

Jaan Pill
June 12, 2012

Comments regarding Jaan Pill's report on options for LBHS archives

Summary

Of the 10 members or long-time former members who offered comments, 9 out of 10 were in favour of moving the Long Branch Historical Society archives to the Toronto Archives.

One member recommended putting the materials into storage for 6 months to give time to conduct a search for a local facility. Another member said her first choice would be a local facility, but given the lack of funding, her second choice was the Toronto Archives. Thus I read the latter comment (No. 9, below) as in favour of the Toronto Archives.

Of the 2 non-members who shared comments, both favoured moving the Long Branch archives to the Toronto Archives.

1. Barry Kemp (phone call, June 8, 2012)

Barry favours the Toronto Archives as the destination for the Society's archives. "There's no other alternative," he said, "Unless someone's going to give us one, this is the only viable alternative."

2. Rosa Stranart (phone call, about June 8, to Barry Kemp)

Rosa Stranart said in a phone call to Barry that she supported having the archives go to the Toronto Archives.

3. Dave Cook (email, June 8, 2012) wrote as follows:

Jaan, I have read your report and must say it is well researched and written. I would strongly support placing the documents with the Toronto Archives rather than a library.

The points made about how they are stored suggest to me, as an author doing research, the libraries cause one to look through scattered storage. The records must be kept, as with the Toronto Archives, in Fond format, if that is the term.

As for items such as a washing machine, I would think loaning something like that to a historical facility such as The James Shaver or some such facility, would be great for people to see when they tour these facilities.

Both the Toronto Archives and the Toronto Library system will be around for a very long time. The decision therefore, is which provides the best format for people wishing to research the information.

Unlike private holding of records, the government run facilities such as the library and archives, provides the best storage conditions for the records ensuring their preservation.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard people say lets just keep them with our members, in their homes or garages. The problem doing that is numerous. What happens when the keeper passes and his offspring throw them out when doing a clean out? I have actually seen that happen here in Mississauga. What about lack of environmental suitable storage in someone's basement?

Too many "ifs" involved when we want to "own" and "store" ourselves.

Jaan, I vote to turn the entire documented collection over to The Toronto Archives.

4. Bernice Law (phone call, June 9, 2012)

In terms of preservation, Bernice Law said, the archives now at the community centre should go to the Toronto Archives.

"I can understand," she said, "that people don't want to give it up, but the reason that the material has been donated in the first place has been in order to preserve it."

She added that it would be inconvenient for people from Long Branch to go to the Toronto Archives at 255 Spadina Road. She said it would be fortunate if the Toronto Archives would find a way to make material available in some way to local people.

5. Malcolm Archer (email, June 10, 2012)

Hi Jaan:

I think it is a "no brainer"; the Toronto Archives seems to be the best home, providing we have reasonable access.

6. Steve Green (phone call, June 9, 2012)

Steve Green suggested that the Society ask for donations from members to enable the archives to go into storage. He said he would contribute to such a fund.

“Don’t rush into it,” he suggested. He said that over a period of six months, the Society would have the opportunity to ask around.

He suggested trying to get an article in The Etobicoke Guardian: Maybe a corporate sponsor would step in and provide a space.

7. Bert Crandall (email, June 11, 2012) wrote as follows:

After all my research into the community of Long Branch’s history I would like to see the collection housed in an archival environment rather than the Toronto Public Library, or warehoused away in a church basement, or community centre.

As you’ve discovered in your research, it’s best to keep the collection as it is in an archival “fond” rather than break it up into discrete parts as it would be in a library, or in some other environment.

Large archives like Toronto, Ontario and Canada’s National Archives have controlled atmospheres to prevent deterioration of paper. They also have the funding to provide a digital copy of the original archive you give them. As well, they give the archive a detailed description of the items found in the fond. The Toronto Archives is available on line. If you have internet access at home you are able to search their data base from the comfort of your home.

By storing these archives in spare spaces of offices, community centres, schools, or churches, you run the risk of losing these archives from theft, flood or fire. Storing them in one of Toronto’s historical houses, such as the Campbell House, Montgomery’s Inn or Spadina House isn’t an option either. These institutions are under threat of closure due to budget restraints, and will be under threat of closure as long as the current Mayor of Toronto is running the City of Toronto. As well, there is no public access to these documents on line and very little personal access to them if the place you store them at has limited hours of access.

The threads of Long Branch history at the Toronto Archives make housing the Long Branch Archives the perfect place to store your archives. For instance, Toronto Archives holds the Assessment Rolls of Long Branch from 1851 to current year. This is an invaluable resource for any researcher. To date most of the 19th and early 20th century Assessment Rolls for Long Branch may be seen in their original ledger books.

Your report gives information that Toronto Archives is far behind in processing archival gifts from various resources. I found that to be true when I first started my historical research in 2002. From amalgamation in 1998 it took this organization many years to complete the cataloguing of all the documents they received from the many cities, comprising Metropolitan Toronto. However, perhaps they are in a better position

today, fourteen years after amalgamation. In the long run Toronto Archives is the best Archives for the Long Branch archival collection.

The Ontario Archives once in downtown Toronto at Grenville and Elizabeth streets has moved into a new building at York University. Eventually it will be on the new subway line from Toronto to Pearson Airport. This archives is also an invaluable resource for late 18th century and 19th century history of Upper Canada. However, since it moved to York University I've not been able to get there again.

The National Archives in Ottawa has been an invaluable resource as well. Most often pictures of the Long Branch Resort are found at this resource. The National Archives photograph collections are housed off site in a new building in Gatineau, Quebec.

A National Archives staff person will accompany you by taxi and pay for your taxi ride to Gatineau and return to Ottawa's main National Archives building.

The Ontario Land Registry Office in the Atrium on Bay Street is an interesting place to find who owned what properties in Long Branch as far back as 1806. But, historical research at this resource is not paramount to this organization. For instance land development plans are sometimes missing from their files, as are files for specific properties in certain years. Most of their original ledgers for the transfer of property are now housed off site, although they have been microfilmed. However the microfilms are in some cases almost unreadable for early land transactions, mainly because the ink has faded with time, and the equipment used to microfilm these records didn't have ways to enhance the print on the original record.

As well, there is few staff to help you find what you want. Their finding tools and digitization of documents are in my estimation woefully lacking. But this isn't their primary mandate.

Thus I support you giving your archives to Toronto Archives on Spadina Road. The site is easily accessed via the TTC, and there is most often adequate public parking on site, unless there is some event underway at the Archives. As Long Branch today is a community in the city of Toronto, I believe this is the best home for your collection of materials.

Unfortunately, museum pieces can't be housed at the Archives and finding homes for them will be a challenge. In Rochester, New York, there is a wonderful museum of household items dating back to the late nineteenth century, with its strength in the first half of the twentieth century. You walk out of that museum with a smile on your face and nodding your head at some of the most bizarre items manufactured for households in the last century.

Best wishes in finding a consensus for a permanent home for the Long Branch Archives.

8. Natalie Lisowiec (email, June 12, 2012)

I think that to move the Long Branch Historical society archives to a facility such as the Toronto Archives is the way to go. This would ensure that the archival material will be properly stored and catalogued to make it easier for research purposes. I personally would have liked to see it housed more locally, but this has been going on for years and that does not seem to be a viable solution.

That would be wonderful to have copies and as I said there are sometimes numerous copies of the same agenda or minutes of the meetings etc. so these could be put in the local library and no trees would be sacrificed for those copies.

Am planning to attend tonight so will see you there. I have been trying to have this issue looked at for a number of years now and somehow either the society was not in agreement and other factors. It seems now that the stars have lined up for this to happen. Thank you for taking on the job and it is also your involvement that has made this happen in a constructive way.

9. May Jolliffe (personal communication, June 12, 2012) said:

My first choice would be to have it in a secure, climate-controlled local facility, accessible to the public. Unless there was a substantial amount of funding available in the near future, this would not be a feasible option. My second choice is the Toronto Archives, because it's important for people's family and community records to be kept together (the fonds approach).

10. Carol Milroy (June 12, 2012)

I agree that at the end of the day the Toronto Archives are the best place to move these items. We could take pictures of everything prior to moving them to the archives. This way we can have our own catalogue should it take the archives some time before they have the items ready for access on line or display. This would also assure anyone who donates items where the item is going and that they will be cared for by professionals.

I had previously suggested that we could have a donation photo opportunity at our general meetings where a donor would be photographed with members of LBHS when donating

the item(s) thus making some more Long Branch History...’the day that so and so donated their item to the Long Branch Historical Society’.

We could even send a photo of the donation ceremony along with the item when it goes to the archives. Also a copy of this photo could be sent to the donor with a letter thanking them on behalf of the LBHS and the Toronto Archives. Perhaps the archives might have a fund, grant etc. to help the neighbourhood historical society with any costs associated with donations of items or even advertisements i.e. in the Etobicoke Guardian soliciting historical items to the LBHS.

Thank you for all your time and effort in this matter!!!

11. Daryl Pantel (email, June 12, 2012)

Thanks for sending this out, Jaan Daryl’s [reference is to draft of report about comments received to date]. I, too, believe that the Toronto Archives is the best way to go, even if they have a backlog. This guarantees that the documents are housed properly and eventually will become available to anyone who is interested.

*

We’ve also received comments from interested persons who are not members of the Society:

12. Paul Sharkey, City of Toronto Archives (June 11, 2012)

Paul Sharkey notes that his comments are as an individual, and do not represent the opinions of the City of Toronto or the City of Toronto Archives.

In an email, he shared the following comments:

A very interesting article. As an employee of the City of Toronto Archives, I would, of course, recommend that for the continued preservation of the records of the Long Branch Historical Society, and the guaranteed access to its records, your Society's documents would be best suited to reside in the Archives.

For an incomplete list of other local societies who have donated their records to us, follow this link:

http://www.toronto.ca/archives/description_subject_headings.htm#neighbourhoods

I understand that ownership of the records is a big concern for your members. Ownership and preservation are sometimes difficult bedfellows. I do hope your membership comes to a satisfactory conclusion for the long term preservation and accessibility of the records.

Neighbourhood funds now in place at Toronto Archives

From the above-noted link, below is an incomplete list of **Neighbourhood Funds** currently in place at the Toronto Archives. It may be noted that some funds related to Long Branch, New Toronto, and Mimico have been created in previous years:

Neighbourhoods

Fonds 20; Howard Walker fonds - 1961-1973

Fonds 27; Rochdale Community Forum fonds - 1974-1977

Fonds 55; Thorncrest Homes Association Inc. fonds
- 1944-1994

Fonds 85; William Abbot Parsons fonds - 1874-1985,
predominant 1885-1917

Fonds 87; Blair Ripley fonds - 1913-1915

Fonds 91; Keith Miller Collection : Wychwood Park Archives -
1860 - 1995

Fonds 97; Frank Longstaff fonds - 1947-1975

Fonds 104; Wychwood Park Trust fonds - [189-]-2000

Fonds 114; James Pears family fonds - 1867-1999

Fonds 116; Drumsnab collection - [ca. 1796-2002]

Fonds 119; South Rosedale Ratepayers' Association fonds -
1960-2002

Fonds 120; 1st Willowdale Scouts and Rovers fonds - 1924-1960

Fonds 128; Albert Fulton fonds : Wychwood Park Archives - 1868-2008

Fonds 201; Village of Yorkville fonds - 1853-1883

Fonds 202; Town of Parkdale fonds - 1879-1889

Fonds 203; Village of Brockton fonds - 1881-1888

Fonds 204; Town of East Toronto fonds - 1888-1909

Fonds 205; City of West Toronto fonds - 1888-1910

Fonds 206; Town of North Toronto fonds - 1889-1913, 1942

Fonds 207; Village of Forest Hill fonds - 1924-1966

Fonds 208; Village of Swansea fonds - 1926-1966

Fonds 210; Town of Leaside fonds - 1913-1966

Fonds 212; Town of Weston fonds - 1882-1966

Fonds 214; Town of Mimico fonds - 1911-1966

Fonds 215; Town of New Toronto fonds - 1913-1966

Fonds 216; Village of Long Branch fonds - 1915-1966

Fonds 230; Marie Cerny papers - 1983-1990

Fonds 240; Marcus Schubert fonds - 2000

Fonds 241; Morry Smith fonds - 1968-1997

Fonds 252; York Mills Ratepayers' Association fonds - 1953-2003

Fonds 296; Barbara Millar fonds - 1961-1997

Fonds 297; Parkdale houses and streets -
[1972 or 1973], [ca. 1980], 1990-1991

Fonds 1006; Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations (CORRA) fonds -
1969-1988

Fonds 1014; Toronto Association of Neighbourhood Services fonds -
1918-1975

Fonds 1016; West Island Drive Ratepayers Association fonds - 1935-1939, predominant 1937-1939

Fonds 1026; Downtown Action fonds - 1951-1979, predominant 1971-1979

Fonds 1047; Toronto Island Archives fonds - 1916-1982, predominant 1950-1980

Fonds 1049; R. S. Pennefather fonds - 1973-1976

Fonds 1051; Toronto Island Residents Association fonds - ca. 1960-1982, predominant 1970-1980

Fonds 1052; Deer Park Residents' Association fonds - 1952-1970

Fonds 1054; David Amer fonds - 1920-1982

Fonds 1055; Cottingham Square Community Association fonds - 1959-1980

Fonds 1062; North Jarvis Community Association fonds - 1971-1979
Fonds 1063; Toronto Island Inquiry fonds - 1980

Fonds 1073; Swansea Area Ratepayers' Association fonds - [196-]-2007

Fonds 1109; James E. Goad fonds - 1890-1912

Fonds 1113; Ramsden Park Committee - 1971

Fonds 1280; Robert Sward fonds - 1912-1984, predominant 1965-1984

Fonds 1292; Theatre Block fonds - 1988-1989

Fonds 1338; Thomas Helliwell family fonds - 1841-1876

Fonds 1571; South Eglinton Ratepayers Association fonds - 1964-1987

Fonds 1590; John "Black Jack" Robinson fonds - 189-

Fonds 1597; Hillcrest Ratepayers Association fonds - 1962-1972

Fonds 1664; Robert Burley fonds - 1991

Fonds 1670; Annex Residents' Association fonds -
1933 - 1990

Fonds 1682; Howard Joy fonds - 1994-1997

Fonds 1688; Henrey Parfrey fonds - 1913-1938

Fonds 1689; Oriole Park Association fonds - 1959-1991

13. David Juliusson (email)

This would be my recommendation. Donate them to the archives. I know it will remove them from your ownership, but the city would have the responsibility and the expertise to preserve them. A provision could be made to keep them together. As time goes by new archival material from the City Archives will be added. I know it is not ideal, but it will guarantee they will be kept and available for future generations, even if it is on Spadina Ave. To me it is the best solution.

Wayne Reeves is interested as the City Historian. Let him know what the final outcome is.