's book *Mississauga Portraits* (University of Toronto Press), Ogitchada (Warrior) songs from Morningstar River, and the premiere of two stunning works: 'The Road' by Toronto's Centre for Indigenous Theatre and 'The Honouring' by Kaha:wi Dance Theatre. On June 21 Fort York marked National Aboriginal Day with traditional stories, songs, dances, and a Sunset Ceremony and on June 22, out in New Credit near Hagersville, a new Community Centre was opened with an exhibit titled 'Outcome of the War of 1812: First Nations Betrayed.' This exhibit, along with much of our National Aboriginal Day programming is the result of the ongoing partnership between the City of Toronto's Museum Services and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Although a few weeks delayed due to weather, construction of the Visitor Centre is moving along with the foundation work largely complete. Actual building completion is still



*Photo by Lucia Graca / Field Trip Music & Arts Festival*



*Photo by David Hou for Kaha:wi*





Photo by Andrew Stewart

scheduled for May/June of 2014 with exhibit installation to follow. Parallel projects, including the rehabilitation of the Garrison Common and planning for the Fort York Pedestrian bridge, continue to move ahead. One of the next major components of the overall landscape master plan now being investigated is the future removal of the obsolete Garrison Road bridge. The plan is to demolish the bridge structure and to create a level route at the lower Garrison

Common elevation. This will have a huge and positive impact on the overall site, providing a much stronger connection between the Armoury and Fleet Street portion of the national historic site and the actual Common, and allowing for improved access through the site in the area of the Visitor Centre.

With restoration work completed on the Brick Magazine, the exhibit 'Finding the Fallen: The Battle of York Remembered' has now been installed in the building. Those visiting the site recently might have noticed the new windows in the North Soldiers' Barracks. These windows have been meticulously hand-crafted by Chris Laverton, Cultural Assets staff, from wood salvaged from the Queen's Wharf after archaeological investigation at Bathurst and Fleet streets. The landscape design at the east end of the national historic site is also moving along. The last public meeting was held on May 15 and the response to the final conceptual design and approach was very positive. I encourage everyone to view the presentation material from the first public meeting [http://ward20.ca/files/2013-03-05\\_CreekParkPresentation.pdf](http://ward20.ca/files/2013-03-05_CreekParkPresentation.pdf).

Presentation material from the most recent public meeting has yet to be posted.

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## Rising from the Ashes: Fort York 1813 to 1816

by Chris Laverton

A chronology of the construction of Fort York is one of the largely unexplored aspects of the site's history. It is a complex and interesting story, the progress of which is not helped by a curious lack of surviving documentation; not one of the various engineers' estimates, for example, has ever been found in the Canadian archives. A researcher must cobble together clues and references from alternative sources.

At the opening of hostilities with the United States, the present site of the fort on the west side of Garrison Creek was occupied by the Government House and its complex of associated public buildings. The genesis of this grouping lay in the earlier proposal to remove the Marine Establishment from Kingston to York. To this end, Major General Isaac Brock recommended that the Government House site be established as a 'Citadel' and military post, and fortified against a westward attack. Work began in April 1812, with the preparation of a temporary magazine, the excavation of a ditch (forming the present west curtain wall) and a demi-lune battery (the present Circular Battery), mounting two 12-pounder cannon, on the embankment at the southeast corner of the Government House. With the exception of the magazine, these features—plus the garrison well—are all that remain today of the works that were in place during the American attack of 27 April 1813.

Following the destruction of the Government House and the town and garrison blockhouses by departing US troops, the accommodation for British troops at York was substantially diminished. Moreover, when the enemy returned on 31 July 1813, they burned all but six of the remaining barracks at the garrison, making the post all but untenable for the British army when it was proposed to send troops back to reoccupy the capital. Lt. Colonel Ralph Henry Bruyeres, the Commanding Royal Engineer, came from Quebec in late August under orders to erect blockhouses for the accommodation of troops and stores. He set about directing the cleanup of the site for that purpose. The immediate priority was to construct a variety of temporary (i.e. wooden) buildings as quickly as possible.

Shipbuilding timbers left unburnt at the dockyard were hauled to the new garrison site for the construction of Blockhouses Number One and Two. The debris of the Government House complex was scoured away and dumped over the embankment; any materials that could be reused (primarily building stone) were salvaged. The burnt-out shells of the Parliament buildings in town were converted into barracks, and by the end of November 1813, Blockhouses One and Two had been raised and were ready to be roofed in, but the work was delayed into the New Year owing to poor weather and the chronic want of artificers.

The year 1814 was a busy one. By March, the two blockhouses we know today had been finished, as also was the new Western Battery, which had been mounted with guns. More ordnance was arriving daily to replace that taken by the enemy. The batteries in the garrison, however,

remained unarmed. An Ordnance Store was building at the garrison, a blockhouse was under construction in the ravine at Lot (later Queen) Street, and another to replace the two lost on Gibraltar Point. Elmsley House had been converted to a hospital, and the stable into barracks. By the end of May, the blockhouse on Gibraltar Point had been completed, with a glacis. By July, the blockhouse in the ravine had also been completed with a glacis, and the garrison entirely enclosed with pickets. In August, the estimate for the range of splinterproof barracks (along the south wall) was submitted, and in September, those for the construction of the Garrison Hospital in the ravine (north of the Fort) and the woodframe Officers' ('Blue') Barracks were approved. By December, construction had begun on the Brick Magazine. Materials for such 'Engineer Services' were delivered by ship, landed on the beach, and hauled up by contractors' teams of oxen into the garrison.

By 6 January 1815, twenty-year-old 1st Lieutenant William Matthew Gossett, RE had arrived from Kingston to take charge of the department at York. He was a veteran of the attack on Oswego, New York (5-6 May 1814), and would be responsible for the construction of the majority of the

'permanent' buildings in the new garrison, all but two of which survive to this day. A search of the Commissariat Account Book shows that over the course of five days in March 1815, his estimates for the South and North Soldiers'

Barracks, Stone Magazine, Fort Adjutant's Office and Quarters (1815-1838), Officers' Brick Barracks and Mess Room, and the Commandant's Quarters (burned in 1869) were approved. Gossett superintended the principal construction of these buildings (see "The Thomsons: Early Builders at Fort York," *Fife and Drum* July 2010). Unfortunately, he was removed to Kingston in September and, so, likely never saw them to completion.

Intriguingly, however, in July 1815, he'd literally left his mark on one of these buildings—the Stone Magazine—the work of which he was apparently the most proud. Gossett was succeeded by 1st Lieutenant Henry Hill Willson, RE who remained in command of the department at York until the arrival of 1st Lieutenant George Phillpotts and his young family in June 1816, when all the buildings surviving today had been reconstructed

*Now on the staff of Toronto Culture, Chris Laverton worked as an interpreter at Fort York from 1983 to 1986.*



*Architects sometimes sign their buildings. Lieutenant William Matthew Gossett was Commanding Engineer at York when he caused his initials and the year to be carved into a brick arch in the interior of the Stone Magazine. Photo by Chris Laverton*

## *The Return of the Third York Militia Colours*

*by Alex Avdichuk*

After four years of conservation treatment the Third Regiment of York Militia Colours have finally returned to the City of Toronto's Historical Collection. Restoring these remarkable textiles to a prominent place in Toronto history would not have been possible without the help of St. James' Cathedral, The Friends of Fort York, and the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa.

I will not revisit the extraordinary history of these two War of 1812 flags (a story told by Carl Benn in the July 2007 issue of *Fife and Drum*), except to mention that their survival almost defies belief. Textiles of this vintage are rare enough, but those made of fragile silk are even more so. Add to these facts that the colours were believed to have been buried in 1813 to prevent their capture, and then were on display in St. James' Cathedral for the next hundred years, and their survival to see their bicentennial is remarkable.

The latest effort to conserve the colours began with their transfer from St. James' Cathedral to the City of Toronto, a move aided by The Friends of Fort York. The City's Museum Services first applied for conservation treatment at the



*Textile conservators at the Canadian Conservation Institute, Ottawa, apply net to the Regimental Colour to hold it together during the treatment process. All photos courtesy of the Canadian Conservation Institute*

Canadian Conservation Institute in 2007. The colours were accepted for conservation a year later, with actual treatment commencing in April 2009.

Textile conservators at CCI were excited about the project because it allowed them to study the previous conservation treatments that had been applied to the textiles, such as the stitching of cotton net over the flag fragments in 1927, and the use of a Plexiglas pressure mount in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> This project was a rare opportunity to study the materials used previously, and judge their suitability and survival over time, prior to undertaking the new conservation treatment.

Conservation of the flags required thousands of hours of scientific analysis and specialized labour by CCI. The project record consists of more than one hundred pages of treatment reports documenting the process, soon to be summarized in a final report written by CCI. Labour costs for the project were absorbed by CCI, while Museum Services covered expenses relating to materials, transportation, and storage. The most significant costs borne by the City related to the custom-made pressure mounts, oversized glazing, and frames for each flag.

The conservation of the York Militia colours is an outstanding example of how many partners can work together to preserve our history. The colours returned from Ottawa in May 2013, and will remain in climate-controlled storage until they are exhibited next year in the new Fort York Visitor Centre.

1. Vuori, Jan, Renee Dancause, and Janet Wagner. "Conserving Canadian Identity: The Colours of the Third Regiment of York Militia," *Reflections on Conservation*, Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 2012.

Alex Avdichuk, Supervisor of Collections and Conservation, City of Toronto Museum Services, oversees the artifact collection for ten city museums.



King's Colour – before conservation



King's Colour – after conservation



Regimental Colour – before conservation



Regimental Colour – after conservation

## 2013 | Upcoming Events Historic Fort York

Compiled by Kristine Williamson

**On account of construction, on-site parking is limited. Visitors are encouraged to walk, take transit or bike to the site.**

### JULY

#### Fort York Ongoing Summer Programming Daily throughout July, 10 am to 5 pm

Visitors will enjoy hourly demonstrations of military music, drill, musketry, and artillery performed by students representing the Canadian Fencible Regiment that was garrisoned at the fort at the end of the War of 1812. Program varies daily. Call for specific details.

Regular admission.

#### Canada Day @ Fort York Mon. July 1, 10 am to 5 pm

Spend Canada's special day at Fort York, the birthplace of urban Toronto. Kids can enjoy various take-away crafts, face-painting, hula-hooping, and storytelling sessions. Enjoy the varied tours, bring a picnic, and learn the exciting story of this National Historic Site. This is a Celebrate Canada event sponsored by the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Regular admission.

#### Fort York Historic District Walking Tour: "Building a Great Canadian City: Early Lakefront Development in Toronto" Mon. July 1, 1 to 2:30 pm

This special walking tour explores the evolution and history of our Lake Ontario shoreline in the Fort York Historic site area from the early British colonial era to the present day. Rain or shine. Meet at the admissions desk/canteen.

Regular admission.

**Toronto Urban Roots Festival, Fort York Garrison Common**  
**Thurs. July 4, 5 to 10:30 pm**  
**Fri. July 5, 5 to 11 pm**  
**Sat. July 6, 11 am to 11 pm**  
**Sun. July 7, 11 am to 10 pm**

Fort York National Historic Site is pleased to welcome the Toronto Urban Roots Festival. Tickets and more information available at <http://torontourbanrootsfest.com/>. The fort's regular operations may be interrupted by the setting-up and taking-down of the Festival.

**Parler Fort: "What the Dickens!!" with Dr. Leon Litvack**  
**Tues. July 9, 7:30 to 9 pm**

Coinciding with the 18th Annual Symposium of the Dickens Society in Toronto, Fort York is proud to present another evening in its Parler Fort series when Dr. Leon Litvack will talk about Charles Dickens's impressions of Canada and the US, formed during his several visits here. Dr. Litvack, a Canadian who is Professor of Victorian Studies at Queen's University, Belfast, will offer a lively slide-illustrated evening recalling the experiences and insights of one of the most endearing authors in the English language.

Pre-registration encouraged. Call 416-392-6907 X 221, or email [fortyork@toronto.ca](mailto:fortyork@toronto.ca)

"What the Dickens!!!" is generously sponsored by Context, developers of the Library District condominiums on the east side of Bathurst Street opposite Fort York.

*Tickets are \$10 (tax incl.).*

**Historical Cooking Classes in the Officers' Mess Kitchen From the Kitchen Garden: Two Seasonally-themed Summer Classes**

**Sun. July 14, 11 am to 3 pm**  
**Sun. August 18, 11 am to 3 pm**

Join the cooks in the 1826 Officers' Mess Kitchen to prepare recipes from the late 18th and early 19th century using seasonal fruits. Some vegetables will be freshly harvested from the Fort's own kitchen garden. Participants will use historic recipes and period equipment. Recipe packages and food samples supplied. Maximum of 8 participants per class. Lunch included.

Pre-registration is required. Please contact Bridget Wranich at 416-392-6907 x 225 or [bwranich@toronto.ca](mailto:bwranich@toronto.ca).

*\$50 plus tax for each class or 2 classes for \$90 plus tax.*

**AwesTRUCK 2013, Fort York Garrison Common**  
**Sat. July 20, Hours TBD**

Food Truck Eats, the ongoing series of wildly popular and successful events celebrating Toronto's burgeoning gourmet street food culture, proudly presents its second annual awards ceremony: AwesTRUCK 2013. Check [ontariofoodtrucks.com](http://ontariofoodtrucks.com) closer to the date for more details.

**Mad Decent Block Party, Fort York Garrison Common**  
**Fri. July 26, 1 to 11 pm**

Mad Decent and Embrace team up for their annual Mad Decent Block Party. Tickets available at <http://www.maddecentblockparty.com/>.

The fort's regular operations may be interrupted by the setting-up and taking-down of the Block Party.

## AUGUST

**Fort York Ongoing Summer Programming**  
**Daily throughout July, 10 am to 5 pm**

Visitors will enjoy hourly demonstrations of military music, drill, musketry, and artillery performed by students representing the Canadian Fencible Regiment that was garrisoned at the fort at the end of the War of 1812. Program varies daily. Call for specific details.

*Regular admission.*

**Grove Music Festival, Fort York Garrison Common**  
**Sat. August 3, 1 to 11 pm**

The Grove Music Festival is a one-day boutique musical experience promising a diverse, world-class festival adventure.

Tickets available through: [thegrovest.com/](http://thegrovest.com/)

The fort's regular operations may be interrupted by the setting-up and taking-down of this Festival.

**Simcoe Day at Fort York**  
**Mon. August 5, 10 am to 5 pm**

Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada (Ontario) founded the town of York in 1793. Come learn about the birthplace of Toronto. Enjoy tactical demonstrations in the afternoon by the Fort York Guard representing the Canadian Regiment of Fencible Infantry; the Fort George Guard representing the 41st Regiment of Foot; and the Guard from Old Fort Erie representing the Glengarry Light Infantry. This great day will celebrate the legacy of Fort York and its place in Toronto's history.

*Free admission.*

**Riot Fest, Fort York Garrison Common**  
**Sat. and Sun. August 24 and 25**

Union Events presents the 2nd annual instalment of Toronto's Riot Fest. Tickets available at [riotfest.org/toronto-tickets/](http://riotfest.org/toronto-tickets/)

The fort's regular operations may be interrupted by the setting-up and taking-down of Riot Fest.

## SEPTEMBER

**Ontario Model Soldier Society Show**  
**Sat. September 7, 10 am to 5 pm**

All ages will enjoy Fort York as it hosts the Ontario Model Soldier Society's 49th annual show and competition. Many vendors will be offering toy soldiers for sale.

*Free with regular admission.*

**On Common Ground**  
**Sat. and Sun. September 21 and 22, 11 am to 6 pm**

On Common Ground 2013 will be a two-day multidisciplinary arts and cultural festival that will animate the grounds and buildings of Fort York with an entertaining and engaging mix of culturally diverse music, dance, storytelling, digital theatre, a sound installation, visual arts, crafts, local food, and family friendly activities. This weekend encompasses the International Day of Peace and the autumnal equinox.

Check [toronto.ca/fortevents](http://toronto.ca/fortevents) closer to the date for details.

**The Canaccord Genuity Great Camp Adventure for SickKids**  
**Sat. September 28, all day**

Take on the challenge of a new adventure walk unlike anything Toronto's ever seen: a full day designed so everyone and anyone can participate. Join in a challenge-by-choice walk along a planned route – all the way up to 20 km. Support SickKids Hospital.

Register online at <http://www.campforkeeps.com> or by phone at 416-4-4KEEPS(445-3377).

**Please Note: Fort York will be closed to the general public all day on Saturday, September 28th for this special event.**

Visit our website at: [www.fortyork.ca](http://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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 **TORONTO Culture**  
[www.toronto.ca/culture](http://www.toronto.ca/culture)



Regular Admission to Fort York (all prices include taxes)  
Adult: \$9.00, Senior (65+) & Youth (13-18): \$5.50,  
Children (6-12): \$4.25, Children (5 and under): FREE

The Fife and Drum is a quarterly publication of the The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common