



# THE UPDATE

York Pioneer and Historical Society

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## Doors Open 2025 – The City is Your Playground; Get Ready to Play!

Dates: Saturday May 24, 2025  
Sunday May 25, 2025  
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., both days

The Scadding Cabin invites volunteers to embrace fun and history!

This year's theme is: 'The City is Your Playground: Get Ready to Play.'

Step back in time and explore how children and pioneers alike found joy in simple games and activities. Watch live demonstrations of spinning, carding, and outdoor games like hoop rolling and ring toss. Learn about the games that entertained traders during long winters, such as cribbage and "Nine Men's Morris."

This year, we're excited to host **creative competitions** for visitors of all ages! Join our **sketching competition** or participate in a **photo contest** to capture the charm of Scadding Cabin. Show off your artistic talents and celebrate the beauty of this historic gem.

Interested volunteers are asked to make arrangements with Kayoko Smith at [yorkpioneers@gmail.com](mailto:yorkpioneers@gmail.com).

Volunteers are encouraged to bring their cell phones and cameras to help bring history to life during this engaging weekend event. Come and experience the joy of play, the spirit of community, and the hidden stories of Toronto's past.



*Above: Diane Reid and Marilyn Horwood entertain guests at the Scadding Cabin, Doors Open 2024.*

*Photo: Kayoko Smith*

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## REPORT FROM THE 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



***Above:** Outgoing President Angus Palmer chairs the 2025 AGM. **Photo:** Brent Cunningham*

The 2025 Annual General Meeting was held at Friend's House and chaired by our outgoing President, Angus Palmer. Although absent, Paul Litt was elected as the incoming President for 2025, along with the full slate recommended by the nominating committee.

Members in attendance received copies of The York Pioneer 2024 publication, thoughtfully distributed by our Editorial Chair, Bruce McCowan. Detailed reports were presented by Treasurer Jennifer Horwood and Scadding Cabin Chair Kayoko Smith, while other committee chairs provided concise updates on their portfolios.

The meeting also featured a lively debate on fundraising efforts for 2025. While no firm decisions were made during the discussion, the incoming Board identified devising innovative fundraising strategies for Scadding Cabin repairs as a priority for the year ahead.

A special highlight of the afternoon was the presence of David Scadding, Emeritus Professor



***Above:** David Scadding, Emeritus Professor at York University and a direct descendant of John Scadding presents pieces from his private family collection. **Photo:** Brent Cunningham*

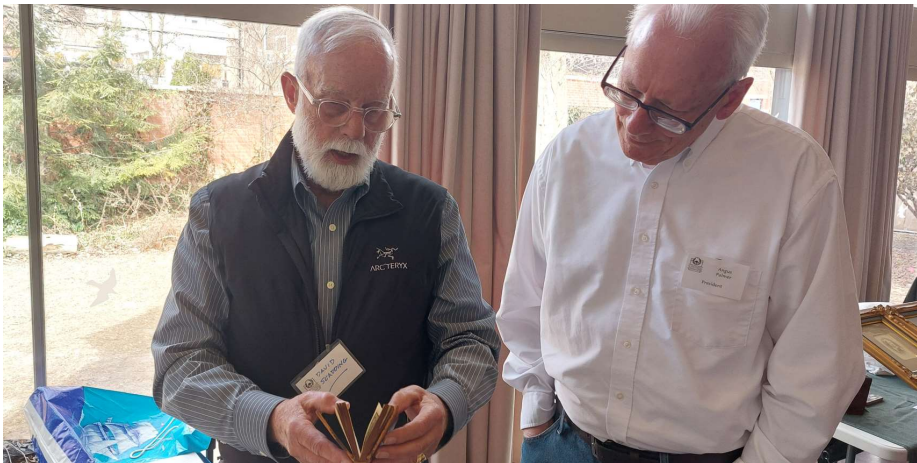
at York University and a direct descendant of John Scadding. David graciously shared a selection of invaluable Scadding artifacts, complemented by our Archivist Erin Baxter with the York Pioneer and Historical Society Scadding collection. The display was a vivid celebration of our heritage.

To round out the occasion, attendees enjoyed an abundance of cakes—a sweet and fitting conclusion to a memorable gathering, selflessly arranged by Membership Chair Marilyn Horwood.

As we look ahead to 2025, we find guidance in the thoughtful words of our incoming President, Paul Litt ([see Page 4](#)). Paul brings a steadfast commitment to preserving our shared heritage while inspiring a vision for growth and innovation. With the collective strength of the incoming Board and a renewed sense of purpose, we are poised to celebrate our rich history and boldly embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making the 2025 AGM a success!





**Above:** "Let there be cakes! And it was good!" Marilyn Horwood, our dedicated Membership Chair, is pictured here with the delightful array of cakes she thoughtfully arranged for the AGM attendees to enjoy.

**Middle and below:** David Scadding, shares treasures from his remarkable collection with outgoing President Angus Palmer. These artifacts, rich in history, were among the highlights of the AGM's heritage display. **Photos:** David Rayment and Brent Cunningham.

## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I was very surprised and honoured to be approached by the nominating committee about possibly serving as President of the York Pioneer and Historical Society. Although I was out of the country this year when the AGM was held last month, I was humbled to learn that I had been elected to the role by the general membership.

My associations with the YPHS extend back almost forty years now. I joined the Committee of Management (which shortly thereafter became known as the Board of Directors) in 1990 and served in several different capacities including president from 1994 to 1996. Although I stepped away from Board in 2000, I have continued to be involved with various projects and endeavours over the ensuing years, but I had also come to enjoy my more 'passive' relationship with the society. I must confess that I am flattered to think that I still might have something to offer to the group! Although there have been a handful of past Presidents who have served two non-consecutive terms - I think my second term may now stand as a record for the longest break between terms!

All that to say, I have very good memories of the time I spent on the Board of Directors back in the 1990's. Many of the friendships I made at that time have continued to this day. As a volunteer organization the YPHS has always been fortunate to attract particularly dedicated and talented individuals. None of the current board membership were part of the board when I was last part of the board back in the 1990's, however I have been very impressed with their diligence and am looking forward to working with them to help continue to serve our membership and move forward.

As many of you are aware, as a society, we continue to explore our options at fund raising for the ongoing renovations of the Scadding Cabin. In just a couple of years we will marking 150 years since the Cabin was moved from its original site to the Agriculture Exhibition Grounds (modern Exhibition Place). We've been fortunate to attract some corporate donations and also grants, but we can't do it without your help and support as well. Thank you everyone who has stepped up to volunteer or contribute to the cabin in recent years.

The York Pioneer journal has become an increasingly important part of our mandate over the past few decades. There were challenges over the last several years as we all lived through a global pandemic. The York Pioneer fell behind in its publishing schedule. Over the last several years there has been a concerted effort to 'catch up' and I've been enjoying the 2024 issue which I just received a few days ago. Our current editor Bruce McCowan is always pleased to receive submissions for the journal. If you have any ideas about possible future articles, please reach out.

Thank you all for indulging me in my rambling and reminiscences! In the future I will try to focus more on the current challenges and projects of the York Pioneer and Historical Society. For now, I wanted to commend the current Board of Directors for their fine work...and you as members for your ongoing support of the society. I am looking forward to working with you all and continuing to support the society's goals and objectives.

Respectfully,

Paul Litt



## A HERITAGE & HARVEST CELEBRATION AT JOHN MCKENZIE HOUSE

By: Beth Alaksa

As members of the YPHS we all share a love of history. At the November 17, 2024, Heritage & Harvest afternoon tea at the John McKenzie House in North York, two members shared their particular passion.

Diane Reid, a preeminent storyteller at the Scadding Cabin during the CNE and Doors Open Toronto, shared her current research project, stories of the men on the wagons that moved the cabin to the exhibition grounds in 1879. Diane is doing research to identify and document the background of each of the men in the 1879 photo. At this talk we learned about three men in the photo who were instrumental in founding the York Pioneers and Historical Society in 1869: Richard Oates, James Ashfield and John Smith.

Richard Oates arrived in the Town of York in 1817 Belfast, Ireland and worked selling grinding millstones. He was a member of the original committee executive from 1869 until he passed in March 1881. He is credited with being the primary force starting the Society even though never being the President. We are most proud that a descendant of Richard is our current membership chair.



*Above: A blend of heritage, history, and irresistible treats from November's event. Photo: Beth Alaksa*



*Above: Diane Reid delves into the untold stories of the YPHS Wagon men. Photo: Kayoko Smith*

James Ashfield was 19 when he arrived, in 1831, from County Cavan, Ireland. When the volunteer fire brigade was formed in 1839, James joined eventually becoming Captain in 1846 and Chief Engineer of Station No. 6 on Queen Street in 1851. He also spearheaded the request to City Council to establish a paid Fire Department in 1874. James joined the Pioneers in 1869.

John Smith was born in 1811 in the Town of York at the corner of King and Sherbourne, which was part of the Scadding estate property his father William Smith Jr. purchased from John Scadding in 1818. To the Scadding Cabin which was on the property, William added a tannery and a family home. Eventually, John became a gentleman farmer and built a large family home on Kingston Road. In 1879 the Smith family offered to donate the cabin which was still in their possession to the York Pioneer and Historical Society. The same year it was moved to the agricultural exhibition grounds and opened as a museum. John Smith is seating in the front seat of the wagon picture.

Sherry Murphy, also a board member of the Culinary Historians of Canada appealed to the cooks in the group and to everyone's taste buds with a talk on gingerbread from the 1800s. We learned the history of gingerbread and enjoyed samples. The recipes Sherry used for the gingerbread were from "The Cook not Mad or Rational Cookery", the first cookbook published in Canada in 1831. The recipes in the book came from an American involved in the revolutionary war who came across the notebook of an army cook while leaving the US for Kingston, Ontario. The recipes call for local ingredients, such as wild turkeys, bison and cranberries, watermelon and tree syrup. There were also records of plants to use for household cleaning and medicines.

We enjoyed a sample of both hard gingerbread and soft gingerbread. The base recipe is the same for each type. Adding milk and eggs gives soft gingerbread. Both recipes call for pearlash as a leavening agent. Today we use baking soda or baking powder. In 1831 pearlash would have been derived from potash. Regardless of what Shirley used the end results were delicious.

If you have suggestions for future talks or something you would like to share, contact Beth Alaksa at [yorkpioneers@gmail.com](mailto:yorkpioneers@gmail.com).



**Left:** Gingerbread delights and historical insights, presented by Sherry Murphy of the Culinary Historians of Canada. **Photo:** Beth Alaksa. **Right:** An iconic moment in history: John Smith and The Wagon Men in front of William Rennie's seed store as they prepare to relocate the Scadding Cabin to the CNE grounds, August 15, 1879. **Photo:** Evening Telegram.



## CALL FOR ASSISTANT EDITORS FOR THE YPHS JOURNAL

Many thanks to the authors and Assistant Editors who worked so hard and so effectively on the 2024 York Pioneer. We trust Members have enjoyed this issue. Now... planning ahead for 2026: members and friends are invited to compose articles for the 2026 issue.

This is a call for Assistant Editors for the 2025 and 2026 issues of the York Pioneer.

-An Assistant Editor will work closely with an author to fine-tune / edit a submission and do some fact-checking (Chat GPT and such submissions won't be permitted!)

-An Assistant Editor will hustle to find authors who will draft submissions in a topic area(s). I am looking for Assistant Editors to find authors in the following topic areas:

- Agriculture
- Religion / Churches
- Sports
- Education / Schools
- Political
- Natural Sites
- Other Social and Economic Institutions

Assistant Editors are de facto members of the York Pioneer Editorial Advisory Committee.

I know you are interested in being an important part of The York Pioneer -- one of the longest-running local history journals in Canada. Please email the editor, Bruce McCowan ---

[bmccowan@netrover.com](mailto:bmccowan@netrover.com).



## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE YORK PIONEER & HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN YOUR LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT?

As we reflect on the rich history of Toronto, we are reminded of notable figures like Lady Eaton, who left significant bequests in their memory. Such acts of generosity have played a crucial role in preserving our city's heritage.

One of our most cherished landmarks, the Scadding Cabin, has been with us since 1794. It is through the dedicated fundraising of our donors that we have preserved this historical treasure for over two centuries. We invite you to help us continue this legacy and ensure the Scadding Cabin remains a vital part of our community for the next 230 years.

Please consider including the York Pioneer & Historical Society in your will. This not only ensures the preservation of historical landmarks like the Scadding Cabin but also offers potential tax benefits in the year of your final tax return. Additionally, we encourage you to inspire friends and family to make donations to the York Pioneers in your memory. Always work with your legal counsel, accountant, and/or financial planner to make the decision that works best for all involved parties, ensuring that your legacy is honoured as you intend.

Whether you choose to make a grand gesture or a more modest contribution, your support is invaluable to us. Together, we can continue to honour and preserve Toronto's fabled history.

Thank you for your consideration and generosity.





**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY**

The 2025 Volume of "The York Pioneer" is currently in development!

Ensure that you receive your copy by renewing your membership in the York Pioneer and Historical Society today.

Individual membership is an affordable \$30.00, with students eligible to join for only \$20.00. Or sign-up your family for just \$50.00.

Send us your cheque payable to:

The York Pioneer and Historical Society  
PO Box 186  
260 Adelaide Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5A 1N1

or, visit our website at [www.yorkpioneers.com](http://www.yorkpioneers.com), and pay by e-transfer or PayPal.

Don't miss your chance - renew your membership **today!**

**Welcome New Life Members!**

Ethan M. S. Fox   Thomas Little   Hans Bathija   David Scadding

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Diane Gilday**, longtime member, passed away peacefully January 14, 2025 surrounded by family:

<https://www.humphreymiles.com/obituaries/Diane-Louise-Gilday?obId=34742446>

**Michael Lewis**, life member, passed away January 17, 2025 in Dartmouth, NS:

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/dartmouth-ns/mike-lewis-12205281>

**Katherin Lynn McKenzie**, fifth generation member, passed away March 17, 2025:

<https://www.arbormemorial.ca/en/mceachnie/obituaries/katherin-lynn-mckenzie/139119.html>

## 2025 Board Members

### Officers

**Past President:** Angus D. Palmer

**President:** Paul Litt

**Vice President:** Brent Cunningham

**Treasurer:** Jennifer Horwood

**Recording Secretary:** Robert Horwood

**Corresponding Secretary [Social media]:** Bob Georgiou

**Archivist:** Erin Baxter

### Committee Chairs

**Editorial:** Bruce McCowan

**Membership:** Marilyn Horwood

**Programme:** Beth Alaksa

**Publicity/Newsletter:** Brent Cunningham

**Scadding Cabin:** Kayoko Smith

**Representative on the Board of Sharon Temple:** Glenn Bonnetta

**CNE Association Representative:** Liam Peppiatt

### Members at Large

Sebastian Aguanno

Robert Murphy

### CORRECTION TO THE DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE OF THE UPDATE

On Page 3 of the December 2024 issue of *The Update*, the headline for the Ghost Walk report reads “CNE Ghost Walks 2024 – A Spooky Success.” The annual Ghost Walks are hosted by **Exhibition Place**, not the CNE.

Your Publicity Chair alone is responsible for the error and apologizes on behalf of the York Pioneer and Historical Society.

The YPHS gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming