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HIGH PARK

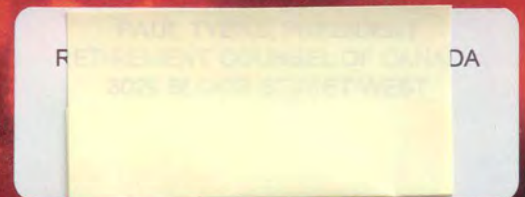
A Park Lover's Quarterly

**High Park zoo
sends animals packing**

**West end politician
targets gay sex cruising**

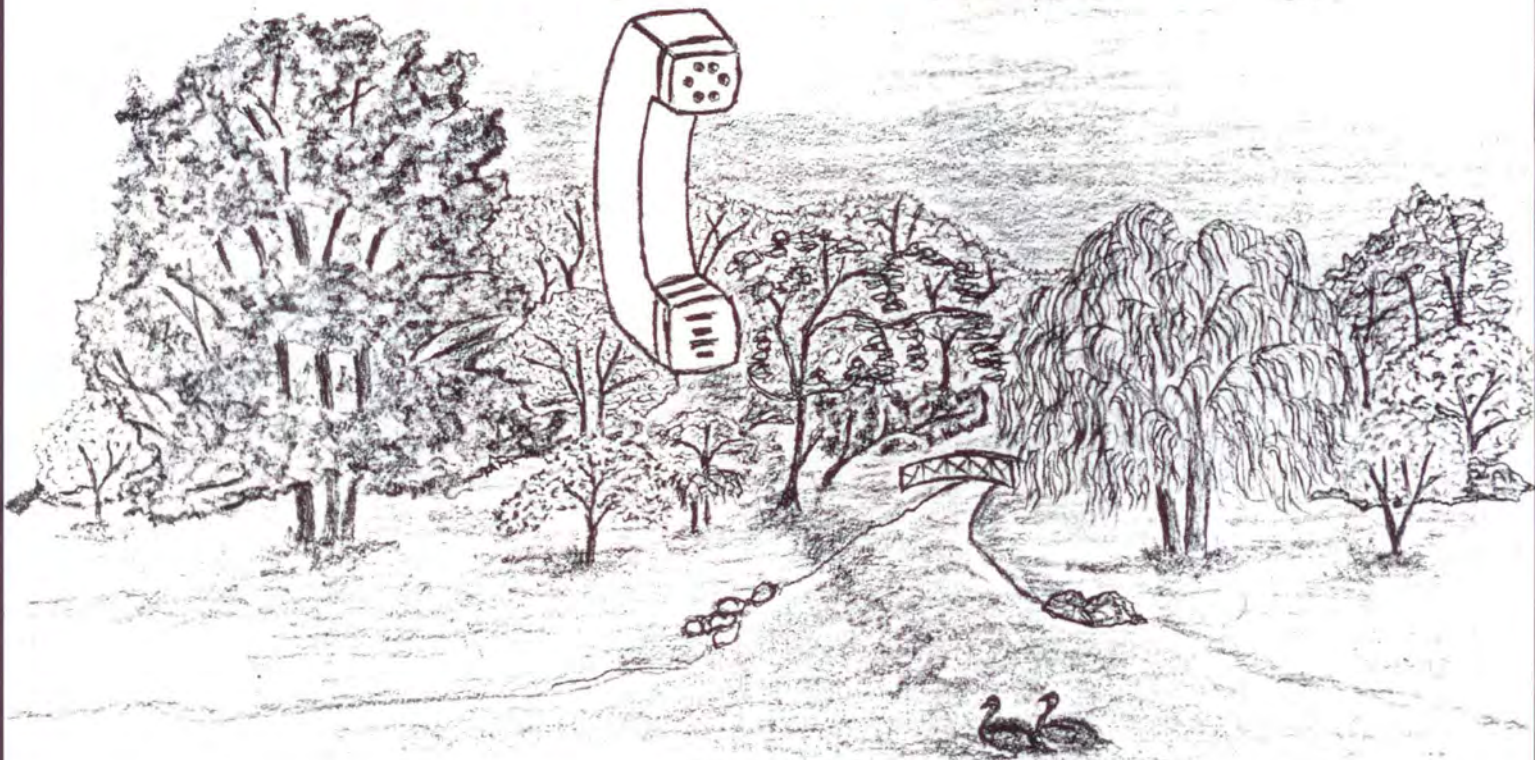
**Ernest Hemingway reports
on High Park's oaks**

Christmas at Colborne Lodge • A park lover's best of 1996



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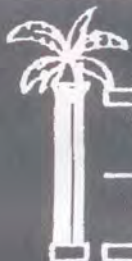


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Contributors - Amy Airhart, Gera Dillon, D.W. Dorken, Jill Franklin, Mary Lou Kumagai, Mario Maceda, David McClusky, Joan Miles, Kim Osborne.

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Back page photo by Gera Dillon

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Park Politics

— a guide to grassroots involvement in High Park

HIGH PARK CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE meets the third Wednesday of every other month. The next meeting is Jan. 15, 6:30 p.m. at the Keele Street Community Centre. The committee meets to discuss the work of the High Park subcommittees



David Miller

Metro Councillor
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55 John Street
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392-4072

on Safety and Recreation, the Natural Environment, and Transportation. For more information phone Jamie Bell at 604-7421.

HIGH PARK TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE meets the second week of December. Topics to be discussed include the production of an off-road cycling pamphlet for the public. A new chair will be chosen. For more information phone 588-5678.

PARK WATCH meets every week at the Annette Public Library. For more information phone 392-7276, ext.311.



David Hutcheon

City Councillor - Ward 1

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

from

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Chris Korwin-Kuczynski

392-0202



Rob Maxwell

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Colborne Lodge X-mas explores green holidays

Bing Crosby would shudder, but this holiday season Colborne Lodge is going for a green Christmas.

Christmas programs at the Toronto Historical Board's Colborne Lodge in High Park, will explore the relationship between the environment and the holidays and winter festivals.

The lodge will be decorated in traditional Victorian style. Groups will tour the house and sip a cup of hot mulled cider in the historic kitchen.

Colborne Lodge is the 1837 country home of John and Jemima Howard, the founders of High Park.

During the holiday season the Lodge is open Dec. 1-23, Tues.-Fri., noon-4 p.m., Sat., Sun., noon-5 p.m., Dec. 24, noon-3 p.m., Dec. 27, noon-4 p.m., Dec. 28, 29, noon-5 p.m., Dec. 30, noon-4 p.m., Dec. 31, noon-3 p.m. Admission is adults/\$5, seniors/\$4, children/\$3.50. For more information phone 392-6916.

Grenadier Restaurant gets major facelift

A half-million dollars should go some distance toward sprucing up High Park's badly sagging Grenadier Restaurant.

The Caragianakos family, who have run restaurant for the past 16 years, have entered into a 20-year lease with the city of Toronto, and have agreed to spend upwards of \$500,000 to renovate the Grenadier's interior and exterior.

Major exterior changes to the building include replacing all the windows with french doors, re-grading the landscape to create two outdoor patios, and replacing the roof and adding sky lights.

Changes to the interior include creating a tea room with a fireplace and library, replacing the fast food-style seating with tables and chairs. A pizza oven will be built and the menu will be substantially revised.

Work could begin in March, 1997, according to John Romanov, an architect working for the Caragianakos family.

The agreement between the city and the family calls for the work to be completed by the end of 1997.

Bell Tel scoffs at safety

Bell Telephone wants to pull the plug on a public phone, located in a remote area of High Park for safety reasons, because the booth is in the red.

According to Bell, the phone, locat-



ed near the park's allotment gardens, is making anywhere from 14 cents to \$2/day, well below Bell's target minimum of \$2.80.

Bell wants the city of Toronto to subsidize the phone to the tune \$1,000 per year or the company is threatening to take the service away.

The city spent \$10,000 bringing in power and telephone lines to the booth's location.

Park Watch dots the 'i's

Park Watch is poised to launch mobile teams of volunteer hosts in High Park in the spring of 1997.

A proposal for the program calls for the volunteers to "act as hosts and goodwill ambassadors to enhance the image of the Park".

Volunteer hosts would also provide information to parks users, do monitoring, identify and report any safety problems.

According to the proposal the mandate of Park Watch is, "To keep High Park a safe and friendly place".

Park Watch is run through the High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee and its Safety and Recreation Subcommittee.

In the proposal Park Watch also asks for approval to establish behaviour guidelines. Park Watch also wants to work with police and park staff to prevent safety problems.

The proposal is waiting for approvals from the police, Toronto Parks and Rec, and Toronto City Council before it can go ahead.

Mutt mit craps out

The best of inventions are often put to unintended uses and the mutt mit is no exception.

After paying \$4,000 to buy and install two mutt mit stations in High Park, the Toronto Parks and Recreation Department took them down in late November. The stations had only been in the park six weeks.

They were installed to encourage more people to pick up after their pets. Park staff realized people were grabbing handfuls of the bags. The stations had to be refilled every week.

Mutt mits are plastic mittens, minus the thumb, that are pulled over the hand to pick up dog feces. The stations are a poll with a box on top that held the recycled plastic mits.

Signs people park

Like other municipal centres, High Park has its fair share of signs - 768 as of spring 1996.

Here is a breakdown of the type and number of signs in High Park:

- information - 236; road - 236; winter - 97; train - 16; bicycle - 19; wheel chair - 10; animals - 43; signs on buildings - 95; restaurant - 3; no vending - 8; post no signs - 14.

season's greetings

from

Carolyn Hillman

Royal LePage

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High Park zoo cuts back herds

A major thinning of several herds of animals has significantly reduced the population at the High Park zoo.

About 16 animals of different species were shipped from the zoo to a private farm in Bowmanville at the end of November. The animals will be kept for breeding stock or sold to petting zoos, private zoos and farms.

"Every two years we try to keep the herds' numbers down," said Carol Guy, community parks supervisor in High Park. "We also have to keep the bloodlines clean," Guy said.

The animals, shipped Nov. 28 and 29, went to the Bowmanville farm of Brian Hart. The species included: white-tailed deer, white fallow and spotted fallow deer, one llama (born last year), west highland cattle, this year's baby bison, one mouflon sheep, and six barbury sheep.

According to Hart two spotted fallow deer and the llama were sold to the Waterloo City Zoo. He is keeping the rest for breeding stock, he said.

Hart, who also works with major zoos in Canada said his business is in buying and reselling animals, and trading animals. Hart said he paid the city of Toronto about \$2,000 for this most recent group. "There was nothing there of true value. I bought everything as a bulk order," Hart said. Besides his private farm in Bowmanville, Hart also owns a farm in Manitoba, Grouse Island Park, that people can visit.

Before animals can be shipped out of the zoo they must be tested to make sure

they are disease-free.

A veterinarian from Agriculture Canada tested all the deer, and bison for mammalian and avian tuberculosis, and brucellosis.

Three of the white-tailed deer showed a reaction to the tubercular skin test and will be re-tested in 60 days, toward the end of January, for the two types of T.B.

According to Dr. Tom Popper of Agriculture Canada the mammalian version is "serious" and the avian variety is "not serious".

"The reaction means they have been exposed but it doesn't mean they have anything," Popper said.

If the second test shows a significant reaction then the animals will have to be slaughtered, Popper said.

"It is a public health concern. There's a good chance, if it's positive, that they got it from people," he said.

All the results for brucellosis were negative. Brucellosis, also called Bang's Disease, causes abortion in cattle and fever in people.

— Gigi Suhanic

Councillor targets gay cruising

A west end councillor is kicking up dust over gay cruising in High Park, saying its "hypocritical" to look the other way.

Ward 2 councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski said he is waiting for a "verbal report" from Toronto's Parks and Recreation Department before trying to put a stop to sexual activity in the park's south end near The Queensway.

"Sexual activity in the park should

not be tolerated," Korwin-Kuczynski (K-K), said.

"Everyone was happy when we caught the flasher this summer. To look in the other direction in this case is hypocritical," K-K said.

K-K said he will be looking to police to provide him with support.

How much support he will get is unclear. According to the police there is no specific law against having sex in a public park. There are bylaws that cover conduct in the park with the pertinent sections referring to behaviour that interferes with someone else's enjoyment of the park.

"People are saying to me, 'Finally somebody is willing to do something about it,'" K-K said. "I don't care if I get accused of gay bashing."

The other issue associated with gay cruising is the lack of washrooms. The public washroom in the south end was permanently closed in the fall of 1993 because it was being used by men as a place to have sex.

"People want to know why it's been closed for so long," he said.

— Gigi Suhanic

Tiny Yorkville Park's rocky road to success

Tiny Village of Yorkville Park caused a big ruckus when the 150 by 30 metres green space emerged four years ago from a parking lot at Cumberland Street and Belair Avenue.

The architected and constructed green space, a diorama of several of Ontario's ecologies, evoked horror and delight in the Toronto public, with most of the attention focusing on a mound of re-constructed Canadian Shield.

Passions were recently rekindled

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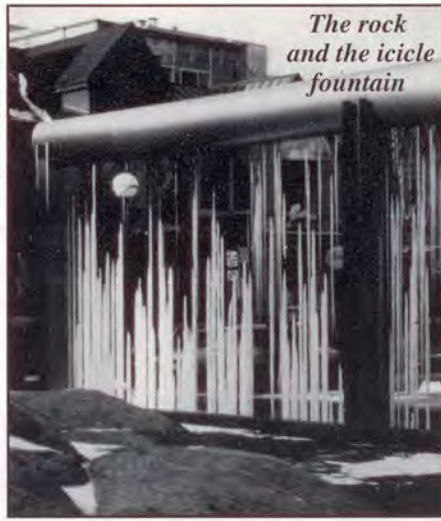
when the park was named winner of the Presidents Award of Excellence by the American Society of Landscape Architects. The award can only be granted by a unanimous decision of the jurors.

The park was featured on the cover of the November issue of *Landscape Architecture*, the society's magazine with a circulation of 40,000. "Several judges predicted that the park will become a landmark. Certainly the Village of Yorkville Park commands attention on the aesthetic and the educational fronts," the cover story said.

In 1992, as construction of the park progressed, the city of Toronto Department of Parks and Recreation was hammered when it was discovered that \$280,000 of the park's \$3 million budget was being spent to purchase, break up and reassemble a piece of the Canadian Shield. A Muskoka farmer, Kermit White, was paid \$5,000 for the 650 tonnes rock that was transported to Toronto in 137 pieces on 20 flatbed trucks.

One of the things Toronto architects David Oleson and Wilfrid Worland were trying to do with the rock and the other 13 gardens present in the park was to represent the province's landscape.

"I don't take stuff personally," said David Oleson of the attack on his and his partner's design. "On most aesthetic projects it's a battle to the death to try to do an interesting design. It's nice when you succeed," Oleson said.



The rock and the icicle fountain

Is this award vindication for the flack the park took?

"Real vindication would be if the people who criticized it gave us the award," Oleson said. "The best vindication is that people are actually using it. That's the point of it all," he said.

"I would like to point out that this is an important creative use of small space to provide a toehold for nature in the city," he said.

The truth of the matter is that the Village of Yorkville Park is no stranger to fighting. The battle over this park began in the 1950s when some Victorian row houses were demolished where the park is today, to make way for the Bloor/Danforth subway. Despite parking lots and threats of highrises, a group of merchants kept on pushing for a park for Yorkville.

One of these merchants, Budd Sugarman, said if a high rise had come in the tone would have been set for the rest of Yorkville to topple like dominoes.

In 1971, Toronto City Council approved the site for a park. It would be another 20 years before the design competition was launched that would result in the Village of Yorkville Park.

Sugarman, who owns an interior design business on Hazleton Avenue, was on the competition's selection committee. "I was expecting the usual trees and grass for the park," Sugarman said. "It's not everybody's normal park. One is capable of changes. This is a change for the better," he said.

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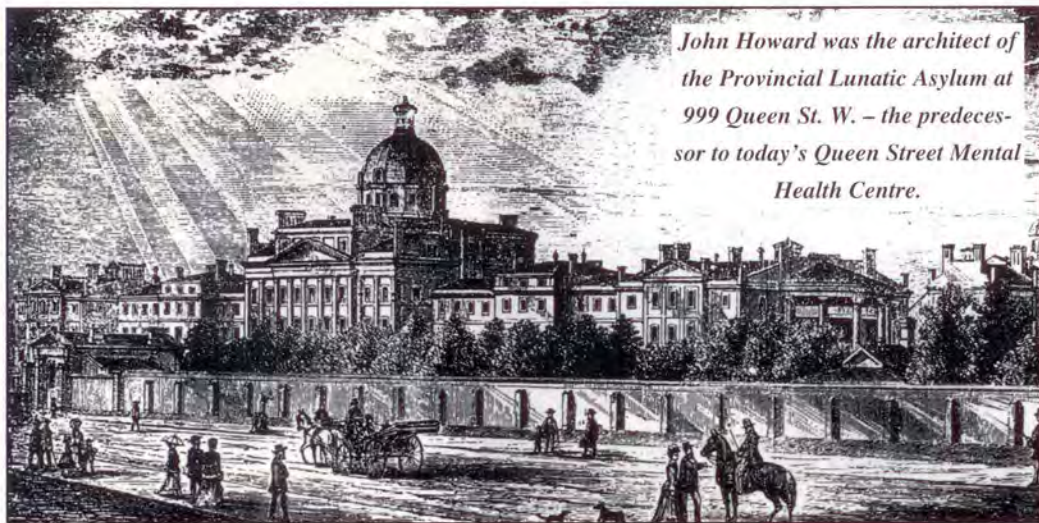
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John Howard's foray into lunacy

by Jill Franklin



John Howard was the architect of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at 999 Queen St. W. – the predecessor to today's Queen Street Mental Health Centre.

Shortly after John Howard, the founder of High Park, completed the second floor addition to Colborne Lodge, his Regency-styled home in the park, the government announced a competition for architects to submit plans for an asylum. Toronto's population had rapidly grown to over 18,000 by 1844 and the problem of what to do with the segment of society labeled as "lunatics" and "idiots" was finally being addressed. They could no longer be confined to the primitive conditions in basements of decrepit and overcrowded jails.

Howard won the prestigious competition and was awarded £30. He regarded his victory as the proudest moment of his career, despite the outcry from his envious peers who tried to have his commission revoked. The feisty Howard fought for his right to supervise the construction of his imposing building that would strike fear in the hearts and minds of Torontonians for the next 125 years. Over a black ash swamp, on land the Indians claimed they never surrendered, and with an address to become 999 Queen Street West, Howard built the largest civilian structure in Canada – The Provincial Lunatic Asylum.

The Government had been collecting money to defray the costs of the institution, with an experiment in direct taxation. Balls were held to raise further funds, and appeals went out to the public attributing many cases of insanity to being hereditary, so "every citizen should look at this department of philanthropic activity with the possibility in his mind of his dearest relative some day becoming an inmate of a lunatic asylum".

Howard's plans incorporated conditions to encourage fair and humane treatment for the homeless "undesirables". Yet at the time, few doctors valued an environment for the insane that would provide a clean, comfortable lifestyle and nurture the patients' physical and spiritual well-being, in most cases for the rest of their lives. Howard planned for relief, relaxation and entertainment with two infirmaries, a garden, ballroom and three chapels: for Roman Catholic, Protestant and non-denominational.

The exterior of Howard's design was based on a study he made of the National Gallery on Trafalgar Square in London. With the main facade being 584 feet long, the cornerstone (which has since disappeared) was laid by Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson in 1846, being inscribed as "the first building in Western Canada for the reception of Insane and Lunatic Persons". *The Globe* described the building as "exceedingly handsome, commodious, healthful and safe...a monument to the Christian liberality of the people".

Howard's plans were a testament to his innovative architectural skills. He included systems for steam-heating and ventilating the entire building, considered to be the best in North America until the turn of the century. An enormous dome in the centre held an 11,000-gallon iron tank providing running water throughout the institution – a luxury usually reserved for only the finest buildings of the time. A spiral staircase, built up to the cupola on the dome, was used to reach a lantern that served as a beacon to navigators on Lake Ontario. In *Toronto No Mean City*, Eric Arthur described the staircase as a "piece of theatrical scenery, but it has all the fascina-

tion of a set in which Orson Welles might have played a part".

The Provincial Lunatic Asylum officially opened in 1850 and by year's end there were 308 patients registered; 44 more than the main building was designed to house. The original plans had included two lateral wings to the south, but lack of funds only allowed Howard to complete the main section for £56,000.

During the early years, most of Howard's morally based ideals for treating the mentally-ill were ignored. Doctors still believed that insane people were criminals or subjects of demonic possession, becoming more frenzied as the moon increased to its full lunar phases, (hence the term 'lunatic' from the Latin word for moon 'luna'). Leg-irons and iron cages for restraint were commonly used, as were anti-masturbation devices, Spanish-fly blisters and a 'cautery' – a rod heated to a white flame then applied to the neck to produce a running sore – believed to reduce cerebral congestion in maniacal patients.

By 1853 the asylum was in complete disarray. Howard was still struggling with the leaking roof, and had to fire the painters. Many of the patients who were transferred from the jails did not survive; others were dying from an outbreak of cholera. Dr. Joseph Workman was appointed Medical Superintendent and after a thorough investigation, found the source of infection coming from an enormous foul cesspool underneath the building. The builders had failed to connect the drains to main sewers resulting in a three-year accumulation of human excrement. After the drainage and ventilation systems were rebuilt the Superintendent reported, "Perforating Dysenteries, intractable Diarrhoeas, and the whole Typhoid family of deadly complication ceased to perplex the Medical Staff".

Dr. Workman introduced a number of progressive therapeutic programs during his 22-year appointment. He scorned the common practices of blistering, blood letting and purging and focused on feeding the patients well, rather than keeping them undernourished to reduce over-anxiety. The use of drugs such as chloral and bromide of potassium was reduced in favour of beer and spirits. There were times when the institution's liquor bill was higher than the one for drugs. The popular doctor also established a patient library and began cultivation of surrounding land. In 1871, he changed the name of the institution to the "Asylum for the Insane, Toronto".

The improvements brought more patients from all areas of the province. By 1869 the two new wings were built, but not to Howard's design. His architectural rival, Kivas Tully was given the commission based on plans that did not utilize the space as well as

Howard's. Despite the addition, overcrowding became a serious problem. Patients were often violent; murders and suicides were common, as were beatings by untrained attendants.

It was into this environment that John Howard planned to commit his wife in 1875. During their marriage, Jemima had nursed Howard through extensive periods of his demanding physical ailments and mental exhaustion. But Howard would not reciprocate when Jemima began to show signs of deterioration at age 73. He described her behaviour in his diary as being fraxious, irritating and difficult but gave no reason as to why she tried to run away from High Park on at least three occasions. Unable to exercise patience and goodwill toward his wife, Howard went to the asylum, chose a room for Jemima and signed a bond to have her committed.

Strong resistance came from her family and the two doctors that Howard needed to verify Jemima's supposed insanity. Even Dr. Workman, who had known the Howards personally and professionally, refused to make such a diagnosis and sign the bond. But John Howard was not a man who easily accepted defeat. He hired a woman to care for his wife, took numerous trips away from High Park, and refused to let her relatives visit.

Jemima remained at Colborne Lodge for another two years until her death. She was moved into a back bedroom, her windows barred and a locked door was placed in the hallway. From the window, she could see her husband building the elaborate tomb to her memory.

By the mid 1880s the estimate for Ontario's insane population was 3,000 – one insane person for every 640; the U.S. Census reported one for every 552. The Medical Superintendent, Dr. Daniel Clark, attributed the prevalence of rapidly increasing insanity to the high tension under which so many people were living, telling a *Globe* reporter, "If you try to get 25 horse-power out of a 25 horse-power engine...the engine is likely to break down".

Under Dr. Clark, the asylum became completely self sufficient, with 110 acres of attached land being put to use. Patients raised all of the fruit and vegetables needed by the institution and kept 26 cows which supplied the dairy requirements. The women made clothing; men were engaged in tailoring, gardening and other trades. The patients were reportedly 'happy' and rarely did one try to escape or need restraint. Unfortunately, such conditions that made economic sense in the long run, were not to last.

The attitude toward mental health care was changing and given a low priority with the onset of the World War I and the Depression. Financial support was meager, the programs of patient productivity were ended and the Toronto Asylum was deteriorating badly. Lobotomies, electro-convulsive therapy, drug experimentation and the use of straight jackets were widely practiced. The building itself became a symbol of scandalous horrors in the treatment of the insane.

Hoping that its reputation would improve, the asylum was renamed The Queen Street Mental Health Centre in 1966. Then in the mid-1970s, despite public opposition and a brief occupation, one of the last remaining buildings designed by John Howard in Toronto, could not be saved. In *Lost Toronto*, William Dendy writes, "The Minister responsible, Mrs. Margaret Scrivner, represented the government's determination to demolish, as if it were a personal crusade, and all appeals against the decision were futile."

A parking lot replaced one of the most outstanding monuments of Neo Classicism in Canada, considered to be John Howard's finest work. The new buildings were designed as a university setting and were officially dedicated to the treatment of the 'mentally challenged' in 1979. Even the address was changed – to 1001 Queen Street West. All that remains for public view of Howard's creation is a piece of the spiral staircase, mounted above the door to the staff cafeteria.

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Early playground advocates cited physical, mental, moral benefits

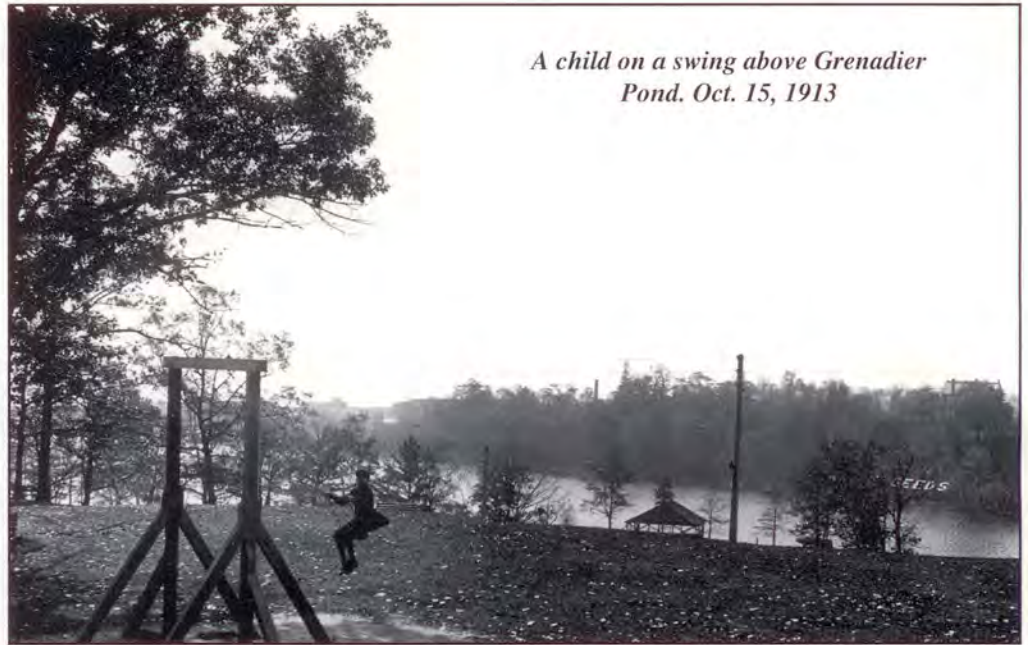
by Joan Miles

High Park in History

For many families in 1850s Toronto, the excitement of crossing to Toronto Island on the horse-propelled Peninsula Packet was equalled only by the prospect of “swings and a merry-go-round for the amusement of children”. Both diversions were open only to those who could afford the modest fee. While there had been commercialized picnic grounds before 1833, 60 years passed before the notion of public supervised playgrounds for children took hold.

The National Council of Women, persuaded of the benefits of outdoor recreation as an “antidote to slothful living,” convinced the city fathers in 1893 to form the Playground and Recreation Branch of the Toronto Public Parks Department.

By 1911 there were six supervised playgrounds in all of Toronto. Children of the immediate neighbourhood came to these



A child on a swing above Grenadier Pond. Oct. 15, 1913

places, where there was trained adult supervision from May until November. Miniature toboggan slides were maintained in winter. By 1913 a few swings with wood frame supports had been erected above today's Hillside Gardens in High Park.

Until the end of World War II municipal funding for equipment, as well as recreation programming and supervision was scant. Most outdoor activities were sponsored and organized by church, social and workplace groups. Alderman Fred Conboy was among the earliest advocates of vastly

improved provision for public recreation. In 1936 he asserted the strong correlation between engaging in recreational activities and exhibiting sound physical, mental and moral health. He noted that just 20 per cent of the boys, and even fewer girls in Toronto schools took part in recreation programs, citing the poor quality of facilities and equipment available.

By the early 1950s there were two children's playgrounds in High Park: one in the north-west corner near Bloor Street, and the other in the south east-quadrant of the park, skirted by Spring Road to the west and enclosed on three sides by sloping land with vegetation. Standard play equipment consisted of swings, slides and teeter totters.

An unintended consequence of the completion of the artists' constructs for the 1967 International Sculpture Symposium was the creation of an improvised playground. Then-commissioner of Parks and Recreation Forrest noted ruefully in 1973 that these works proved “of great interest to children visiting the park...used as play-sculpture or novel pieces of playground apparatus”. Sadly the work of Eskimo carver Pauta was so defaced that it had to be relocated to the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg.

From the 1960s on, new amenities in the designated playgrounds included a wading pool in the north end, and variations on the slide, swing sets, teeter totters and jungle jim at both sites. Stationary brightly coloured dinosaurs were in place luring the curious climber.

Today creative community collaboration will result in the next tangible expression of a new children's playground in the south-eastern corner of High Park.

Sources: City of Toronto Archives; Colborne Lodge; Parks Dept. Archives; Early Life in Upper Canada by Edwin C. Guillet, T.H. Best Printing Co. Ltd., 1933.

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Cars slaying Toronto's oaks

This article written by Ernest Hemingway under the name "Peter Jackson" appeared in the *Toronto Star Weekly* in 1923. The C.D. Howe referred to in the article is not the same person for which the C.D. Howe Institute was named. In 1994 the article was included in an anthology of Hemingway's newspaper writings during his stay in Toronto called, *Hemingway. The Toronto Years* by William Burrill. This article is reprinted with the permission of the *Toronto Star*.

A chill wind blows over High Park. There is snow in the air.

Other trees sway with the wind. The pines seem to enjoy it. But the oaks are sullen and rigid. Stripped of their leaves by the wind, they stand stiff and despairing looking against the sky. For the oaks are dying. They are dying because they cannot stand the city. And the city comes nearer and nearer all the time.

Other trees are built to make compromises with the city. They have special defences against the attacks the city launches against them. But the oak is not built for compromises. It is like some animal of prehistoric times, built only for a certain environment. And when that environment is changed it dies.

Motor cars kill oak trees, declares Dr. C.D. Howe, dean of forestry at the University.

"The dust constantly stirred up by the automobiles settles on the oak leaves and forms a film," Dr. Howe stated. "It is exceedingly fine and often contains oil. The film on the leaves stops the breathing pores and the trees suffocate. They must have air to breathe just as an animal must."

It is because the oak leaf is smooth and offers a perfect surface for the film of dust and the city smoke that the sturdiest of trees succumbs to the city, where the elm and the maple survive, according to Dr. Howe.

"Elm trees have rough leaves with minute little hairs, like a stuffy beard," Dr. Howe told the *Star Weekly*. "The dust particles cannot make perfect film and cut off the respiration as they do in the oak. So the oaks are being slowly smothered."

Toronto's oaks are dying in Queens' Park as well as in High Park. According to authorities, one reason they are unable to resist the steady smothering of the dust film is because of the weakness of old age.

Most of Toronto's oak trees are close to one hundred years old. At seventy-five to a hundred years an oak tree begins to weaken. In good, rich soil in Canada an oak should live to be 250 or 300 years if it were not exposed to the dust, smoke and gases of the city. In England there have been cases of oaks reaching the age of 600 years. That was in the country.

When the oak has been weakened by the smothering caused by the shutting off of its respiratory organs, the fungus attacks it. The particular type of fungus that kills Toronto's oaks starts in at the roots. It spreads from the roots and gradually rots out the heart. The oak lives on for a time as a shell, its sap mounting in the spring and its leaves struggling against the city's dust assaults, and then dies...The article ends with a discussion of the effects of cars on pine trees.

Quick facts about High Park's oaks today

- black, red, and white oak are the three most commonly found species of oak in High Park.
- black oak are among the largest of the species.
- approximately 95 per cent of the black oaks in High Park are at pathological maturity.
- approximately 50 per cent have heart rot, a fungus that eats wood from the inside out.
- black oaks are not regenerating.

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Naturalist's notebook

Cement mixes up oaks

It may come as no surprise, but oak trees and cement concrete don't mix.

Oak trees marooned in a sea of concrete, in parking lots and at road sides, bear the brunt of their living conditions in a number of ways suffering reduced life spans and producing deformed acorns.

"Oaks living in the woods do much better than those living surrounded by concrete," said Solomon Boye. Boye is head of the native plant propagation program at the High Park Greenhouse. Through field observations and testing, Boye has concluded concrete is putting some of the parks' oaks at serious risk.

Boye collects acorns from High Park and germinates them in the green house, as part of a project to protect the park's declining oak population. Before Boye starts the germination process he subjects the acorns to a simple water flotation test to determine soundness and health. The acorns that sink are sound inside; the ones that

float are generally hollow inside, deformed or have been eaten through by an insect.

As a general rule, acorns, collected from trees living in concrete, sink. This is so much the case that Boye said he doesn't collect those acorns anymore.

Boye has also found that when he does successfully sprout some of these acorns, they start growing tumours, cancers, swellings on their stems. Then they decline. "We dug them all up and threw them away," he said.

What does concrete do to stress these trees out?

Construction of a sidewalk or roadway tends to pile dirt up around the flare of a tree. The flare is the lower part of the trunk that bells out.

Boye said the piled dirt collects water in an area where there shouldn't be any. A fungus starts to grow because of the increased dampness. "Most of the time it starts to rot," he said.

Concrete also causes compaction, a pressing together of the soil. According to Boye compaction causes a serious loss of oxygen in the soil. The concrete also forms an impenetrable seal that cuts off aeration, for example, from worms boring holes into the ground and allowing air in.

Nutrient uptake by the feeder roots is also interfered with. Nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium are the nutrients plants need.

"When you impact on the nutrient and oxygen uptake you are impacting on the whole wellbeing of the plant," Boye said.

— Gigi Suhanic

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ECONOTES

COMPOSTING IN WINTER: Tired of lugging your food scraps through the cold and snow? Move your compost bin closer to the house! Or store food waste for a week or two in a sealed container in your house or garage (topping it up with soil or sawdust helps control odours), then move it to your outside bin. Save some fall leaves to add to your pile in layers throughout the winter. *For more information, call Metro's Composting Helpline at 392-4689.*

ADOPT AN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY: This grassroots program brings residents and business people together with City Works Services to resolve recycling and other environmental concerns in the community. A pilot project to set up information resource stations is now underway in our area (watch for the signs!) *For more information call 392-7850.*

POLLUTION SOLUTIONS: For practical advice on disposing of toxic household waste and finding safer alternatives, call the WWF Pollution Solutions hotline at 489-8855.

GREEN TOURISM: The Green Tourism Partnership brings together businesses, groups and individuals to promote green tourism in our city and to help meet the growing demand for ecologically sustainable leisure experiences (like a walk in High Park!). *For more information, call Joan Miles at 767-6129.*

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY IN HIGH PARK: Plans are underway to hold a city-wide celebration of Earth Day in High Park in April 1997. *For more information or to get involved, call Earth Day Canada at 599-1991.*

Eco-Notes is a community service from Bloor West Eco-Village.

Contact us c/o Swansea Town Hall, 95 Lavinia Avenue, Box 107, Toronto ON M6S 3H9

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Outdoor volunteer work in High Park this winter includes:

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“Fleeting moments & tiny treasures” – a park lover’s 1996 diary

There’s a great and glorious tradition in the media around this time of the year. As real news slows to a crawl, and holiday shopping and cheer take their toll, certain ink-stained wretches resort to making lists of the best, the biggest and the “most” of the year that was. But, hey, we’re above all that. Instead, we have decided to celebrate the small stuff — those fleeting moments and tiny treasures that have added zing to the strings of a Toronto park-lover over the last 12 months. Here are some of my personal favourite zingers, in no particular order...

1. Watching a red-shouldered buzzard hawk, nearly two feet tall, stomping about on the ground under a pine tree in a furious snit — his intended lunch, a cheeky black squirrel, has just narrowly escaped into the underbrush. The viewer is grateful to be a non-rodent.
2. Sitting on The rock in Yorkville Park on a perfect, sunny day in June, soaking up the heat and wondering who or what had sat here years before me, when this granite monolith was still sleeping in northern Ontario’s shield. The wind shifts, bringing a fine mist from the waterfall and the hint of piney perfume from the trees at the other end of the park. I’m inside a True North hologram.
3. Standing stock-still in a white winter landscape, watching a shockingly brilliant-red cardinal do nothing in particular on a branch six feet away, as an azure blue jay screams obscenities at the both of us.
4. Kicking through piles of dry leaves on a misty October afternoon and looking up to see “the frosted asters like a smoke upon the hills.” Realizing that the Bliss Carman poem Mrs. Holiday made us memorize in Grade 5 wasn’t entirely sippy after all.
5. Finding huge, frilled orange fungus like some exotic orchid corsage pinned halfway up the trunk of an oak tree in High Park. (Several day later, nothing but a ragged shred remains, a victim of nefarious fungus-filchers unknown.)
6. Tramping along the frozen banks of a park pond in

December, knowing that beneath my feet scores turtles and fish lie dreaming in the mud. Do visions of lily pads and juicy flies and mice dance in their heads? Can you prove conclusively they don’t?

7. Happening upon a young tree planted on a sunny hillside, with a small granite plaque at its base. “In loving memory...” it says, and other words as well. Not a name I recognize, yet someone I might have passed on walks, might even have nodded to if it had been a regular occurrence. I like to think so.
8. A flock of Canada Geese wheeling and banking in V-formation overhead, eerily silent for once. A final, near-kamikaze dive, then the leader gives a single bleating honk and they’re gone. Practising for the air show? Stealth geese?
9. Two dogs out for a romp in the freshly fallen snow — the big one, a golden Labrador retriever, bounding on ahead while the small one (part Dachshund?) tries valiantly to keep up. He leaps porpoise-like from one Lab footprint to the next, tongue flapping like a scarf. When the Lab notices, he returns to offer encouragement. It seems to be a friendship sort of thing.
10. Chipmunks laying in provisions for the winter are zipping up and down the trunk of a crabapple tree until they hear someone cooing. Suddenly, they “freeze-frame” against the bark, apparently believing this renders them invisible. The passerby plays along with the game, pretending that they are, indeed, impossible to see (choosing to ignore the twitching tails, and the bright little eyes that follow one’s every move.) I can almost hear tiny sighs of relief as I move on.
11. Strolling, at the height of the festive season, through groves of fruit-laden crabapple trees, stands of red-berried bushes lopped with garlands of wild cucumber, all coated in fresh white snow. Discover that I’m not alone, as it seems nearly everyone’s come out to admire the special effects. Funny how it gets strangers socializing together — apparently, where “ooing” and “aahing” are concerned, the more really is the merrier.

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High Park in Winter

The popular High Park Walking Tour program continues into winter and early spring.

Most tours take about 2 hours. A \$2 donation is suggested to support these and other volunteer programs. Walks are moderately paced and go on uncleared trails. Dress warmly!

Snapping Winter Weeds

(Nature study and photography)

Sunday, Jan. 12, 1:15 p.m.

Meet at Grenadier Restaurant

(bring a camera)

Birds of Winter

Sunday, Feb. 9, 1:15 p.m.

Meet at Grenadier Restaurant

(bring binoculars)

Tour of the Stars*

Sunday, March 9, 6:15 p.m.

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(bring binoculars)

* especially recommended for families

Tour of the Stars*

Sunday, April 6, 7:15 p.m.

Meet at Grenadier Restaurant

(bring binoculars)

Lost Waterways of High Park Area

Sunday, April 13, 1:15 p.m.

Meet at Grenadier Restaurant

(wear sturdy shoes)

Celebrate Earth Day in High Park*

Sunday, April 27

Watch for more details about events and tours

Organized by the High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee, Colborne Lodge (Toronto Historical Board) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (city of Toronto)

For more information about tours or other volunteer programs, call 392-7276, ext. 301.