



# EAST YORK INKLINGS

Newsletter of the East York Historical Society

Volume 10 Issue 3 – May 2014

## President's Message...

Finally Spring is here! Happy Belated Mothers' Day! (May 11, 2014)

The History and Spooky Secrets of the Don Jail was presented by Scott Smith at our March 25 meeting. Considering how cold and chilly it was that night, we had approximately 50 in attendance. Thank you!

In honour of Black History month, we had a brief presenter at the end of Scott Smith's presentation by Ms. Beverly Salmon.

On March 22, 2014 Kay Horiszny, Connie Fenton and myself went on a tour of the renovated Don Jail (former city of Toronto & East York). The tour was given by Heritage Toronto. William Burgess Elementary School celebrated 100 years of learning at their Open House on Saturday May 3 and in attendance were Joyce Crook, Christopher Salmond and myself. It was quite a celebration!

As of our May 2014 newsletter, I will be honouring a member from the East York Historical Society who's had years of involvement or attendance. This month's feature will be Mr. John Laraway who was interviewed and photographed by Margaret McRae. See information on the following page.

Congratulations on behalf of the East York Historical Society, to the 2014 Agnes Macphail Award recipient, Sheila Lacroix.

A reminder for May 24 and 25 that there will be an Open House at Todmorden Mills. (I will be in attendance on both days).

Happy Victoria Day Wishes!

Our 2014/2015 upcoming calendar dates are almost complete. Please make notes on your own calendars.

Warm welcome to our new members!

Summer is fast approaching. Hoping to see you all at the East York Canada Day Parade! The East York Historical Society is a participant in the annual parade that meets at Dieppe Park at 9:30am...and ends at Stan Wadlow Park. It's always a fun and colourful day for families and visitors. Have a healthy and safe summer.

Sincerely,

Pancheta (Pat) Barnett  
Phone: 416 801 6274  
E-mail: [eyhs@eastyork.org](mailto:eyhs@eastyork.org)

Website: [www.eastyork.org/eyhs.html](http://www.eastyork.org/eyhs.html)

\*Missed from our March newsletter was: Happy Belated New Year's Greetings to our Chinese Community from the East York Historical Society and may the Year of the Horse be good to us all.

## Join us at our Upcoming Meetings

**Tuesday, May 27, 2014**  
**Refreshments at 7:00pm**  
**Meeting starts at 7:30pm**  
**Todmorden Mills Restoration**  
**Presenters Ulana Baluk & Neil Brochu**

**Tuesday, September 30, 2014**  
**Refreshments at 7:00pm**  
**Meeting starts at 7:30pm**  
**The History of Toronto**  
**East General Hospital**

**Wednesday October 15, 2014**  
**Meeting starts at 2:00pm**  
**This is an opportunity for everyone**  
**to bring your memorabilia and/or**  
**family treasures to the meeting.**  
**Joyce Crook has agreed to lead off**  
**with her own.**

**East York Historical Society meetings are**  
**co-sponsored by the Toronto Public Library,**  
**and take place in the John S. Ridout**  
**Auditorium at the S. Walter Stewart Library**  
**Branch, located at 170 Memorial Park**  
**Avenue on the corner of Memorial Park and**  
**Durant Ave.**

**Evening Meetings take place on the last**  
**Tuesday of January, March, May, September**  
**and November. Afternoon Discussions take**  
**place on a Wednesday in February, March,**  
**April, October and November**



## Remembering former East York Mayor Willis Blair

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By **RAJESH SAMMY**, The Observer

One of East York's most veteran politicians died on Saturday.

Willis L. Blair was mayor of what was then the Borough of East York from 1973 until 1975. He also served on borough council for 18 years beginning in 1958, and he held a variety of government and regulatory posts, including the chairmanship of the Liquor License Board of Ontario, and seats on the Ontario Municipal Board and what was then Metro Council.

He was 90 years old.

Blair died on the eve of Canada's National Volunteer Week — an apt connection, considering that for over 50 years, he was a supporter of Toronto East General Hospital, the Kiwanis Club of East York and Westview Presbyterian Church in the Bermondsey Road-O'Connor Drive neighbourhood.

"He was there in every possible charitable drive that was held in the community," said David Collenette, a former member of Parliament representing East York ridings. "He was always there helping, donating and getting people into contributing."

Collenette said he knew Blair for almost all of his life. When Collenette was first elected in 1974, Collenette said of his friend, "he made me feel welcome."

"He was great at strengthening our connection with the community," said Teresa Vasilopoulos, the president of Toronto East General Hospital.

When Blair was mayor of East York, he helped push to bring Major League Baseball to Toronto — an effort that succeeded with the arrival of the Blue Jays in 1977. He also helped establish the East York Curling Club on Cosburn Avenue, which famously hosted the Junior World Championships in 1974.

Although generally considered conservative, Blair didn't hold back on supporting politicians with different views.

"He would do what he thought would be the best for the municipality," said Beaches-East York

MPP Michael Prue, a New Democrat.

"He believed in East York. He believed in Toronto," Collenette said. "He epitomized everything that was good and decent in Canadian life."

Prior to his career in politics, Blair served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, went to the University of Toronto, and worked at the Canada Life insurance company.

His funeral was held at the Heritage Funeral Centre on Overlea Boulevard on Wednesday. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Elsie, as well as three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



Former East York Councillor Edna Beange and East York Historical Society Board Members Justin Van Dette, Jane Pitfield and Hon. Alan Redway with Willis Blair in 2013.

**Visit us on Facebook:**  
**<https://www.facebook.com/groups/144715709718/>**

## OTHER EXCITING UPCOMING EVENTS

### DOORS OPEN TORONTO

The EYHS will be at Todmorden Mills Heritage Site for Doors Open Toronto on Saturday and Sunday, May 24 and 25 from 10 am until 5 pm.

We have several volunteers to help with our table but welcome others. Please advise Margaret McRae by phone at 416-429-7821 or by e-mail at [marg.mcrae@gmail.com](mailto:marg.mcrae@gmail.com) if you would like to help out on either of those days and what times you prefer. This will be almost the last opportunity to see the buildings as they are now because they will be closed for the summer while the houses are being restored to represent different eras. Our meeting on May 27th will be discussing the upcoming changes.

### TFN NATURE WALK

Paula Davies will also be leading a TFN nature walk on May 25th at 1:30 pm in the Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve which you are also welcome to join.

### EAST YORK CANADA DAY ON JULY 1<sup>st</sup>

We will also be walking in the East York Canada Day parade on Tuesday, July 1 and will have a promotional table at Stan Wadlow Park for the event. Please also let Margaret know if you would like to walk in the parade or help at the event.

### EAST YORK... Then and Now!

We encourage our members and supporters to visit and LIKE a great facebook page: **EAST YORK... Then and Now**. This site features some great photos of our community that date back decades. Feel free to get in touch with them if you have any that you would like to share. You can visit the page at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/East-York-Then-and-Now/340651007038?fref=ts>

**Cosburn Avenue – looking west at Pape Avenue**

Cosburn Ave. looking west at Pape Ave. 1911 & 2009



Toronto - Then & Now



Join us at the 17th Annual General Meeting  
of the Toronto Historical Association

Sunday, June 1, 2014 ~ 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

St. Matthew Lawn Bowling Club ~ 548 Gerrard Street East

Following the formal portion of the meeting there will be refreshments and a Special Guest Speaker

# Membership Spotlight: John Laraway

Interview with John Laraway, a lifetime EYHS member by Margaret McRae

John Laraway has lived his entire life in his family home at 24 Hopedale Avenue. John is a lifetime member of the EYHS and tries to attend all our meetings. He has helped with our outreach tables at Canada Day and Todmorden Mills. He has always enjoyed volunteering and started volunteering as a high school student with the East York Collegiate Drama Society where he worked behind the scenes as stage crew.

As a high school student he started volunteering at the streetcar museum, the Halton County Radial Railway. It is north of the 401 on the Guelph Line towards Highway 7. John co-ordinated arranging rides for the students with adult drivers. He has also ridden his bike there, arriving around noon, and cycling back in the evening after several hours work. Their work included repairing streetcars and putting in tracks. He also looked after organizing inventories of space. He still goes there once a week and looks after the archives of the museum. It is open to the public on weekends in May, June, September and October and 7 days a week in July and August.

He was involved with the North York Historical Society who did oral histories and have a scrap book where members recorded their recollections. They take written records from the 1960's and convert them to computer accessible records. He works once a week on these projects. He thinks the East York Historical Society should get members to write down their recollections so we can put together our own history.

John has an amazing collection of books. His mother said he always had his nose in a book. He also collects used postage stamps from Canada, the United States, Britain, and Malta.

He also looks after the archives of the West Toronto Junction Historical Society which are housed in the

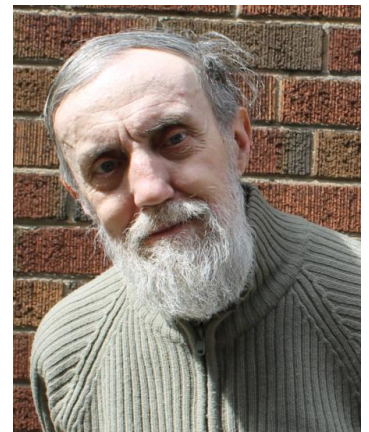
basement of the Annette Street Library. They are open Mondays from 3 - 5 pm and Thursdays from 6 to 8 pm.

In the 1960's John worked at Todmorden Mills as the weekend custodian for a couple of years, opening up and conducting tours of the property.

We spent some time discussing the changes in East York. At one time there used to be a gas station on at least 3 of the 4 corners of many intersections. Thorncliffe Park Market Place used to have a movie theatre which required the building of a second storey above the TD Bank and there was also a mini golf course in the basement. He recalled the factories in the Don Valley -- Bates Chemicals, Howard Smith Papermill which was bought out by Domtar, and a construction company across the railway tracks.

He remembered floating masses of soap suds coming out of the North Toronto Treatment Plant and in the Valley below Beechwood Drive there was a little stream with colored water, the colour of the paper they were making that day at Domtar which flowed downstream to enter the Don River near Pottery Road. Apparently in those days they made coloured toilet paper and kleenex. Near the top of Beechwood Drive on the west side were many pear and apple trees on the steep slope.

We had a very interesting conversation. John has so much knowledge of East York's history and our historic buildings and is a valuable member of the heritage community.



## SAVE THESE DATES...

**Our Wednesday afternoon show and tell discussion meetings start at 2 pm.**

**Refreshments are always served.**

**(The Hon Alan Redway Vice President of the East York Historical Society, has taken on the lead on these meetings. Thank you, Alan.)**

October 15, 2014

This is an opportunity for everyone to bring your memorabilia and /or family treasures to the meeting. Joyce Crook has agreed to lead off with her own.

November 12, 2014

East York's own George Shields Member of the Order of Canada, founder of the East York Barbershoppers, will tell us about how Harmony Hall on Gower Street came to be and about the mud slide years ago on his street Notley Place that caused a house (not his) to slide into the valley.

# 2014 MEMBERSHIP LIST

Eileen Adams  
Kate Akerfeldt  
Curtis Atkins  
Lynn & Michael Austin  
Pancheta Barnett  
Susie Beamish  
Diane Bennett-Jones & Christopher Jones  
Bill & Cathy Betsworth  
Robert Brathwaite  
Lisa Brazier & Colleen Peacock  
Louise & David Bridge  
Diane Brockman  
Robert & Ruth Broughton  
Lynne Brown  
John Carter  
Ron, Wanda, and Erica Chamberlain  
Marilyn & Fred Clark  
Sandra Collins  
Joyce Crook  
Paula Davies & Steve Smith  
Heather de Veber  
Don Deathe & Randall Speller  
Irene Derzay  
Val Dodge & Risa Gluskin  
Susan & Mike Dolbey  
Norman Dyson  
Tessa Edward  
Connie & Glenn Fenton  
Mary Fragedakis  
Ed Freeman  
Jim & Petra Grass  
Joanne Green

Lise, Denis, & Mike Héroux  
Jeanne Hopkins  
Rita Hoppe  
Christine Ioannou, Steve Zullo, & Sebastian Landry  
Chris & Mary Jean Joys  
Aarne & Helen Juhola  
Maggie Kambanis  
Geoffrey Kettel  
Gus Klisouras  
Lorna Krawchuk  
Ted Lea  
Lawrence Main  
Linda Martin  
George Matthew  
James McAndless  
Margaret McRae  
Dean Metcalf  
Melanie Milanich  
Nancy Moffat  
Glen Moorhouse CEO  
Barbara Morrison  
June Murdoch & Joan Tilt  
Deirdre Paul  
Barry Penhale & Jane Gibson  
Gordon Pinnell  
Jane Pitfield  
Betty Price  
Michael Prue  
Lillian Robertson  
Patrick Rocca  
Raija Rosenthal  
Walter Rothenburger &

Bill Bartlett  
Christopher Salmond  
Elizabeth Shelton  
Nathan Smith  
Jean Stapleton  
Roger & Marie Steer  
Grace Tanaka  
Lillian Tanizaki  
Ken Thompson  
Justin Van Dette  
Sonia Van Heerden  
Kathleen Waters  
Miriam Webster  
Manfred Wewers & Mary Lang  
Ian Wheal  
Carl Wilcox & Laurel Nicol  
Scott Burns  
Joseph Cooper  
Eleanor Darke  
Peter Edwards  
Louise Herzberg  
Kathleen Horiszny  
Katherine Kirzati  
John Laraway  
Kenneth Menagh  
John Michailidis  
B. Jane & Robert Moore  
Martin Rainbow  
Hon. Alan Redway  
Joan & Lynn Ridout  
Pam Sellers  
Don Uttley

## SAVE THESE DATES...

**Our Tuesday evening meetings start at 7pm. Refreshments are always served.**

May 27, 2014

Todmorden Mills Renovations in 2014  
Presenters Ulana Baluk & Neil Brochu

September 30, 2014

History of Toronto East General Hospital  
Presenter: tbd

November 25, 2014

The Salvation Army, its History & Local Contents...  
Presenters Col. John Carew & Capt. Rick Zelinsky.

January 27, 2015

Balsam Lake July 20, 1926...11 of 14 campers drowned  
Presenter Karen Fraser

March 31, 2015

Bob Rumball Centre of the Deaf...How it all started  
Presenter Derek Rumball

May 26, 2015

The Barbershoppers of East York  
Presenter: Mr. Greg Shields & performers

September 29, 2015

TBA

November 24, 2015

TBD

**E-Mail us at [eyhs@eastyork.org](mailto:eyhs@eastyork.org)**

## **ABOUT THE EAST YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

The East York Historical Society was formed in 1980 and incorporated in 1981 as a non-profit corporation affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society to bring together people interested in the diverse heritage of East York, to research, retain, preserve and present historical data pertaining to the region.

Meetings of the East York Historical Society are generally held on the last Tuesday of January, March, May, September and November at the S. Walter Stewart Library (northwest corner of Memorial Park and Durant Avenues) at 7:00pm and include an illustrated presentation on a subject of historical interest. Our meetings are co-sponsored by the Toronto Public Library.

## *Special Welcome to our New Members*

Roger & Marie Steer  
Raija Rosenthal  
Lise, Denis, & Mike Héroux  
Dean Metcalf  
Betty Price  
Sebastian Landry

Please drop by the Registration Table upon your arrival to pick-up your name tag.

## **INTERESTED IN THE EAST YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CONTACT US:**

Pancheta (Pat) Barnett  
President, East York Historical Society  
Phone: 416 801 6274

E-Mail: [eyhs@eastyork.org](mailto:eyhs@eastyork.org) - Web: [www.eastyork.org/eyhs.html](http://www.eastyork.org/eyhs.html)

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Pancheta Barnett, President  
Justin Van Dette, Secretary  
Kay Horiszny, Director

Alan Redway, Vice President  
Jane Pitfield, Past President  
Christopher Salmond, Director

Val Dodge, Treasurer  
Margaret McRae, Director  
John Michailidis, Director

Visit our new facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/144715709718>

## **HELP PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF EAST YORK BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE EAST YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Help strengthen the History of East York by becoming a member of the East York Historical Society. Provide us with your ideas and know more about the great community that we live in. Your membership helps us to keep you informed and organize events that educate the residents of East York.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

New members and guests are always welcome. The fees for 2014 are:

Single - \$15      Family - \$20      Student - \$7      Organization - \$50

Bring cash to our next meeting or mail us a cheque payable to the "East York Historical Society" to:  
East York Historical Society, 107 Cambridge Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4K 2L7

[ ] YES!!! Please add me to your e-mail distribution list – help save a tree!