

HAYTER STREET
GERRARD STREET WEST

WALTON STREET

THE WARD

WALTON STREET

ELM STREET

EDWARD STREET

THE LIFE AND LOSS
OF TORONTO'S FIRST
IMMIGRANT NEIGHBOURHOOD

EDITED BY
JOHN LORING
MICHAEL MCCLELLAND
ELLEN SCHEINBERG
AND TATUM TAYLOR

TERAULEY (BAY) STREET

AGNES (DUNDAS) STREET

LYRIC

THE WARD

Ward 4

Park Lot 12

SEE PLATE 8



SIMCOE ST.

UNIVERSITY AVE.

WARD 4
WARD 3

Park Lot 11

CENTRE AVE.

ARMOURIES

ARMOURY ST.

OSGOODE ST.

OSGOODE HALL

Ward 3

SEE PLATES 12

Park Lot 10

CHESTNUT ST.

ELIZABETH ST.

Park Lot 9

ALICE ST.

TRINITY

SQUARE

TRINITY ST.

JAMES ST.

CITY HALL

TERRELL ST.

Park Lot 8

YONGE ST.

YORK ST.

ROBERT SIMPSON CUP

SCALE 100 FEET TO ONE INCH

SEE PLATE 6

RICHMOND

QUEEN ST.

HAY ST.

ROBERT SIMPSON CUP

T. EATON CO.

T. EATON CO. TRINITY SQ. TRINITY CHURCH

6 5

11 12

13 14

15 16

7 8

9 10

17 18

19 20

1 2

3 4

5 6

7 8

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

WARD 4
WARD 3

John Lorinc dedicates this book to Jeff Preyra and Matt Blackett.

Michael McClelland dedicates this book to Alex.

Ellen Scheinberg dedicates this book to her husband, Jack, and sons Cory and Mitchell.

Tatum Taylor dedicates this book to Mekhala.

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first edition



Canada Council
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ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
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Canada

Published with the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Coach House Books also acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund.

The editors and publisher would like to thank the Metcalf Foundation, the Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, and the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario for their generous support of this project.

The views expressed by the contributors to *The Ward* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors, Coach House Books or the foundations that supported the project.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

The Ward : the life and loss of Toronto's first immigrant neighbourhood / edited by John Lorinc, Michael McClelland, Ellen Scheinberg and Tatum Taylor.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-55245-311-7 (pbk.)

1. Ward (Toronto, Ont.)--History. 2. Neighborhoods--Ontario--Toronto--History. 3. Immigrants--Ontario--Toronto--History. I. Lorinc, John, 1963-, author, editor II. McClelland, Michael, 1951-, author, editor III. Scheinberg, Ellen, 1964-, author, editor IV. Taylor, Tatum, author, editor

FC3097.52.W27 2015

971.3'541

C2015-902035-2

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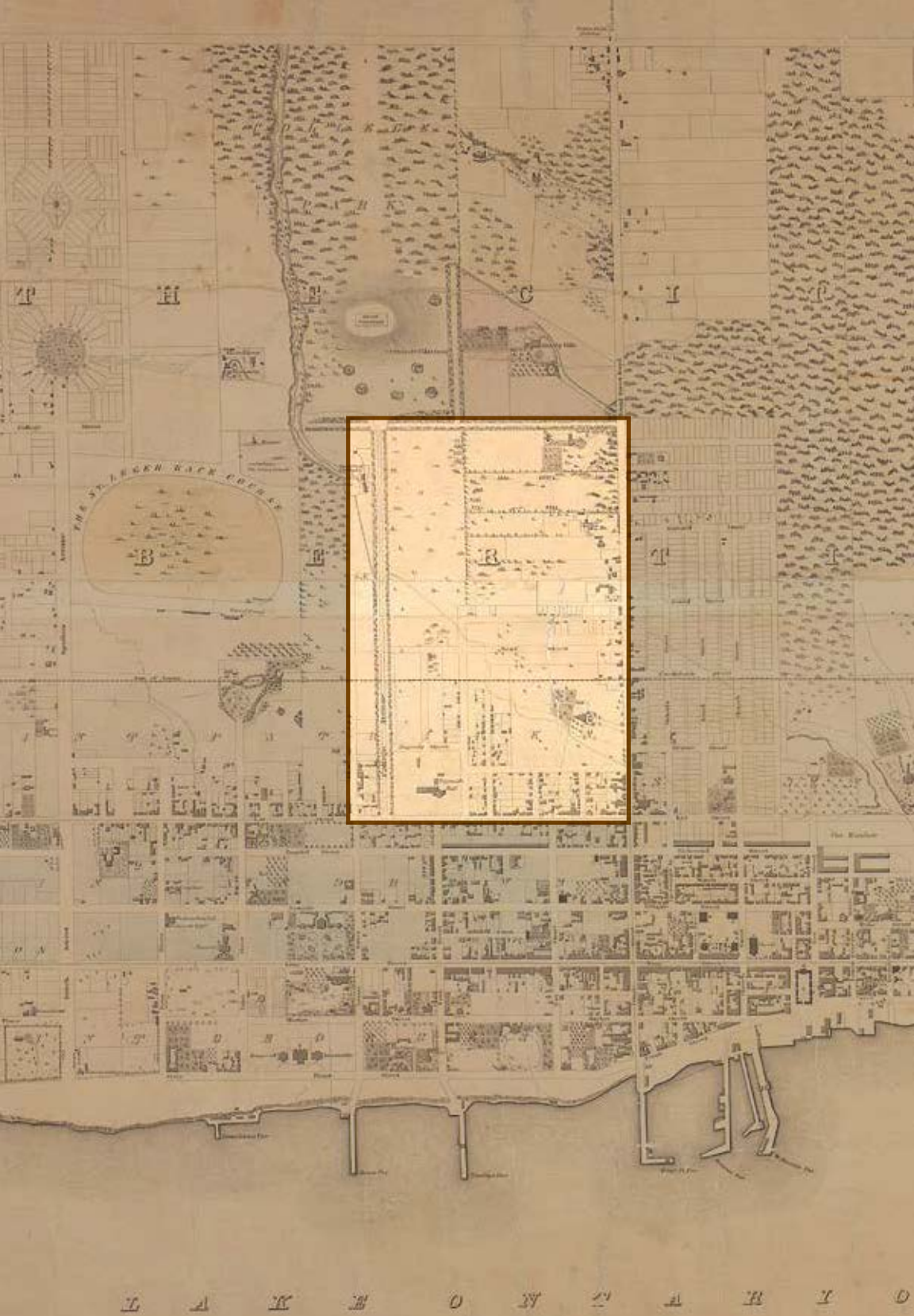


Immigrants arriving in Toronto, ca. 1910.

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L O N D O N

THE MONEY COULD scarcely have arrived at a more opportune moment.

In late 1845, John Strachan, the first Anglican bishop of Toronto, learned his financially struggling diocese had received an anonymous £5,000 bequest from England. The funds were to be used to build and sustain a new Gothic-style church that would serve the city's poor. In contrast to most churches, which charged congregants for the use of the pews, in this church, the donor's will specified, the seats must be 'free and un-appropriated forever.'

Strachan, a Tory legislator and educator, was a key figure in the Family Compact that controlled Upper Canada. Yet after the 1837 rebellion, he faced criticism over his affluent lifestyle, as well as his political challenges to the Anglican Church's dominance. Strachan was also battling with his superiors in London to ensure he had funds to pay priests and spread the gospel.

With this new tranche of cash, Strachan hired Henry Bowyer Lane to design the church, to be located on the site of the Terauley Cottage – a country estate located west of Yonge Street, a few hundred yards north of Queen. The land had been donated by an old Upper Canadian family, the Macaulays, who owned much of the swampy, forested real estate extending northwest of Queen and Yonge. The English-raised Lane enjoyed a reputation as the city's go-to architect. He'd completed Little Trinity Anglican Church, on King Street East, as well as the new city hall, the city market (later St. Lawrence) and additions to Osgoode Hall.

Almost fifty years later, it was revealed that the mystery donation came from a young British woman named Mary

JOHN LORINC INTRODUCTION

*Previous: Ice Wagon
on Elizabeth Street,
September 16, 1916.*

*Left: 1842 Cane
Topographical Plan of
the City and Liberties of
Toronto. Macaulaytown,
Toronto's first suburb, is
shown, running from Yonge
Street to University and
from Queen to College.*

Lambert Swale. Born to a family of wealthy bankers and lawyers, she married Hogarth Swale, a Yorkshire Anglican priest. Though they never visited Canada, the couple learned about Toronto from Strachan's articles in a journal published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, an Anglican missionary network. Swale died after giving birth, in May 1845, at the age of twenty-five. The bequest had been part of her will, as was a similar gift to establish a place of worship for convicts on an Australian island.

None of that back story was known immediately after her death because Reverend Swale wanted the gift to remain a secret. When builders finished the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1847, writes Eric Arthur in *No Mean City*, "Strachan published a notice inviting "the poor families of the United Church of England and Ireland to make the church their own" and another announcing the opening for service of the "Parochial Church of the Poor of Toronto."

Long before St. John's Ward came to be branded, in the early twentieth century, as Toronto's most impoverished – and most notorious – 'slum,' the working-class enclave bounded by Queen, College, Yonge and University had a distinctive, diverse character that set it apart from the surrounding city. And, contrary to the Holy Trinity's founding mission, it was anything but uniformly 'poor.'

According to historian Barry Dyster, Macaulaytown was known in the 1850s for its 'boisterous, plebian and clannish qualities.' This gritty, tight-knit community, nestled just past the city's northern fringe, served as a recruiting ground for populist local politicians, as well as a destination for sailors on furlough drawn to its bowling alleys, taverns and brothels, writes Dyster. The inhabitants were predominantly Protestant, with lots of Methodists and Baptists.

The Ward was also home to much of the city's thriving African-Canadian community, whose ranks included successful entrepreneurs, merchants and professionals. Many were escaped slaves or freemen who had fled to Canada via the Underground Railroad and were drawn to Toronto for its reputation as a hotbed of abolitionist sentiment.

As it happens, Toronto's African-Canadian community in 1845 had acquired a piece of land in The Ward, just four blocks from the future Holy Trinity site. The lot was to be the site of a new church for a congregation founded eight years earlier. When it opened, the British Methodist Episcopal Church, located at 94 Chestnut Street, offered not just services, but educational programs and

space for public meetings for members of the black community, many of whom lived nearby.

Then, in 1847, another Victorian-era institution relocated to The Ward. The trustees of the Poor House – at Elizabeth and Elm, and three blocks from the British Methodist church – dispensed welfare to destitute women and children in need of food and shelter. The Poor House wardens forced the men to break stones in order to receive their allotment.

Intriguingly, these three structures – and the communities they aspired to serve – epitomized The Ward, and offered clues about its future evolution. As far back as the 1850s, here was a complex and recognizably urban neighbourhood already characterized by ethnocultural diversity, crushing poverty and upward mobility, as well as the presence of sturdy institutions that claimed to be acting in the best interests of the area's inhabitants.

Physically, however, The Ward was being squeezed by the surrounding city. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, some of Toronto's most significant institutions – University College, the Ontario Legislature, the Victoria Hospital for Sick Children – sprang up just beyond the borders of The Ward. Members of the city's business elite built mansions along University Avenue, then an elegant boulevard, and north of Queen's Park. Closer to Yonge, the T. Eaton Co., in the 1890s, began constructing a series of massive factories, which eventually surrounded Holy Trinity, forming a wall of brick and glass on The Ward's eastern border. Finally, in 1899, after a decade of construction and scandal, builders completed E. J. Lennox's monumental new city hall/courthouse at Bay and Queen. The towering sandstone structure – designed in the Romanesque Revival style and overlooking the financial district – symbolized Toronto's turn-of-the-century confidence and economic heft.

So what became of the community – or communities – wedged between all this growth? By the early 1880s, eight churches, including Holy Trinity and British Methodist, served a growing neighbourhood of about a thousand people. While The Ward's cottage-lined streets now extended further north, toward College, little had changed socially. It was still a predominantly working-class area with pockets of poverty, whose residents were mainly of British, Scottish, Irish or African origin.

But just over a decade later, as Toronto's economy roared back following the great recession of 1893, the area began to transform rapidly. Immigrants



The new Registry Office site at 38-42 Elizabeth Street, May 23, 1912. The location corresponds to the present-day playground on the west side of City Hall.

from Italy, Eastern Europe and China – as well as places like Macedonia and Finland – arrived in large numbers. The Ward (and other older working-class districts) offered a supply of cheap, filthy rooms in crumbling stucco-and-wood cottages once occupied by an earlier generation that had relocated to newer neighbourhoods outside the core.

The whole city was in the midst of a period of intense flux, according to historian J. M. S. Careless. Union membership doubled between 1900 and 1906. Women's rights networks were actively pushing for universal suffrage and social reform. Temperance activists and missionaries, meanwhile, railed against vice, alcohol and violations of the Lord's Day Act.

It's not difficult to understand the source of all this upheaval. Between 1871 and 1911, Toronto's population exploded, from 56,000 to over 376,000 – an almost sevenfold increase that drove outward expansion and placed enormous strains on municipal infrastructure. (Toronto, notes historian James Lemon, didn't boom as rapidly in this period as cities like New

York, Chicago and Boston.) Foreign-born residents, moreover, now accounted for almost 10 per cent of the population, and a significant proportion came from non-English-speaking countries. (The Ward's residents were predominantly Jewish and Italian in the early twentieth century. The area became increasingly populated by Chinese bachelors after the First World War and the passage of the Exclusion Act in 1923. The Ward's Jews migrated to Kensington Market while the Italians decamped to College west of Bathurst.)

With speculative commercial and institutional development pushing in from all sides, Ward landlords had little incentive to upgrade aging residential buildings – mostly one- or two-storey wood-frame houses. But they responded to demand for inexpensive living space – a single labourer earning two or three dollars a day could pay as little as seventy-five cents to \$1.25 per week for lodging and washing – by erecting rough-hewn shacks in The Ward's litter-strewn rear alleyways. Some of these so-called 'rear houses' had no street frontage and could be accessed only through dirt-floor basements with creaking stairs leading up to backyards piled high with junk.

In 1911, a shocking report by Toronto medical officer of health Dr. Charles Hastings stated that The Ward's now predominantly immigrant population had ballooned to over 11,000 (by 1918, the number reached 17,000). New immigrants were arriving every day, many of them packed into overcrowded rooming houses that lacked the most basic sanitary amenities. Hastings ordered city photographer Arthur Goss to document the conditions, and Goss's images of revolting toilets and derelict flophouses full of labourers graphically illustrated the report.

The streets of this 'slum' teemed with newcomers who were visibly, audibly and culturally different from the majority. Today, one might describe the area using journalist Doug Saunders' resonant phrase, 'arrival city.' In fact, that period marked an historic point of inflection. It was the moment when 'Toronto the good,' a staunchly Anglo outpost preoccupied with defending its Christian values, came face to face with concentrated ethnic diversity and grinding poverty, all in one place.

'Few residents of the Ward had the time or inclination to notice the wretched conditions and pungent smells,' observes journalist/historian Charlotte Gray in *The Massey Murder*. The blocks bustled with commerce – peddlers, butchers and bakeries, small factories, lumberyards and sweatshops. The inhabitants,

Gray continues, 'were too busy scraping together the money to bring to Canada the relatives they had left facing poverty or pogroms in the Old Country. Yet The Ward was not a relentless dark place. Its unpaved streets were lively with entertainers, local preachers, and small stores selling fresh vegetables. Women wearing brightly coloured shawls over their heads haggled in unfamiliar languages over prices.'

Public reaction to all that conspicuous difference was hardly sanguine. A 1905 *Globe* article, entitled 'An Invasion of Foreigners,' fretted about an 'influx of a large population foreign in race, speech and customs.' The writer raised red flags: declining downtown church congregations and a worrisome propensity on the part of newcomers, including many Jews from Russia, to cluster together.

Three years later, a somewhat less anxious *Globe* feature noted the proliferation of synagogues in The Ward, as well as new 'penny banks,' night schools and shops. As the reporter lyrically observed:

What is familiarly known as 'the Ward' has undergone a radical change in nationality. The little rough-cast houses of Centre Avenue, Terauley, and Elizabeth streets, from which three or four years ago the Irish wash lady wended her way to us on Monday mornings, where the Italian fruit vendor ripened his bananas under his bed at night, and the negro plasterer and barber gave colour to the social scene of a summer evening, have in these later days thrown their shelter over the oppressed Slavonic Jew. Practically the whole Ward is a city ghetto...

Yet this tract of apparently impoverished exoticism drew not only waves of striving immigrants; the area also garnered attention from the city beyond The Ward's well-defined boundaries. Toronto the Good simply could not look away.

Writers, journalists, painters and photographers explored the neighbourhood's busy avenues, filled as they were with peddlers and children. Missionaries and social reformers set up street-front operations to recruit new souls, prevent juvenile delinquency and encourage newcomers to learn Canadian customs. Public health nurses fanned out, visiting the homes of immigrant women to offer stern housekeeping and parenting advice. Psychiatrists trawled for 'feeble-minded' or apparently morally deficient foreigners. Civic officials and policy researchers (among them, an ambitious young graduate student named William Lyon Mackenzie King) went from

sweatshop to sweatshop, and from door to door, dutifully recording everything from the number of flophouse beds and so-called 'dark rooms' to language and behavioural shortcomings within individual families. More institutions, like baths, settlement agencies and even an Italian consulate, opened up to provide various services to residents.

The Ward was also attracting interest, however tentative, from ordinary Torontonians. Audiences flocked to the large vaudeville and burlesque theatres on Terauley (now Bay) and Queen. Onlookers crowded into the Elizabeth Street playground (located on the current site of the new wing of the Hospital for Sick Children) to watch amateur baseball and youth festivals. By the 1920s, a growing number of intrepid diners ventured into The Ward for Italian ice cream or the 'chop suey' served in Chinese eateries. Fortune tellers worked other Ward restaurants, like Mary John's, a popular café at Elizabeth and Gerrard. From the 1930s, artists also began gravitating to The Ward's northern half, where they rented old cottages inexpensively and used them as studios. In the 1950s and 1960s, those blocks, which had the look and feel of contemporary Kensington, became a precursor to Yorkville in its heyday.

Not all this outside interest was benign. Jewish peddlers and Chinese café owners found themselves on the receiving end of attacks by young thugs, including former soldiers back from First World War battlefields. Meanwhile, the police, tasked with upholding Toronto's Protestant values, patrolled The Ward's streets, looking for bootleggers, gambling dens, houses of ill repute and merchants doing business on 'Protestant Sundays.' There was more than a hint of moral panic. The Ward was known to encompass a notorious a red-light district, on Centre Avenue. And at one point, council passed a bylaw preventing white women from working for Chinese businesses.

News coverage, in turn, ranged from alarmist to intrigued, or at least bewildered. 'Negros and Chinese seem to mingle well together,' a *Globe* reporter noted evenly in a 1922 story that makes no reference to the decades-long African-Canadian presence in The Ward. '[T]he native Chinese restaurants are filled with negro customers, several of them women, while here and there an occasional white girl can be seen partaking of a meal with either a brown or yellow skinned partner.'

Was the writer here sending a dog-whistle warning to socially conservative readers, alerting them to the threat of mixed-race relationships or prostitution?

Or was the reporter merely recording something, well, unusual about the way people from different backgrounds encountered one another? The latter question begets another two: did such 'sightings' subtly validate a form of social mixing that may have been taboo until then? And is this how ethnocultural acceptance in Toronto germinated?

It's possible. But louder voices, and more strident calls for civic and social reform, prevailed, especially when it came to determining the area's future uses.

Well before city leaders focused on the most visible symptoms of poverty and overcrowding, the blocks north of Queen had been targeted for redevelopment. Early plans for E. J. Lennox's new city hall, for example, envisioned razing the southern blocks of The Ward to create a square anchored by a giant statue of Queen Victoria. Subsequent civic beautification plans, released in 1911 and 1929, proposed open squares, parade grounds and neo-classical government buildings situated above Queen, at the head of a new north-south boulevard leading to Front Street.

The promulgation of these ideas accompanied increasingly anxious warnings about the dangers of slums. At a conference in 1907, Toronto controllers convened to consider the 'evils' of tenements, with Dr. Charles Sheard, the medical officer of health, alleging that Jewish investors had snapped up derelict Ward dwellings and were charging steep rents. 'He suggested the rookeries in St. John's Ward be expropriated by the city and... turned into playgrounds,' the *Globe* reported.

Even as the most decrepit Ward buildings were gradually torn down and replaced with the sort of two- and three-storey brick structures (store at grade, apartments above) still common in Toronto, civic leaders became ever more preoccupied with the spread of New York- or London-style slums. While he didn't disparage poor immigrants, Dr. Charles Hastings warned Torontonians that they were living in a 'fool's paradise' if they thought the city was immune to the problems of concentrated, visible poverty. Less cautious headline writers slung around shrill words and phrases like 'canker,' 'menace' and 'human derelicts.' Nativist sentiment was palpable, and especially directed at The Ward's Chinese residents. As a 1922 *Globe* article about The Ward all but shouted, 'Moral leprosy spreads.'

The message was clear.

The roots of Toronto's preoccupation with the 'spread' of so-called slum conditions can be traced to England during the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Cities had been home to enclaves of desperately poor people for centuries, of course. But the rise of industrialism triggered the mass urban migrations that transformed the nineteenth century. London's population, for example, jumped from 1 million to 6 million within that period, and other cities experienced similarly explosive growth.

The influx of newcomers placed extreme pressures on urban living conditions, municipal infrastructure, housing and transportation networks. As Peter D. Smith, author of *City: A Guidebook for the Urban Age*, wrote of London during that era, 'Cesspools were overflowing, the cemeteries were bursting with stinking corpses, the streets coated with noxious black mud, rotting rubbish clogged its alleys, and its citizens living in overcrowded decrepit buildings, breathing air that was heavily polluted with soot and sulphurous fumes. This was the filthy reality of London for most of its inhabitants.'

Charles Dickens documented this world in novels like *Our Mutual Friend* and *Oliver Twist*. Beginning in 1842, the young Friedrich Engels spent two years exploring the crowded, dehumanizing slums of Manchester, and the book that emerged from his observations, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, became a hugely influential manifesto about the plight of the urban underclass.

Governments, of course, responded in various ways to these conditions. The British Parliament, in the 1830s, reformed the country's long-standing 'poor laws,' creating new centralized administrations that operated large workhouses (the Poor House in The Ward opened only a few years after the British reform legislation received royal assent).

Overcrowded, unsanitary conditions also gave rise to lethal epidemics. Victorian physicians believed infectious diseases spread through smell, and fixated on 'miasma' and fetid odours. But during the 1854 cholera outbreak in central London, Dr. John Snow, the father of epidemiology, decided to map fatalities – the so-called Ghost Map – and ultimately concluded that the source of infection was a pump-operated drinking well on Broad Street, in Soho, that had been contaminated by a leaking sanitary sewer nearby. Workers at a neighbouring brewery didn't contract the disease because they mainly drank beer. Snow famously cut off the source of contamination by removing the pump's handle.

To counter slum living conditions, public health and ‘sanitary’ advocates pressed for the construction of public baths that would allow working-class people to not only clean their bodies but also cleanse their souls – filth, in Victorian England, was considered symptomatic of moral decay.

On a broader urban scale, the obviously putrid state of the Thames, and public alarm over incidents such as ‘the great stink’ of 1858, prompted London civic authorities in the 1860s and 1870s to embark on a massive sewer-works campaign. Sir Joseph Bazalgette oversaw the construction of 2,100 kilometres of new tunnels, including so-called interceptors, which ran along the banks of the Thames and connected with ancient sewer outflows so runoff could be discharged downriver.

Well before The Ward became a subject of concern here, Toronto, with its large concentration of British immigrants, was paying attention to such developments. In 1885, a *Globe* correspondent travelled to London and sent back a detailed account of Bazalgette’s vast sewer-construction campaign, published on November 4 of that year. Noting the sharp drop in cholera cases since Snow’s 1854 discovery, the reporter opined that Toronto ‘before long will have resolutely to face the great sewage question.’ He continued: ‘[M]any useful lessons may be learnt from London’s experience.’

Authorities also turned their attention to housing conditions in notorious slums such as Old Nichol, in London’s East End, with the national government establishing a royal commission on housing in 1884. ‘The working class housing question was like a great blocked drain,’ writes Sarah Wise, author of *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum*. ‘But a number of well informed and articulate individuals were determined to flush it through.’ As if foreshadowing Toronto’s preoccupation with The Ward in the 1910s and 1920s, British missionaries, child welfare advocates, university settlement workers, social reformers and ‘slumming’ journalists gravitated to Old Nichol, with its 5,700 residents, exposing municipal corruption and Dickensian conditions.

Meanwhile, social researcher Charles Booth began one of the first and most influential exercises in fine-grain urban poverty mapping – an analytical approach still in use in Toronto, with projects such as University of Toronto sociologist David Hulchanski’s ‘Three Cities’ study in income inequality. Working with a team of investigators, Booth categorized income levels for over 900,000 Londoners, and published colour-coded block-by-block maps showing

areas of high need. His work ultimately led to reforms such as the shortened workweek, rent controls, old age pensions and adoption of a ‘poverty line’ to assess family need.

As Wise observes, ‘The more significant achievement of the outsiders who came to Nichol and to the other pockets of deep deprivation was the steady accumulation of data – both dry figures and startling anecdote – that eventually led to moves towards greater social justice at both the local and national government levels.’ Old Nichol, however, was demolished in favour of upmarket apartments.

London wasn’t the only city grappling with questions of concentrated poverty, immigration and housing shortages. At the same time Booth was probing the extent and intensity of London’s poorest, American journalist and social reformer Jacob Riis was wandering through the congested streets of New York’s Lower East Side, an area considered at the time to have the world’s highest population density. He not only wrote about what he saw, but he also photographed the residents of a world where large immigrant families packed into cramped tenements and eked out a living in the garment trade.

It was a new and powerful way of documenting social conditions. Riis’s book, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), became an influential bestseller, and drew the attention of progressives like Theodore Roosevelt, who would describe Riis as ‘the most useful citizen of New York.’ (Roosevelt was also heavily influenced Upton Sinclair’s 1906 novel *The Jungle*, a fictionalized account of working-class Chicago and the city’s corrupt and unsanitary meat-packing industry.)

As Charles Madison noted in his 1970 preface to *The Other Half*, Riis ‘not only substantiated his case against the tenements – with photographs duplicating conditions to the last crack in the wall and the most minute wrinkle – but he was also the first to show the power of photography as a journalistic weapon.’ It is not known whether Arthur Goss or William James, the photographers who documented Ward conditions in the 1910s and 1920s, were familiar with Riis’s efforts, but the similarities are impossible to ignore; like that of Riis, the work of Goss and James allowed a broader audience to observe life as it was lived in the city’s poorest and most crowded enclave.

The historical record clearly shows that Toronto officials were well aware of the concerns about slums and tenements (a word used to describe early

apartment buildings as well) emanating from American and British cities. Some of these places were demolished. In the case of the Lower East Side, according to journalist Taras Grescoe, author of *Straphanger*, the construction of subways to Brooklyn ‘decanted’ the ghastly, overcrowded conditions on the Lower East Side (gentrification, however, didn’t reach Mulberry Street and the Bend until recently).

In Toronto, Charles Hastings vehemently opposed the development of modern apartment buildings as a solution to downtown housing needs, claiming they’d degenerate into tenements. Instead, he advocated for planned ‘garden city’-style suburbs and improved rapid transit between outer areas and the core. He even urged council to begin buying land that could be developed with modern housing. In the mid-1930s, Lieutenant Governor-General Herbert Bruce recommended the development of modern public housing projects following his inquiry into slum conditions around the city. His proposal led to the post-war demolition of hundreds of derelict east-end row houses and the subsequent construction of Regent Park, itself the subject of a massive redevelopment effort that has sought to undo some of the damage inflicted by well-meaning housing reform.

As for The Ward, years of anti-slum rhetoric inevitably hit the mark. Council in 1946 authorized the expropriation and clearance of the lower Ward, which at that point encompassed Chinatown. The process of razing, land assembly and redevelopment all the way up to College continued steadily until the 1990s, with office, apartment and institutional buildings (most notably City Hall, the Toronto General and Sick Kids) replacing almost all of the older structures, including stores, homes, synagogues, churches, theatres, cafés, studios, offices and Chinatown’s landmark restaurants, as well as a public school and a popular playground. Streetcar tracks were pulled up, and several roads were cut or erased altogether, including the southern portion of Elizabeth, which had served as The Ward’s main thoroughfare for over a century and, since the 1930s, Chinatown’s high street. In fact, the City combined several blocks of Chinatown into the parcel that would become Nathan Phillips Square.

Besides a handful of row houses on Dundas, Gerrard and Elm streets, as well as Holy Trinity and the Poor House, scant tangible evidence remains. (The British Methodist Episcopal Church was sold and then demolished in the late 1950s after the diminished congregation relocated to Shaw Street; the land

where it stood for over a hundred years remains a parking lot near City Hall.) To find The Ward today, in fact, we must imagine our way back into a complicated world whose physical traces have been systematically expunged. Yet The Ward's deeply compelling stories, and its wider legacy, remain woven into the fabric of a global city now defined by the diversity it first encountered well over a century ago, within a few cramped blocks of the downtown. Now, as then, we still struggle with questions about difference and deprivation, heritage and renewal, equity and political exclusion.

The entries that follow are an attempt to embark on that imaginative journey, and to then contemplate how The Ward's past informs Toronto's present.

Because this community was such a jumbled place – one that churned with vitality and variety as well as conflict and hardship for almost a century – we have opted not to relate its narrative(s) in a conventional way. The book is arranged neither chronologically nor thematically, and some entries offer contradictory or multiple views of what happened, and why. Certain essays provide detailed historical accounts of aspects of The Ward's existence, while others adopt more impressionistic, speculative or polemical perspectives. The collection also includes entries about the many representations of The Ward, because these refracted images, and the impact they made, constitute an important part of the area's story, and its ultimate fate. Throughout, we have sought to make connections across time and space. Indeed, we invite the reader to think about this neighbourhood in four dimensions, because one must always acknowledge time as a powerful actor in the lives of cities.

Lastly, we make no claim of comprehensiveness. We sought to push past the existing literature in compiling these entries. As we came to discover while working on the book, The Ward is still giving up its secrets to those who care to look: there are many more stories out there, at the edge of living memory or tucked away in old photo albums, diaries and archival vaults. The fact that they continue to surface, and to resonate in a city so devoted to the future, is surely interesting in and of itself.



