

New Toronto Historical Society Volume 16 No. 1 – March 2014

Upcoming Events

SPROG – RCAF Bomber Command

Join us on Tuesday **April 22, 2014** at LAMP, 185 Fifth Street at 7PM. Our guest speaker will be Malcolm Kelly, Professor of Sports Journalism at Centennial College. He will speak to us about his current book (due to be finished by the end of this year) entitled *SPROG*, a novel focussing on 6 Group (RCAF), Bomber Command; and the Canadians, Americans and British youth who fought with it.

The Great Escape: A Canadian Story

Join us on Tuesday **May 27, 2014** at LAMP, 185 Fifth Street at 7PM. Our guest speaker will be Ted Barris an award-winning journalist, author, and broadcaster. He will speak to us about his latest book *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story*. Ted will recount for us this nearly mythical WWII escape operation through the voices of those involved, many of whom trained in Canada, served RCAF bomber and fighter squadrons, were shot down over Europe, imprisoned at Stalag Luft III, and ultimately became co-conspirators in the actual Great Escape. Copies of the book can be purchased at the meeting for \$35.

New Toronto 100th Anniversary Celebrations A Great Success

The celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Town of New Toronto on Saturday October 5, 2013 was a great success.

Approximately 105 people attended the historical walk under the auspices of Heritage Toronto, and 88 people attended the celebratory tea at St. Margaret's Church Hall.

Sharon Stewart-Kettlewell's, fantastic historical displays at the tea delighted many.

New Toronto Book Research Continues

Research and writing of the new book on New Toronto continues.

Do you have any historical photographs of New Toronto or any fascinating stories?

If so, please let us know. You can contact Wendy Gamble our president at wlgamble@eol.ca.

1904 Big Year for New Toronto

The year 1904 was a big year for the unincorporated community of New Toronto.

After many years in the doldrums following the economic depression of the mid 1890s the announcement of the founding of Canada's first brass company in New Toronto and the construction of the Grand Trunk Marshalling Yards was big big news!

Canada Brass Rolling Mills

The first brass company in Canada was founded in New Toronto in 1904. As reported in the *Toronto Star* on June 21, 1904 the founding of the plant was a direct result of a protective tariff put in the place the day before by the Canadian government.

"The 'anti-dumping' clause in the new Fielding tariff has not only reassured those manufacturers already in business in Canada that they can continue without fear of competition of an unfair nature, but it is encouraging new industries to begin operations."

"On the afternoon of the day that the new regulation was announced a wire was sent from Toronto ordering on from the United States machinery with which to equip the Canada Brass Rolling Mills Foundry in New Toronto." "This will be the first brass rolling mill in Canada", said Mr. R.E. Menzie, Managing Director "At first we are only putting into it from \$150,000 to \$200,000 capital but we expect ultimately to have a million dollar plant." He then went on to explain the market that the plant was meant to exploit. "We import

annually into Canada in the form of brass and rods about \$9,000,000, and in finished articles about \$3,000,000 more. This is the trade we are going after." Mr. Menzie was doing double duty as he had also just opened a wallpaper factory in New Toronto. In commenting on the tariff, Mr. Menzie indicated that he was so pleased that he had voted Liberal for the first time in his life and intended to support the Liberal Laurier government in the next election.

In 1905 the foundry began to produce its first product. As reported in the *Toronto Star* on February 10, 1905 "[a]nother important step in the industrial progress of Canada has been taken. Canada is now producing brass. The first consignment of brass turned out in the Dominion will be shipped tomorrow from the Canadian Brass Rolling Mills at New Toronto. This shipment marks the opening of an industry of the utmost importance to the country. The Canada Brass Rolling Mills Limited, has just completed large smelters and mills at New Toronto, where brass will be turned out in the form in which it is best by firms of brass manufacturers. The mills will employ 60 hands when everything is in complete running order." Copper from the "Lake Superior district" was being utilized at the New Toronto foundry.

On June 23, 1905 the *Toronto Star* reported that the Canada Brass Rolling Mill in New

Toronto marked an epoch in Canadian Industry. "Probably the most important development in Canadian industries is the establishment of the Canada Brass Rolling Mills in New Toronto. This plant is now operating commercially, and is prepared to turn out sheet brass, sheet copper, sheet silver, brass rods, and numerous other commodities, which are the raw materials for a large number of industries making brass goods."

However, something appears to have gone terribly wrong by February 1906 we learn that the foundry is closed and "has been shut down for some time". The plant would remain closed until 1910 when it reopened as Brown's Copper and Brass.

Grand Trunk Marshalling Yards

The second big business news of 1904 was the announcement that the Grand Trunk Railway would be opening a major marshalling yard at Mimico. Ostensibly called the "Mimico Yards", the majority of the land was actually in New Toronto.

The story was front page news. "The Grand Trunk Yards at Mimico" the *Toronto Star* proclaimed on July 19, 1904. "A Great Thing for the Town That Has Suffered for old Real Estate Boom". And indeed it was.

It was the beginning of the turnaround that so many had been hoping for.