# The Fife and Drum

The Newsletter of The Friends of Fort York and Garrison Common v. 19 No. 2 July 2015

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## *Fort York Is Better for the Bicentennial*

*by Christopher Moore*

The first time around, York and Fort York were hit hard by the War of 1812. Happily they have done much better by the Bicentennial. With the Treaty of Ghent now fully two hundred years in the past, it is time to examine what the commemoration has done for the fort and the city and what lessons might be carried forward. Recently I talked with some of the people most directly engaged with what has happened to Fort York in the Bicentennial years.

*Courtesy of Andrew Stewart.*

***The Bicentennial as Urban Renewal***

"When I came here, I never saw anyone walking across the Bathurst Street Bridge," said urban planner and Fort York site manager David O'Hara, who has been at the fort about a decade. "Now there are streams of pedestrians, bicycles everywhere. We are accessible." Just as the Bicentennial approached, Fort York escaped from its imprisonment in a decaying neighbourhood no one much wanted to go to. Residential development came to the industrial zone south of the fort, to the King Street West neighbourhoods north of it, and to the former railway lands running east to the Rogers Centre and the CN Tower. Suddenly it was somewhere everyone could visit.

Open spaces–almost the only ones in the neighbourhood–now radiate out from Fort York to the city and to the waterfront. New pathways and a reorganized street grid bind the neighbourhood together from Rogers Centre to the Princes' Gate, and from King West down to the lakeshore. The newly opened Fort York public library is so busy "it could be twice as big." Condo towers now advertise themselves "@Fort York," and the main street of the district is Fort York Boulevard, designed to showcase the fort, named for it, and making it newly accessible. Today Fort York finds itself in the heart of a densely populated residential neighbourhood with the accompanying transit lines, services, and amenities–just about perfect for an urban heritage landmark. "It became my cliché," laughed Sandra Shaul, manager of the City of Toronto's programs for the War of 1812 Bicentennial: "The fort that founded the town is now surrounded by the town that it founded."

***But the mingling of urban transformation and the Bicentennial was not a coincidence.***

Even when the fort was still trapped in its "old" neighbourhood its managers and friends were planning for something better, working to convince city planners to make Fort York integral to, not an obstacle to, the new community that was taking shape. The long campaign to give the fort the visitor centre it deserved exemplified that strategy and continued the vision of those who preserved it early in the last century and saved it from the Gardiner in the 1950s. In turn, the looming Bicentennial helped create the impetus for the final funding commitments from governments and donors, making the Visitor Centre that opened in 2014 the key legacy

# *Mystery Ship Arrives at Fort York*

*by David Robertson and Thanos Webb*

*Archaeologists sitting and leaning on the ship's hull confer shortly after its discovery. Courtesy of Andrew Stewart.*

Intensive redevelopment of the largely underutilized or derelict lands surrounding Fort York and the Garrison Common continues to change the landscape of the "Birthplace of Toronto." This is by no means a new process, as it was initiated over a century and a half ago by the railways in their efforts to transform the waterfront to suit their own purposes. There is, however, a difference between the railway and industrial developments of the 1850s through 1950s and the residential intensification of the last ten years, in that the past is no longer simply ignored and swept away without consideration or documentation.

Beginning in 2005, Archaeological Services Inc. (ASI) began working with the developers in the Fort York Neighbourhood to record the vestiges of the harbour infrastructure in this portion of the waterfront, particularly the Queen's Wharf and other features built by the Grand Trunk and Northern railways to the south and east of the fort. Indeed, it is only because of these redevelopments that such work is possible. The most recent started in March of 2015, when preconstruction excavations began at a condominium site on Block 37, located at the southeast corner of Bathurst and Fort York Boulevard. The main objectives of the archaeological salvage excavations at the site were to record the remains of the first phase of construction of the Queen's Wharf, circa 1833, and the subsequent modifications to the structure, which defined the entrance to Toronto's harbour.

By early May, most of the objectives of the project had been met. The original wharf had been found, as had the subsequent 1850s modifications that resulted in a doubling of the width of the structure, along with the shore walls and lake fills that had been laid down between the mid-1850s and late 1870s to extend the rail yards south from Front Street. Similarly, other forms of cribwork required to control the flow of Garrison Creek through the new made lands into the lake had been recorded in detail.

But, in keeping with the archaeological truism that the most significant find always turns up during the last few days of any excavation, the remains of the hull of a double-masted ship were found on the east side of the Queen's Wharf. While not without precedent on the waterfront, it still represented an unexpected find.

The vessel is by no means complete, but the anaerobic environment of her final resting place has resulted in the preservation of a substantial portion of her oak hull. She lay with her bow pointing to the south. Her 50-foot (15 m) long keel terminates with a gracefully curved stempost in the bow. While the stern lacks its sternpost, the vessel's rudder was recovered. Only the garboard strake (the first run of planking that is fastened to the keel) and a small portion of the hull near the bow are preserved. On the portside, 31 feet (9.5 m) of the hull, starting at the stempost (bow) and ending aft of amidships includes: eight strakes of outboard planking (2 inches thick) ending at the turn of the bilge; approximately 11 intact double frames including floors and first futtocks (framing), and original ceiling planking along with planking representing later repair work.

One uncommon construction feature of the vessel is the presence of a lower and upper keel. The frames and garboard strake are both fastened to the upper keel and the larger, lower keel is fastened to the upper keel with 3 foot (1 m) spikes that first pass through the keelson (inner keel), floors, and upper keel before being embedded deep into the lower keel. This arrangement also appears on the wreck of the 1814 US schooner *Ticonderoga* from Lake Champlain, New York, which has been studied in detail be Kevin Crisman of Texas A&M University. Originally designed to be a steamboat with a very low draft and little dead-rise, the *Ticonderoga* was converted,

*Wood barrel and other artifacts found beside the keel of the vessel. Courtesy of Andrew Stewart.*

*Only a month later, the hull of the mystery ship arrives at Fort York. Courtesy of Dave Robertson.*

while still under construction, to a 17-gun schooner for use against the British in the War of 1812. To support the weight of the cannon and improve performance while under sail, her longitudinal stiffness had to be increased. The shipwright accomplished this by adding a second keel fastened in the same manner seen on the Queen's Wharf vessel. It is therefore possible that the vessel found at Queen's Wharf also started out as a steamboat and underwent a similar transformation to sail. It is also probable that she too was an American vessel. She would not, however, have seen battle on the Great Lakes. Current evidence, in the form of a US one-cent piece deliberately placed in one of her mast steps, suggests that she was built in the late 1820s. Other artifacts recovered from her bilge are consistent with this dating. It would seem that her useful service ended by the late 1870s when the shallow waters in which she lay were cut off from the lake by a crib wall and filled in over the course of the next few decades.

The identity of the ship is not yet known. Nor is it clear exactly how she arrived at her resting place beside the wharf, or why much of her structure was deliberately demolished. These questions, along with others related to her design and construction, will be subjects of ongoing research.

On June 4, the remains of the ship were lifted by crane and transported to the Fort York National Historic Site, where they will be placed near the entrance to the Visitor Centre, under the Gardiner Expressway in the former lakeshore zone. The ship will be an important part of the landscape and programming at Fort York for years to come, and continued study of the remains will undoubtedly yield answers to some of our questions while at the same time presenting new mysteries to be solved.

The transfer of the ship to the fort was made possible by Concord Adex (Concord CityPlace), who immediately recognized its importance as a historical resource and committed the additional resources necessary for the relocation project. The move itself was accomplished, with exemplary professionalism, by the staff of EllisDon Corporation and Amherst Crane and Concrete Pumping.

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## *Tragic Death of Roger du Toit*

Toronto mourns the loss of a talented and passionate citizen in Roger du Toit, an architect and senior partner in the DTAH firm, who died on May 31 after being hit nearly two weeks earlier by an SUV while riding his bicycle a short distance from his home.

Born in South Africa in 1939 Roger came to Canada for postgraduate studies at the University of Toronto after graduating with a bachelor's degree in architecture from Capetown. In 1966 he joined John Andrews' practice in Toronto, later becoming Andrews' associate and partner. Roger founded his own firm in 1975; it became DTAH and has been responsible for literally hundreds of outstanding studies and designs for buildings, landscapes, and communities. <http://dtah.com/project/> DTAH's involvement with Fort York dates to 1994, and has been recognized with numerous awards.

The Friends of Fort York offer Sheila, Roger's wife and soulmate, and his sons, André and Rob, our deepest condolences. We are grateful for an exceptional life, well-lived, that ended far too soon.