

Oak Savannah Expansion Planting, June 12

By Cara Webster, Restoration Specialist, Urban Forestry Services

The City of Toronto Urban Forestry Dept. manages High Park according to the guidelines set out in the High Park Oak Woodland & Savannah Management Plan.

The area just south-east of the Bloor Street entrance to High Park is dominated by Black oaks with an understory consisting primarily of non-native turf grasses and Canada goldenrod. The High Park restoration crew has initiated work to try to reverse past management practice of turf replacement in the area by connecting the tableland area to the high-quality vegetation on the south-facing slope beside Spring Road. This slope contains a variety of native savannah species including New Jersey tea, Upland willow, Big bluestem, Pennsylvania sedge, Pale-leaved sunflower, Sky-blue aster and Plantain-leaved pussytoes.

The restoration crew has planted native species in four different sites within the area since 2001, experimenting with different methods of planting, site preparation and species selection. Another section is **planned for** planting this spring on **June 12th** with the High Park Volunteer Stewardship Program.



*Planting with VSP, spring 2002
Photo credit: VSP Archives*

This site was partially planted with the VSP in spring 2002 and a fence was erected around the area to prevent trampling or vandalism. The area was also burned in spring 2004 to encourage the native plantings and to prepare the site for further planting. A mix of savannah shrubs, grasses and wildflowers will be planted, consisting only of the determined hardy native species. Future work on the site may include the addition of other species to diversify the site and prescribed burning to maintain the native plant community.



*Prescribed Burn 2004 to prepare area for further planting
Photo credit: City of Toronto*

We will be looking for lots of volunteers to **come out and help plant**. Please check the VSP calendar and bring your own hand trowel if possible.

Monuments, Memorials and Artworks in High Park – Part I

By Ron Allan

There are a number of monuments, memorials and sculptures in High Park. Some you may have passed and wondered about. Others you may not have noticed at all. Many are unidentified.

Why were these particular works of art placed in High Park? Are they appropriate to a public park?

Howard Burial Site/Monument

The Howard burial site/monument is located at the south end of the Park, near Colborne Lodge. When John and Jemima Howard deeded their 165 acre country estate, which they had called High Park, to the City of Toronto in 1873, one of the conditions of the deed was that they would be buried in the Park and that their graves maintained by the City in perpetuity. The City ultimately agreed to this condition and other terms of the contract, including a monetary consideration.

In 1875, the Howards designed and constructed their future tomb and monument near the Lodge, on an attractive site overlooking Grenadier Pond and the Lakeshore. It consists of a cairn or pile of stones to mark Jemima's Scottish background. The cairn is surmounted by a marble pediment at the top of which is a Maltese cross (John was a member of a Masonic lodge and the Maltese cross was a Masonic symbol).

A modest gravestone was later placed in front of the monument.





*Howard Burial Site/Monument
Photo credits: Lisa Kemp*

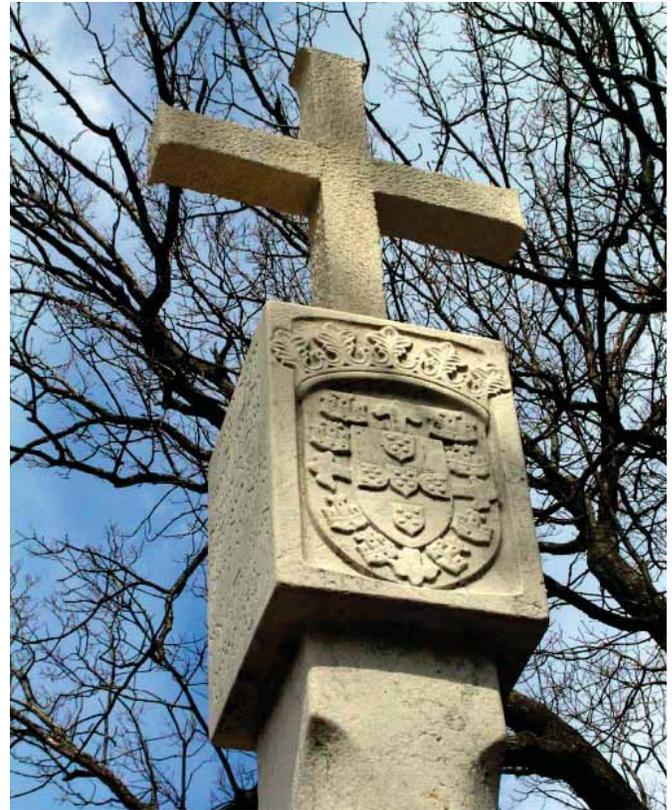
At the same time, John heard that the original fence around St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England was being dismantled and was up for sale. He bought the fencing and had it shipped to Toronto. Unfortunately, the ship carrying the fencing ran aground in the St. Lawrence River and sank. Divers were able to recover part of the fencing and that is the piece that extends across the front of the enclosed burial plot. Sadly, Jemima died of breast cancer in 1877, aged 75 years,

and was buried first. When John died in 1890 at the age of 86, he was buried with her. The City has maintained the Howard burial site with care through the years.

There can be no debate about the appropriateness of this particular monument in High Park.

Portuguese Monument

The Portuguese Monument stands near the centre of the Park just south of the Grenadier Café and Teahouse. It was originally erected in a back area on the north side of the restaurant in 1978 to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Portuguese community in Toronto. When the monument was moved to its present, more visible location about eight years ago, the surrounding terrazzo patio was replaced.



*Portuguese Monument
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

It consists of a terrazzo base with compass points surmounted by a granite plinth. The top part of the monument is a granite column on which sits a marble cross. Just below the cross, and beginning to weather somewhat, is a series of lines written by a 16th Century Portuguese poet, Luis Vaz de Camoes. The epic poem, in the original language, celebrates the exploits of legendary Portuguese explorers and adventurers.



Now one might question the appropriateness of this monument today in that it singles out a particular community in a multicultural Toronto and, by the same token, emphasizes a Christian symbol like the cross at the top. In retrospect, the monument might have been better sited in the original core community “Little Portugal” on Dundas Street.

Incidentally, there is an excellent blue and white tile mosaic recognizing the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Portuguese community in Toronto (2003) in the Queen’s Park Subway Station.

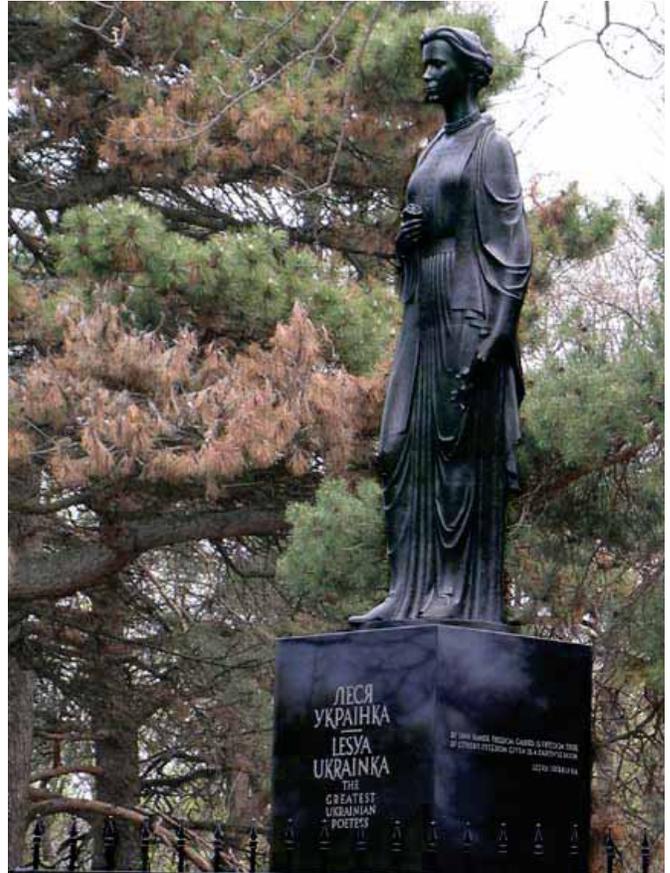
Lesya Ukrainka

This sculpture is located in a prominent spot opposite the Grenadier parking lot on the east side of Colborne Lodge Drive, near the entrances to Dog Hill and the Canadian Stage Dream Site. It was erected in the fall of 1975 (The International Year of the Woman) to commemorate the Ukrainian poet and playwright, Lesya Ukrainka. High Park was chosen “because it was convenient” and because there was (and still is) a large Ukrainian-Canadian Community living in the neighbourhood of High Park.

Lesya Ukrainka was the pen-name of Larysa Petrivna Kosach-Kvitka. She was born in the Ukraine in 1871 at a time when the Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire and began to write poetry in her native tongue at an early age. As she matured, she contributed dramatic prose, articles of literary criticism and social-political essays, again in Ukrainian, and her work began to reflect a demand for human rights and national freedom. Because the Russian Government at the time prohibited publication in the Ukrainian language and also the risk to her personal safety due to the subject matter itself, she published under her pen-name. Always of delicate health, she died of tuberculosis at the young age of 42.

The bronze sculpture is erected on a granite plinth on the front of which, besides her name in both Ukrainian and English, is written the words “The Greatest Ukrainian Poetess”. On the back panel there is some biographical data and the name of the sculptor, Mykailo Cheresniovsky.

Originally, the sculpture stood in the open. However, inner and outer fenced enclosures have since been installed in attempts to prevent unleashed dogs from “paying their respects” to Lesya. There is still some residual odour along the outer fence and it is planned to move the dog-entry path further south.



*Lesya Ukrainka Monument
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

In contrast to the Portuguese Monument, which is generic, one could make a case for honouring an early freedom fighter to whom a lot of the local community could relate. (At the time the statue was erected, Ukraine was part of the U.S.S.R. and still not free). Were Lesya alive today, she would certainly have been out in front among the demonstrators in the recent election controversy in the Ukraine.

Part II of this article, which deals with Sculpture Hill as well as other Artwork and Memorials in High Park, will appear in the summer edition of the Newsletter. If you have any comments or questions, don't hesitate to contact editor@highpark.org



Monuments, Memorials and Artworks in High Park—Part II

By Ron Allan

In the last issue of the Newsletter, we began an article on the Monuments, Memorials and Artworks in High Park. We looked at the Howard Burial site/Monument, the Portuguese Monument and the Lesya Ukrainka Sculpture. In discussion, we addressed two questions: why were these works of art placed in High Park? Are they appropriate to a public park? Keep these questions in mind as we continue.

Sculpture Hill

We now come to a group of sculptures which seems to cause a lot of confusion and comment. Some are situated on the hill bordering the nature/dog path south and east of the Forest School building (Sculpture Hill). Others are north and west of the building itself. Where did they originate? What do they represent? Some look like “piles of junk”; why haven’t they been removed?

It all began in 1967, Canada’s Centennial Year when it was decided to hold an International Sculpture Symposium in Toronto with High Park (Sculpture Hill) as the venue. Interest was solicited from around the world and ultimately 12 international artists were selected including four from Canada. The artists all came to Toronto and worked on site, using the former Forest School to store their tools and gear. In the end, ten sculptures were completed, seven of which remain. (The three others went to the National Gallery in Ottawa, the McMichael Canadiana Collection in Kleinberg and the Art Gallery of Ontario.) Let us examine those that are still in place.



“No Shoes” by Mark di Suvero - original (left) and today (right)
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp

• **“No shoes”** by Mark di Suvero, an American artist. This is the structure close to the nature/dog path. It is constructed from steel I-beams bolted or welded together and painted orange (The title reflects the era – the hippy years.). What one sees today is puzzling. But the original sculpture was much more elaborate. It was fitted with four free-swinging

logs, perhaps relating to the surrounding trees. In time, these logs were removed and what was left fenced off because of the safety risk.



“Flower Power” by Mark di Suvero - original (left) and today (right)
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp

• **“Flower Power”**, at the top of the hill, also by di Suvero, and, again, reflecting the 1960s. Today, it is hard to make anything out of what remains but, originally, it consisted of two interlocking triangles, the top one inverted, the whole held in place by cables under tension. Again, the painted I-beam structure was dismantled and fenced off for safety reasons.



“Three Discs” by Menashe Kadishman
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp

• **“Three Discs”** by Menashe Kadishman, an Israeli. This sculpture is sited south of the second di Suvero sculpture. It consists of three cantilevered, contiguous metal discs painted yellow. It is an inviting target for graffiti artists but seems to remain untouched most of the time.



“November Pyramid” by Bernard Schottlander
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp

• **“November Pyramid”** by Bernard Schottlander, a German artist, living in England at the time. Made of painted steel plates – great for children to climb on.

Some years ago, someone painted the sculpture a vivid blue colour! Parks Maintenance staff quickly restored the sculpture to a neutral dull-brown colour.



*“Mid-summer Night’s Dream”
by Wessel Couzijn
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

- **“Mid-summer Night’s Dream”** is the work of Wessel Couzijn, a Dutch sculptor. It is located on the hill near the Forest School. It takes a little time to realize that you are looking at concrete male and female figures facing each other, presumably doing what lovers sometimes do in the Park!



*“Temple” by Hubert Dalwood
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

- **“Temple”** by Hubert Dalwood, a British artist, is located north of the Forest School. This is a collection of stainless-steel pipes fixed to a base and it remains in good condition.



*“The Hippy” by William Koochin
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

- **“The Hippy”** by William Koochin, a Canadian sculptor, is located at the west end of the Forest School. This sculpture is carved from a piece of granite and, again, has a title appropriate to the sixties.



*Unfinished Sculpture by Irving Burman
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp*

- And, of course, we can’t leave the area without mentioning **the unfinished sculpture**, located at the corner of

Spring Road and Colborne Lodge Drive. This particular project was begun by a Toronto artist, Irving Burman, who had two blocks of granite delivered to the sculpture site. Unfortunately, Mr. Burman suffered a breakdown and neither he nor anyone else had any idea of what he had intended to create! The City later prepared a base for the two pieces in an arbitrary orientation. Besides providing a convenient climbing spot for children, it’s fun to speculate

what the artist originally had in mind – beavers chewing down a tree, caribou fording a river, your guess!

What should we do about this group of artworks? The collection is a cultural asset and of significant value today. Most of the pieces are in good condition, considering that they have been outdoors for almost forty years.

What to do with the two di Suvero sculptures, in particular, remains unresolved. In their original configuration, they were valuable artworks and early examples of a prominent artist’s work. However, if restored to their original design, they would be a potential hazard to the public. Swinging wooden logs (No Shoes) and an inverted steel beam pyramid held under tension by cables (Flower Power) requires careful consideration prior to being reassembled in a public park. The City’s Culture Division is examining options. Di Suvero is an internationally recognized artist today, perhaps the greatest of his genre, with a museum/theme park in New England displaying a number of his works (and the style is still recognizable).

At the very least, information should be provided regarding the history of the collection, current biographies of the artists and proper labelling of each of the pieces. In di Suvero’s case, recognizing the problems with reassembling, pictures or engravings of the original sculptures could be provided.

Other Artwork and Memorials

- **Lott Memorial Fountain.** The fountain and surroundings at the northeast corner of the Park was presented to the City in the 1960s by a local resident, Ernest D. Lott. For many years, it was enjoyed by people, dogs and wildlife. Then the structure began to deteriorate and the fountain was shut down. Funds have recently been allocated to rebuild the site, again with a drinking fountain and a water feature. With complementary plantings of trees, native grasses and wildflowers, it will, once more, make an attractive entrance to the Park.

- **The Labyrinth:** This feature, located on the tableland north of the Grenadier Café and Teahouse, was installed in 2000. A labyrinth is an ancient symbol dating back hundreds of years designed for walking, meditation and relaxation, a memorial of sorts. Labyrinths can be found in many parts of the world including France, Sweden, England and India. In this case, local enthusiasts painted the convoluted walking path on a concrete base, once part of a carousel. It is a copy of a labyrinth found in a 13th Century Cathedral in Chartres, France.

- **Memorial Gateway** – at the High Park Boulevard entrance to the Park. This is an impressive stone structure complete with exotic lighting, erected in 1913.





Labyrinth
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp



Memorial Gateway
Photo credit: Lisa Kemp

The inscription on the gate reads:

THIS MEMORIAL GATEWAY
IS DEDICATED TO THE LATE
JOHN G. HOWARD
FOUNDER OF HIGH PARK
BY THE WESTMINSTER CHAPTER
OF THE IMPERIAL ORDER
DAUGHTERS OF THE EMPIRE
AND THE CORPORATION OF
THE CITY OF TORONTO
DECEMBER A. D. 1 9 1 3

Concluding remarks

We return to the question: are the monuments, sculptures and other artworks described above appropriate to a public park? In a word, yes. These works of art have been in High Park for some time and we are not suggesting that any be removed. However, they should all be clearly identified. We have talked about the need for such recognition for the sculptures remaining from the 1967 Sculpture Symposium. There is a similar need to identify the Portuguese monument. (An identifying plaque has recently been placed at the fence line in front of the Lesya Ukrainka Sculpture)

Other pertinent questions are: do we want to see more monuments and works of art in High Park? And, if so, what acceptance criteria should there be regarding subject and location? Are some subjects or themes more acceptable than others?

What are your thoughts? We'd be glad to hear from you on these questions or on any other points raised in this two-part article. (Contact editor@highpark.org.)