

HIGH PARK

A Park Lover's Quarterly

Jemima Howard

19th century
adventures
of the First Lady
of High Park

Dog Gone It
Pesky mutts make
not-so-merry mayhem

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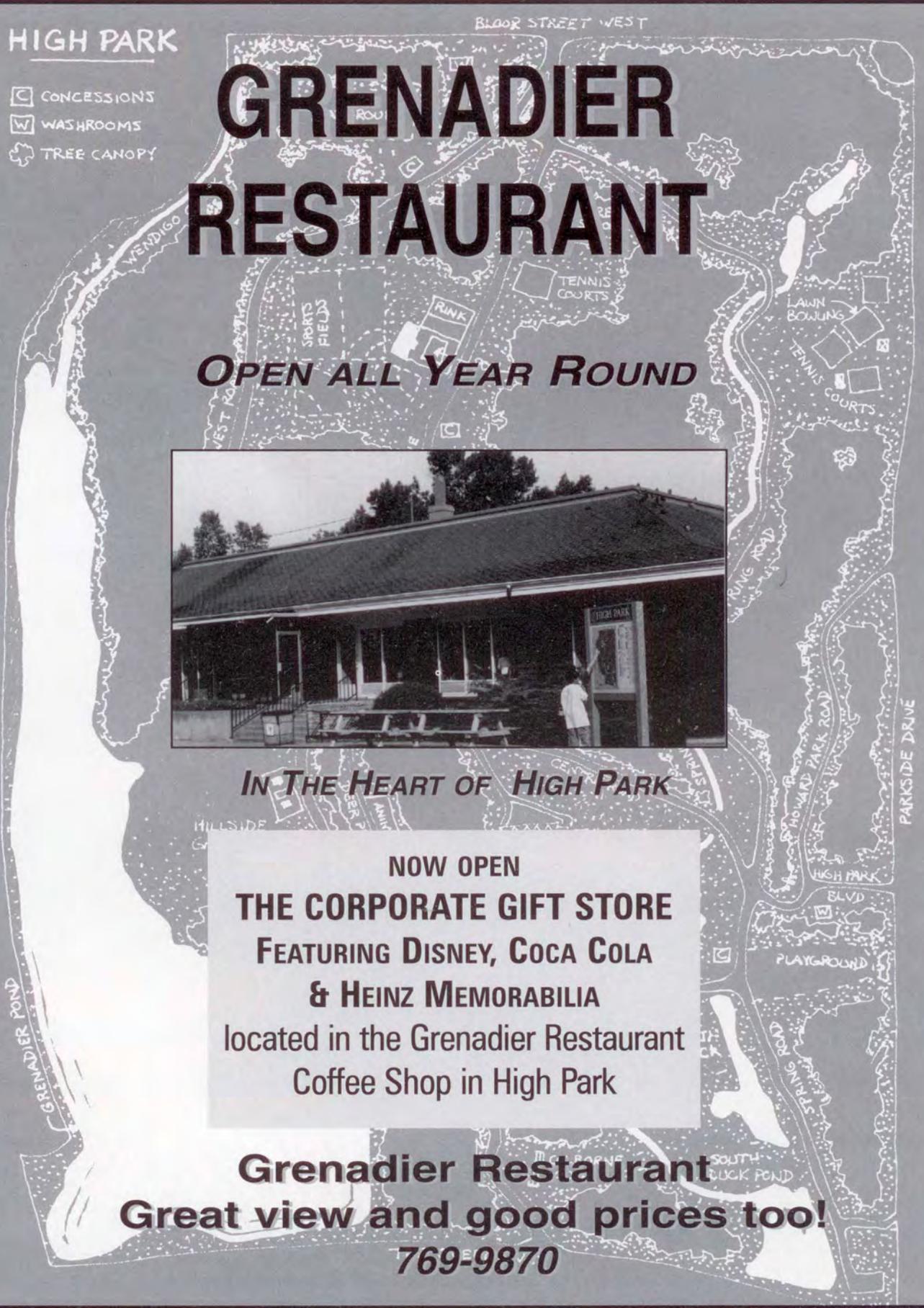


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High Park

A Park Lover's Quarterly

Editor – Gigi Suhanic

Writer – Jill Franklin

Columnists – Mary Lou Kumagai, Joan Miles,

Photographer – D.W. Dorken

Cover and back page photograph by Gera Dillon

Artist's statement about the cover. *Floral Aura*. This seasonally-adjusted image is from my PHOSMOSIS collection of slide-sandwiches. To a winter scene in High Park, I added a ghostly flower...a memory of summer's past glories as well as a hint of what's to come again.

– Gera Dillon

High Park fulfills the personal needs and interests of many people – expansive backyard and playground for those without a patch of green to call their own; a training ground for cyclists and runners; a bird watcher's delight. While the reasons Torontonians flock to the park are many, what they do share in common is an abiding love and concern for the park's wellbeing. This magazine is intended to keep that community abreast of what the future has in store for High Park's 399 acres.

High Park – A Park Lover's Quarterly is published four times a year by High Park Quarterly Inc. Editorial enquiries and letters to the editor are welcome and should be sent to: High Park Quarterly Inc., 53-C High Park Boulevard, Toronto M6R 1M9. Telephone 588-5678. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publisher. Canada Post second class mail registration number is 0248419698. High Park Quarterly Inc., is an independent publishing organization.



Feb. 14, 1917, Toboggan runs, High Park. Photo courtesy City of Toronto Archives.

Contents

Departments

Park Politics.....	4
Park News	
Briefly.....	5
Grenadier Pond's rehabilitation continues.....	7

Features

Mounting complaints about off-leash dogs in High Park have the canine set and park staff searching for solutions. <i>by Gigi Suhanic</i>	6
Jemima Howard, wife of the founder of High Park, died a prisoner of her house and her mind. <i>by Jill Franklin</i>	8
Every day is a miracle for Governor General's award-winning poet Raymond Souster. <i>by Gigi Suhanic</i>	10

Columns

Park Pundit <i>by Mary Lou Kumagai</i>	12
Naturalist's Notebook <i>by Terry Fahey</i>	13
High Park in History <i>by Joan Miles</i>	14



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Park Politics

- a guide to grassroots involvement in High Park

DECEMBER 14, 6:30 p.m.
Mountview Alternative School Library in the Keele Community Centre. Keele Street and Glenlake Avenue. The High Park Transportation Subcommittee meets to discuss among other

things the possible lifting of High Park's summer Sunday closure to cars.

JANUARY 11, 6:45 p.m. Mountview Alternative School Library in the Keele Community Centre. Keele Street and Glenlake Avenue. The High Park Natural Environment Subcommittee meets to discuss progress with shoreline rehabilitation of Grenadier Pond.

MARCH 27, 7:30 p.m. Swansea Town Hall, 95 Lavinia Avenue. "Wetlands restorations in High Park and in your own backyard", a talk by David Orsini, sponsored by Bloor West-Swansea Eco Village Movement, High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee, Swansea Horticultural Society. David Orsini is a landscape architect, specializing in ecological restoration.

GRENADIER POND consultant Gartner Lee has completed a final report of the problems in Grenadier Pond and the possible solutions. For an executive summary phone the Dept. of Parks and Recreation at 392-7251. Submissions on the contents of the report are welcome. Mail them to David McCluskey, High Park Project Coordinator, Toronto Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Toronto City Hall, 14th Floor, 100 Queen Street West, M5H 1N1.

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The gift of life

Good things can come out of death – like \$20,000 from Cardinal Funeral Homes to plant trees in High Park.

The money will go for a planting on the strip of land between The Queensway and Grenadier Pond in High Park's south end.

Cardinal Funeral Homes has a thriving environment fund that relatives contribute to in memory of a loved one.

According to Jim Cardinal, owner of Cardinal Funeral Homes the fund will operate in perpetuity. One of its purposes will be to provide funding to plant trees in the city of Toronto.

"Trees are a symbolic gesture. They are a part of all of us," says Cardinal. "There are a lot of connotations with trees."

Native species of shrubs and trees have been chosen including Red Oak, Large-tooth Aspen, White Ash, Sumac, Blackberry, Honeysuckle, Speckled Alder, Chokecherry and Serviceberry. They will be planted in spring 1996.

Bass bouncing back

Grenadier Pond's beleaguered Largemouth Bass population appears to be bouncing back.

The Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA) conducted tests in High Park's Grenadier Pond and found that the fish population is shaping up to represent "a healthy system".

"What was encouraging was that all age categories of Largemouth Bass were present. It's coming to a reasonably good system," says Jennifer Vincent, a coordina-

tor with the MTRCA.

To count the fish the MTRCA used a hair-raising method, though. The water is charged with an electrical current, enough to stun the fish. They rise to the surface where they are collected, counted and returned to the water.

Large and Smallmouth Bass have been stocked in Grenadier Pond since rehabilitation work began over two years ago.

Conservation alert at west end schools

High Park makes a perfect living laboratory for school groups out on a field trip.

However, High Park staff fear schools may be making too liberal a use of the park, taking samples of plant material and insects.

A kit of proper park etiquette has been developed for distribution to teachers in schools in Wards 1 and 2 in west end Toronto.

"I feel there were a lot more schools this year than last year," says Carol Cormier, district coordinator for Parks West. "Our concern is that 1000s of kids are depleting the natural regeneration processes," Cormier says.

It's not that schools are not welcome in the park. Parks staff want to promote responsible use of the park.

The kit contains information sheets about High Park's fragile ecosystems, the three forest types, like the Black Oak Savannah; There is also information on

regionally and provincially rare plant species, birds, and fish in Grenadier Pond.

A list of 'don't's' also in the kit include: no sample collecting of animals or plants or dead forest wood.

The kit will be distributed through the Toronto Board of Education's Network for Environmental Education. Teachers planning a trip to High Park will be asked to register with the Network who will pass on the information to park staff.

Eventually the goal is to incorporate High Park into programming in environmental education through the Toronto Board of Education.

Parks and Recreation and the Toronto Board of Education representatives hope their efforts will eventually result in an interpretive centre in the park.

We knew it all along

Those of us who travel High Park daily know it is one of the best park experiences you could hope to get in the middle of the city.

High Park's status as #1 green space was confirmed when Now Magazine published the results of its "Best of Toronto" readership survey.

High Park won the blue ribbon with Edwards Gardens coming in second. In the category, "best place to hike" High Park came second after the Bruce Trail.

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It's 'dog-eat-dog' in High Park

Loose dogs and irresponsible owners are vexing park users of all stripes

by Gigi Suhanic

Children and dogs have a lot in common. They don't come when you call them, when they do they are all slimed and somehow, by mere association, manage to translate the muck from themselves to you; and, they need constant love, attention and exercising.

Parents and dog owners are not unlike either.

Parents sometimes forget that others not similarly blessed are not as immune to or tolerant of the various sounds, smells, gestures and down-right rudeness, that emanate from the baby people.

Dog owners, like parents, have also been known to float in a groggy mist of love and forbearance; they smile benignly, yet with pride, as their soggy mutt takes a flying leap to plant its grimy paws squarely on the only clean clothing one owns.

In this homo-centric world, childless people square their shoulders bravely in the face of someone else's children. In High Park patience, for dogs at least, has worn out.

The office in the High Park service yard is being flooded with calls from people venting their spleen about 'man's best friend'. The complaints run the gamut: dogs being encouraged to chase and kill small animals; dogs chasing joggers and cyclists and trying to bite; dogs jumping on people; dogs fighting; dogs killing other dogs, dogs intimidating park staff.

What the calls are really about are dogs that are off-leash and out of control.

"It's a really big problem," says Carol Guy, a High Park supervisor. During peak seasons, spring and fall, Guy says she can field as many as five calls a day about – dogs. And Guy has another concern to add to an already sizeable list of doggy crimes. Dogs tearing through forested areas disturb the soil, tear up plants and break them. "Things are getting worse," Guy says. This past summer parks staff found some grisly bits of doggy work – the mauled cadavres of a beaver and a raccoon.

And the casualty list doesn't end there. Dogs have lost their lives too as High Park increases in popularity as a canine destination.

Chris and Doug Slanker's King Charles Spaniel, Jackson, was a sweet little moppet that regulars in High Park knew and loved. Jackson died on July 13, four days after being picked up

and shaken by a larger dog.

He was taken to the veterinarian immediately following the incident. According to Chris Slanker he was badly bruised and traumatized. The Slankers were told to take their dog home and keep him quiet. But Chris Slanker says Jackson remained confused, scared and disoriented. He never came round.

"One reason it's been so hard to get past it is so many people knew him. We still have people ask us where he is. I wish he had died instantly," Slanker says.

The incident has left the Slankers angry and anguished – anguished, that they have always had a dog in their lives and now feel too paranoid to get another, and angry that they were following on-leash and off-leash rules in High Park, and their dog lost out.

Park staff and members of the dog owner community are now trying to negotiate a solution. The city has offered to move the designated off-leash area from its present location on the West Ravine Nature Trail to 'dog hill' near the 'Dream in High Park' site. Most of High Park is designated as on-leash, except for the West Ravine Nature Trail where dogs can be left off-leash.

'Dog hill' is now the area where most owners congregate to let their pets run loose. The city's has offered to post signs indicating the area is off-leash to dogs and mark the location on billboard-sized maps now dotting the park. "You have to compromise somewhere. We want them to start to be responsible for their actions," says Guy.

Robin Sorys goes to 'dog hill' every evening to meet friends and walk their pets. Sorys acknowledges there is a problem with loose dogs. "I believe it because I have seen it," she says. Sorys and another dog owner Deborah Porteous are representing 'dog hill' in discussions with park staff.

Sorys and Porteous say the regulars at 'dog hill' want to cooperate. "If we get this approved people will be very happy," says Deborah Porteous. They both say their off-leash rights must be protected.

Chris Slanker recognizes the need for dogs to be able to run off-leash. "I like it that there is an off-leash area. But I would want to know there was a place where there was an on-leash area." Slanker says if leash rules are broken then people should be fined.

Animal Control can issue fines of \$125 for breaking leash bylaws. Porteous and Sorys say Animal Control was regularly visiting dog hill last month. "I'm the first one to admit there are leashing problems in High Park," says James Badow with Animal Control. "It's too large, it needs someone there all the time," he says.

Porteous says using a big stick won't get cooperation or results from dog owners in High Park.

"My house it too damn clean without a dog," says Slanker. "My rights have been taken away in a lot of ways".

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More pond shoreline 'rehab' eyed; Sediment pond construction starts

High Park's Canada Geese aren't the only ones who will be busy in 1996 at Grenadier Pond.

The pond will be a beehive of activity as various construction projects and shoreline improvements are completed, with the goal of improving water quality.

More shoreline restoration is planned for the spring of '96, this time at the pond's southwest corner at Ellis Avenue and The Queensway.

Preliminary plans for the corner include the creation of a wet meadow with many of the plants coming from the High Park greenhouses. According to the plans direct access to the water's edge would be cut off there, except for a slender pier extending into the water.

There are several reasons both historic and practical behind efforts to restore the pond's shoreline.

Prior to the 1950s Grenadier Pond was surrounded by wetland. When The Queensway came through in 1956 the wetland was removed at the south end to make way it. Four years later concrete was poured along the pond's edge from the south-west corner and three-quarters of the way up the east shoreline.

The pond environment has suffered as a result. Water quality is poor. Wildlife is threatened.

It is hoped by restoring the shoreline, the wetland will act as a filtre for water flowing into the pond. Parks and Recreation has set aside \$100,000 in its 1996 budget for this project and a similar one on the east side. The funds must still be approved by Toronto City Council.

Also, the Department of Parks and Recreation would like to restore some of the pond's shoreline, across from the Maple Leaf Garden on the steep hill above the pond.

According to the parks department that work is contingent upon Ducks Unlimited Canada providing funding. Ducks Unlimited has been in discussions with parks and rec regarding the rehabilitation of the pond.

In February 1996 construction begins of a sediment retention facility at the north end of Grenadier Pond. The price tag including consultants' reports and construction is approximately \$1,000,000.

Large amounts of sediment and rainwater are flowing into the pond's north end from a pipe that empties out just below Bloor Street and Clendenan Avenue and into Wendigo Creek and Grenadier Pond.

Large amounts of contaminated sediment have filled in the wetlands at the pond's north end. The sediment is also spreading south.

According to Grenadier Pond consultants Gartner Lee and M.M. Dillon the facility will improve water quality and protect the wetlands.

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Jemima Howard



First Lady of High Park

by Jill Franklin

Jemima Howard in 1848. Portrait by Thomas Stevenson. Photo courtesy Toronto Historical Board.

The generosity of John Howard's legacy in leaving High Park to the City of Toronto in 1873 was a shrewd business deal to provide a secure and comfortable lifestyle for himself and his wife Jemima. Together they had built Colborne Lodge into a fine home; farmed, gardened and landscaped the property they wanted preserved "so that we may be identified with Toronto forever".

After 50 years of marriage to John Howard, Jemima passed away in her bedroom at Colborne Lodge on Sept. 11, 1877.

What is known about the life of Jemima Francis Meikle can be found in newspapers of the mid 1800s, her husband's diaries, and personal letters.

Raised in England by socially conscious parents, Jemima could read and write and was trained in female etiquette. She could not have imagined what life would be like with John George Howard.

She was 25 when they married in England in 1827; five years later they were sailing to Canada – a country with the reputation of being fierce, savage, and cold – but a place where easy fortunes were readily made.

The journey to York (later to become Toronto) was nearly three months of high adventure, danger, sea-sickness, drunkenness by captain and crew and an outbreak of cholera.

Jemima's younger sister Fanny and her husband Sidney Mountcastle had emigrated to Canada a year earlier. The Howards found them on the verge of starvation, with one child dead and their son Arthur barely alive.

For the next four months Jemima was able to help her sister, struggling in small, freezing accommodations while the two husbands attempted to establish themselves in business and the new society.

Sidney Mountcastle did not fare well and Fanny became pregnant again. They moved on to Goderich where they became tavern keepers and had five more children.

Jemima had reason to be proud of her husband as he soon became drawing master at Upper Canada College, city surveyor and architect. He joined the Society of Artists and Freemasons and for a time was a justice of the peace.

His wife was often left on her own, while her husband lived out his adventurous nature in Indian Territory and fought in the 1837 Rebellion.

As a dutiful wife, Jemima kept the home and Howard's business in order, but never had children. She devoted much time to the young boys who came to apprentice under Howard, while living with them.

As an accomplished artist herself, Jemima assisted in many of Howard's architectural renderings. One of her own paintings, "The Tired Soldier" was displayed in an exhibition at the Parliament Buildings under the patronage of Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. The painting, in which the woman has six fingers, today hangs in Colborne Lodge.

In May 1842, Charles Dickens wrote that Toronto was "full of life, motion, business and improvement. The streets are well-paved and lighted with gas". The Howards were very much a part of this growing community – attending balls, theatre, and the popular lectures of the day.

Sunday was the day of obedient leisure for carriage rides to Toronto Island, picnics at the Humber or Don, long walks and visits with friends. The Howards were philanthropists to the extent that they could be, helping the "less fortunate" as was the duty of the day.

But they also went through trying financial times. Twice, Howard tried to subdivide High Park, and in 1844, Jemima was obliged to "bar her dowry" – by signing off on any claim to his property.

Jemima took an indulgent interest in the Mountcastle children. For at least a year, 11-year-old Arthur lived with them while he was a "ward" of Howard's Upper Canada College. By the age of 14, Arthur was dead, and in that same year, Jemima's mother died in England.

She wrote to Fanny in Clinton asking that she send her two eldest daughters to Toronto as she had arranged for their education, female companions from established families, and promised to provide all their clothing.

She wrote, "You must consider they are both growing up

and if they see no change they will be likely to marry young as many of your neighbours' children have done, and with a very poor prospect of a living". (The Mountcastle daughters never married).

Jemima reminded her sister that their mother had done the same for them as young girls. She was also lonely for their company. Whether she had any knowledge of her husband's mistress, Mary Williams, and their three children, is not known.

In 1847, the year John Howard's second child was born — he was suffering from exhaustion and bowel irritations. Jemima spent sleepless nights nursing him back to health under the guidance of a doctor, giving him castor oil and smooth boiled starch with laudanum. She wrote to Fanny telling her that Howard was also taking a mixture of powdered chalk with opium, catechu and aniseed which "caused a good deal of pain while acting but brought away such a quantity of filth it was surprising".

Possibly, it was due to John Howard's lingering condition of ulcerated bowels that Colborne Lodge became one of the first homes in Toronto to have an indoor toilet.

When Howard became exhausted and ill again in 1853, the doctor used leeches to bleed him, and told him that a long rests were needed. The Howards spent four months in England and France — their first trip home in 21 years. Jemima returned a happy woman, after spending her husband's 50th birthday with him in Paris, drinking the best champagne, and shopping.

Jemima was 52 when Howard retired and they permanently moved from Toronto to Colborne Lodge in 1855. The small Regency House, begun in 1836 had expanded to two storeys and a basement with three servant rooms off the kitchen. There was never a lack of work to be done, inside and with the gardens. Jemima would take the coach into the city, and they spent a great deal of time entertaining.

In 1858, she made the trip by steamer to Hamilton, checked into a boarding house and had daily mineral baths for blisters and a sore shoulder. She had brought along a suitcase of her husband's belongings, hoping that he would come for the weekend. In a letter encouraging him, she wrote, "I hope you don't miss me too much".

She was concerned that her niece staying at Colborne Lodge in her absence, would remember to light Howard's bedroom fire at night, and have his toast, cocoa and water ready in the morn-



"The Tired Soldier by Jemima Howard

ing.

Three years before Jemima's death, Howard began to make entries into his diary describing Jemima as "being difficult", having "spilled the milk" and smashed the glass on his painting "Alone at Sea". Whether her behaviour was a result of physical ailments or mental anguish is open to speculation. It was the same time that her husband's grandchildren were being born; relations between the Howards and the Mountcastles were increasingly strained.

On an overnight trip to visit the Mountcastles, Jemima wrote of her frustration in not being with them during their troubles with accidents, crop failure, illness and deaths.

As Jemima's condition worsened, the nieces who tried to look after her were unable to stay, abruptly leaving for reasons unknown. After a time, Howard refused to let them in the house, and wrote them hateful letters.

He made arrangements for a room for Jemima in the Insane Asylum, but her doctors persuaded him against committing her.

Annoyed and troubled by his ailing wife's behavior, Howard sent her to stay with a Dr. Riddell for a week. When she returned she tried to run away at least twice, and was given aconite pills as a sedative — a drug that was "not likely to offend or arouse tension".

She developed a painful sore on her breast, which Howard sketched and sent to a prominent specialist in London. The diagnosis was breast cancer.

Jemima was nursed until her death in the back upstairs bedroom of Colborne Lodge with a view of the property and lake. But there were bars on her windows, and a second door installed in the hallway which she could not see from her bed, but which could be locked. In the end she was a prisoner of her home and mind.

Howard arranged for a quiet, distinguished funeral at the tomb he had already prepared, and provided the servants with mourning clothes. He packed up her belongings and sent them by carriage to Fanny in Clinton, then lived for another 13 years, daily visiting the grave of his "dear departed" where he joined her in 1890.

In Howard's deal to leave his property to the people, he ensured that the tomb would forever be preserved by the City of Toronto, on the grounds of the place Jemima Howard had named — High Park.

photo by D.W. Dorken

Raymond Souster's extraordinary ordinariness

Poet Raymond Souster has carved out a pretty extraordinary career paying homage to the little miracles of daily life.

Relying on identifiable, almost common-place images, Souster has won several top-notch poetry awards for his highly accessible and often-times painfully personal verse.

Canadian literary history will also remember Souster as one of a group of writers who broke with traditional poetic structures, and created opportunities for other poets – like Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen – to break into print.

With all this recognition piled up behind him, Souster remains a straight-shooter from the heart, and a self-delcared loner.

In June of 1995 the 74-year-old was made an officer of the Order of Canada for his multi-faceted contribution to Canadian poetry. The only trouble is Souster hasn't been invested because he hasn't made the trip to Ottawa to attend the ceremony.

Souster's shunning, intentional or not, is in keeping with his disdain for any egotistical chest-pounding, in life and in poetry.

The poetry reading circuit made his head throbe, he says. "I would walk away with a terrific headache. But I couldn't resist the money".

His reluctance to step into the spotlight hasn't stopped the literary community from honouring his work. In 1964 he received the Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry for his book *The*

Colour of the Times. He also received the City of Toronto Book Award in 1979 for *Hanging In*.

But who is this man who, along with his contemporaries, helped Canadian poetry to grow up?

Ray Souster is a West Torontonion through and through. Except for a brief overseas stay during World War II, Souster has lived in the west end all his life, first on Glenlake Avenue, and then, and not necessarily in this order, Indian Grove, Colbeck Avenue, Mayfield Avenue and now Baby Point Road.

He attended the University of Toronto Schools and started writing poetry at the age of 13 before graduating from HumberSide Collegiate.

Then he did something that would raise eyebrows in today's artistic circles – he started work at the Imperial Bank of Canada (Imperial Bank of Commerce today) – and stayed there for 45 years, retiring a vault supervisor at Commerce Court in Downtown Toronto.

Souster isn't the least bit whiny about the fact that he didn't make his living practicing his first love. He just made that love make a difference.

His poems are bare-naked to the eye. Poetry had traditionally been written in a literary style. "I started to write free verse." "I'm not very sophisticated. I'm rough around the edges. I didn't think poetry was a vehicle to express philosophy." "I shy away from illusions that sound presumptuous."

He broke further with the classical tradition by choosing to write about what he calls 'topics'. The west end figures prominently in a lot of his 12 books. There are poems on the Humber Valley, Armadale Avenue, Sunnyside, Keele Street, High Park, and more broadly about Toronto.

Two more gestures followed, more nationalistic in nature: Contact Press and the League of Canadian Poets.

Contact Press was founded in 1952 by Souster, and fellow poets Louis Dudek and Irving Layton, to give Canadian poets a springboard into print. Many important writers of the 50s and 60s, Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Milton Acorn, were published by Contact Press. Although Layton dropped out of the project in its early stages, Contact Press gave a lasting literary legacy to a country that needed to hear its own voices.

The League of Canadian Poets, of which Souster was its first president from 1967-71, continues today. With a membership of 400, it represents and promotes the work of Canadian poets.

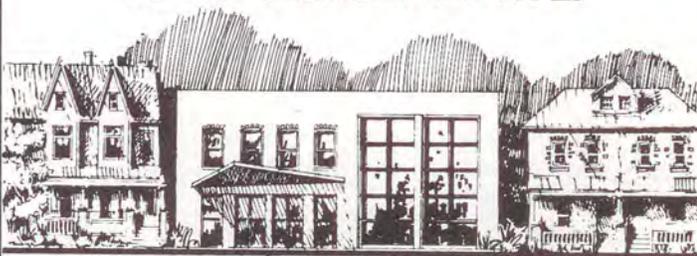
Souster's most recent book *No Sad Songs Wanted Here* appeared in 1995, and was brought into print by his long-time publisher Ottawa-based Oberon Press.

His book of love poetry to his wife, *The Eyes of Love*, published by Oberon in 1987 makes one feel voyeuristic and red-faced, as Souster traces the love lines of his relationship with his wife, then and now.

Souster continues to watch out for that little moment of elation that fills the throat and will spawn another one of his vignettes of our little lives and his.

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The Death of the Grenadiers

By Raymond Souster

It was over the ice
of this bottomless pond
(so the story goes)
that the Grenadiers
chased those Indians,
and the ice that gave way
to the marching step
of the English held up
for the braves' single file....

And girls have told me
they've felt that someone
was looking up their legs
as they skated the pond,
and looking down they've seen
(noses close to the ice
on the underneath side),
the white-bearded faces
of lonely soldiers
looking up at them
with lascivious winks
in their socketless eyes.

HIGH PARK CROSS-COUNTRY RUN

BY RAYMOND SOUSTER

FOR HIGH PARK – A PARK LOVER'S QUARTERLY

Murph and I tried to handle it
like a couple of professionals would –
that is, on the Saturday afternoon
in October a week before the race,
we ran over what we imagined
would be roughly the course the school would choose
to run off this cross-country race,
went up and down the many footpaths along
the hillsides of Grenadier Pond,
finally making it up the steep roadway
where the zoo animals were displayed,
and stumbling across what we pretended
was the finishing -line, both of us
amazed we were still on our feet.

A week later when the day
of the big race came,
I'd almost lost most of the stiffness in my legs,
but after the first miles' dipsy-doodle
up and down those High Park hills,
they were those familiar dead-weights
attached again to my reluctant body,
and it seemed like almost every one
of the nearly two hundred fellow sufferers on the course,

had passed me and quickly vanished
up or over the next impossible hill.
So you can imagine how I nearly died of shock
when, as I finally staggered over the finish line,
some joker grabbed me by the arm and shouted
"Here's the novice winner". And I was still getting over it, half-slumped on
a bench in the refreshment pavilion near by, with good old Murph sitting
beside me
repeating his sad sad story
and getting a bad stitch in his side,
and only half finished, while I tried to sip the mug of hot cocoa our school
had thoughtfully provided,
aware that it seemed to smell and taste a little burned,
but a least it was hot, and was helping us pretend
that we'd finished that race fresh as daisies.

I threw up my cocoa violently
not long after, felt as if I were close to dying
for the next half hour, somehow got home
and ached all over for at least the next two weeks.
And try as I might I couldn't get that burnt taste of cocoa out of my mouth,
or perhaps it was more from my mind, I don't really know.
My prize as the novice winner of the race was a shiny medal in an imita-
tion leather case,
suitably enscribed, that I lost the next year.
And I never ran another cross-country
to this day, or any other race, for that matter.
All I'm left with now is still the slightly burnt,
loathsome, bile-like taste of Baker's cocoa.



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This year we're cool about winter

Park Pundit

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow! This time, we're ready for it. Not like last year. Last year, we were ambushed by the white stuff, sucker-punched by snowflakes. This year, preparations have somehow been made and we are cool. It is a state of mind – either you have it or you don't.

We're not sure why we are prepared for snow. Perhaps because we had such a long time to get used to the idea – winter having arrived while summer was still hanging around sipping wine coolers. We swear we're not carrying any more body insulation than last year, so it can't be that. Maybe it's just a case of "fool me once, shame on you – fool me twice, shame on me." Whatever. We are determined to enjoy the winter wonderland this year – in a non-gung-ho sort of way.

There will be no mushing of huskies. Snowshoe treks across the frozen tundra will be left to the obnoxiously fit, and helicopter skiing at Banff to the obnoxiously solvent. We have loftier, purer pastimes in mind, and they're closer to home. Pass me them walkin' boots, Verlene, and bundle up good – we're goin' to High Park.

Heureusement, distinctively speaking, walking in snow is more fun than walking on dry pavement. If it's cold enough, you make satisfying crispy-crunch noises with every step. If it's deep enough, you can kick frosty plumes into the air. And if you, the city slicker, get lost in the wild, you just turn around and save yourself by following in your own footsteps – existential, *n'est-ce pas?*

Adventurers note that once the pond has frozen, you can do it on ice. Gingerly. Walk, that is. Of course, skates will vastly improve the experience, assuming you know how. And even if you didn't learn to skate as a kid, take heart – we understand it's almost never too late. You may have farther to

fall now, but you're probably much better padded.

For those who crave something more, the excitement of

adrenaline surges, the thrill of broken clavicles, there are the hills. Especially the ones around the pond – they are steep, they are slick, and they know where you live. Daredevils who favour personal vivisection zip downhill on sheets of corrugated cardboard. With this crowd, OHIP cards are more than just a chic accessory. The rest of us make do with sleds and toboggans and a thick skin. Why is it considered entertaining to watch someone hurtling headlong into a snowbank? Friends can be so cruel.

However, if you should happen to fall, accidentally or on purpose, on your back into a soft drift of snow, the experience can be very pleasant. The peaceful, floating sensation is almost irresistible. As a bonus, a little discreet flapping of arms and legs will produce a snow-angel before hardly anybody notices. All this will, of course, chill you to the fundament. About the same time, you may also casually notice that your toes seem to have been replaced by wooden pegs. This is a signal that you must seek warmth. The experienced parkster will arrange for this to occur near a source of coffee, tea and/or hot chocolate.

While the truly trendy hold out for a cappuccino emporium where they can daintily dip their biscotti, those of us with frozen feet and/or small children head straight for the Grenadier. It is a tradition. Burgers and fries share the menu with liver and onions. Old Coke ads on the walls add to that certain ambience. So does the vintage-look washroom, which appears to date from the era when Mike Harris lived on beans and bologna. Or was that baloney? But never mind – generations of grateful Grenadier customers are not complaining. Besides, luxury would just get in the way. At the Grenadier, at least, the staff won't make snooty faces at your dripping boots or your dripping offspring.

So there we sit, our toes doing a slow burn as they thaw, our hands warming around a steaming china mug. All around, kids are stuffing fries into their rosy cheeks and making cocoa come out of their noses. Through the big windows we can see that it's starting to snow again. Call us crazy, but we are actually pleased about it.

by
Mary Lou
Kumagai



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Grubs, skunks part of Savannah healing process

In the fall of 1994 a community planting project introduced 3,200 nursery-grown plugs from the seed of 32 park-sourced savannah species in a test plot in High Park.

The test plot was one of 16 identified to determine what methods would be successful to re-establish native species of trees, wild flowers and grasses in High Park.

The test plot surrounds a large, lone White Oak just north of the Grenadier Restaurant parking lot. The ground there is dominated by an introduced hard grass that forms a dense mat over much of the area.

We wanted to determine how the plugs would take, planted in the grass and what management strategies would favour their establishment.

The site was cordoned off with yellow caution tape and watered for several weeks after planting. During this 1995 growing season we monitored and weeded. Out of bounds to foot traffic and possibly because of the fall watering the grass grew tall and by late July had fallen over forming a thick mat that seemed to choke out our plantings. The seed of our native plantings could not possibly penetrate this thatch to make soil contact. We we're stumped. Burning was not an option and mowing

would have cut down our scant flowerings.

Meanwhile, out in the surrounding table lands, the savannah with its park-like grassland setting of widely-spaced, open grown Black Oaks made a mockery of our effort. Colonies of savannah grasses and forbes, Big and Little Blue Stem, Bush Clover, and Showy Tick Trefoil, expanded seemingly on their own in distinct patches where there had been nothing but lawns of introduced grass five year ago...Why?

I had observed this pattern before. Almost without exception the natives seed preferentially where recent disturbances of the grass mat occur.

Epilogue

On Sunday Oct. 24, 1995 while I was birding at the hawk watch, a tired and hungry migrant Bluebird lit down from the lone White Oak of the test plot to scavenge the ground below. Examining more closely where the bird had landed I discovered tell-tale patches of upturned, rolled back sods, in an area of dead turf measuring eight metres across. Lifting portions of the dead turf by hand revealed several semi-curved cream coloured white grubs. Grubs kill off turf grass by chewing their roots. Skunks and small burrowing animals further uproot the grass by pulling it back or rolling it up

to get at the grubs.

Further inspection showed that in their swath of destruction the grubs had not harmed one of our 3,200 savannah plantings.

Conclusion

White grubs champion savannah restoration.



David Miller

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No tobogganing in "...sanctimonious ice box"

"If you wish to be subject to coughs, colds and fevers shut yourself in close, hot rooms day and night. If you wish to be free from their companionship, always have plenty of pure air to breathe night and day, take daily outdoor exercise, regardless of the weather." This prescription for healthy living from G. Nichols' 1894 work *The Great 19th Century Medicine Manual* has been followed by generations of Torontonians.

High Park has long been a venue for skating, hockey, lacrosse, curling and skiing, but no winter pastime has ever surpassed in popularity the sheer exhilaration of tobogganing.

Subarctic native peoples devised the toboggan to haul small loads of games, supplies and people. Well adapted to light powder snow, the toboggan consisted of two or more thin boards of larch or birch secured by crossbars. The wood was curved up at the front while green or wet. Toboggans were pulled by dogs or humans: among the Chipewyans, solely by women. The explorer Champlain and early white settlers adopted the device for practical purposes. Townsfolk had their own more frivolous use for it, and by the late 19th century North American resorts and country clubs were providing toboggan runs as a recreational amenity.

High Park was a favourite locale for both tobogganing and bobsledding, using makeshift equipment on makeshift runs. The starting point for the steep toboggan runs was near today's Grenadier Restaurant. The velocity propelled riders right across Grenadier Pond! The treacherous icy top of Half Mile Run carried daring bobsledders on runners from the top of the animal pens down to the Queensway.

After the appointment of Toronto's first Parks Commissioner, Charles Chambers, in 1912 the city prepared and



by Joan Miles

supervised the runs. Sheds were erected where bobsleighs were stored for the week for a modest fee. In February 1926 a full afternoon of winter sports sponsored by the Toronto Star and the Toronto Ski Club took place in High Park.

It was the entrenched "blue laws" regulating morality and public behaviour, which reflected the 19th century values of evangelical Christianity and Protestant Orangeism, that put a crimp in the simple

outdoor pleasures of ordinary folk. In 1912, when the six-day work week was common, the Protestant middle-class Lord's Day Alliance obtained a prohibition against tobogganing on Sunday. Earlier, it had successfully campaigned against most commercial and recreational pursuits on the Christian Sabbath. In 1938, when restrictions were eased to permit personal recreation and group sports after 1 p.m. on Sunday – excluding scheduled games or tournaments – hockey rinks and toboggan slides remained off limits. The \$8775 cost of maintaining and supervising these surfaces in Toronto was cited.

The English writer and painter Wyndham Lewis dismissed Toronto in the 1940s as, "a sanctimonious ice box...this bush metropolis of the Orange Lodges." In 1948 all three Toronto newspapers editorially opposed amateur and professional Sunday sports. While Sunday baseball was approved by plebiscite in 1949, it was not until 1961 that hockey and tobogganing were officially condoned in High Park and the rest of Toronto

Sources: *Canadian Encyclopedia: City of Toronto Archives; Toronto, Then & Now, J. Clarence Duff; Village of Swansea Then and Now! Bloor West Villager, May 1974.*



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SAFETY SURVEY

1. What are your three favourite things about High Park?

- a)
- b)
- c)

2. How often do you visit High Park?

weekly monthly a few times a year once/year
first visit

3. How did you get to High Park today?

car public transit walked other(how?)

4. Who do you most often come to High Park with?

alone spouse family friends

5. Do you feel safe in High Park?

yes no

6. If no, what area of High Park do you feel unsafe in?

7. What do you think should be done to improve High Park?

8. Are you familiar with the recent City of Toronto initiatives in High Park?

yes no

9. General Comments:

Name:

Address:

Phone:

I would like more information on High Park , the Park Watch program

Mail surveys to: Councillor David Hutcheon, City Hall, Toronto, M5H 2N2 and/or phone 392-7907.

