



This Week in the Annex:

March 23, 2022

Spring is Spring!

Every year (before the pandemic, that is) that first warm and sunny spring weekend would bring out the neighbourhood. Families gathered *en masse* in the parks to enjoy the swings and slides. Dog owners leisurely congregated, a pleasure, not a duty, to take Fido on his rounds. Neighbours waved hello across the street or stood in smiling clusters catching up on winter's news. We were groundhogs woken from hibernation, gladly surfacing from our winter burrows.

Not so, of course, the mood in March 2020 or even 2021. But the joy in the air this past weekend was absolutely palpable as Annexonians emerged as of old to celebrate the official arrival of Spring.

St Patrick on Parade

The highlight of the weekend for many was the revival of the St Patrick's Day parade. All Sunday morning, brightly costumed participants streamed from the St George subway to assemble down the road for the twelve o'clock start. They were greeted by a one-man band on steroids with anyone and everyone invited to pitch in. [Click here to watch and hear the show](#). You'll see that even the assembled police officers in formal dress uniform couldn't resist bobbing to the music.



St Patrick himself was there, playfully wagging the last of the snakes that he had banished from Ireland.



It was a day when everyone was Irish and everything was green – even the i8 BMW super hybrid that – Annexionians will have no trouble believing – was soon after seen driving through the 'hood looking in frustration for a place to park.



All this was mere prelude to the parade itself. We were fortunate to catch the very start, signalled by a green-hatted, Timmies-tipping parade marshal (just what was in that cup?). There were bagpipes. There were Irish setters. There were flags. There was merriment all round. [Get a taste of the action by clicking here.](#)

The Vernal Equinox

Of course Sunday was also, in scientific terms, the Vernal Equinox. “Vernal” because it’s spring, and “Equinox” because it’s the day when the sun is exactly above the equator and consequently day and night are of equal length. It’s also one of the four days in the year when Brad Golden’s public art installation on the east side of the underpass at Spadina and Dupont is at its most eloquent.

Nicole Stoffman, who wrote about the art work in our [January 19](#) issue, thoughtfully reminded us to go take a gander. Torn between St Patrick and the Vernal Equinox, we privileged the former and chose to visit Golden’s work the day after the celestial punctuation mark.

We arrived dutifully on Monday at 12:00 noon to observe. But, alas, we’d slipped up – victims of the switch to daylight savings time. After lingering for a while watching passersby scurry past the embedded rods – each and every person oblivious to their import – we left the scene. But Nicole saved the day and captured the image below at the stroke of 1:00 pm.



You'll see that the light rays are a tad out of alignment with the target metal bar – witness to the difference a day can make to this genre of timepiece.

Next chance to catch the rays perfectly aligned will be the Autumnal Equinox: Friday, September 23, 2022 at 01:03 UTC. (And if you want to learn what UTC means, as we did, just [go to this website](#) for an explanation.)

Notes and Queries

Duck of the Irish

Of course St Patrick's day was officially the weekday prior – Thursday March 17. And there was no shortage of revellers sporting green that day, either. Most of you will have seen by now the Big Duck Adventure that's usually parked at the top of Admiral Road. We caught owner Simon and friend Heather out enjoying the sunshine, suitably clad for the day as they worked at fabricating the latest duck in the family.



A St Patrick's Day project for Simon – making a duck buddy for his iconic carrier.

West Annex Heritage Focus Groups


There was significant attendance at yesterday's focus group as participants waxed enthusiastically about our community, its unique features and dynamics. If you'd like to join in this discussion and learn how the project has evolved over the past six months, there's still time to register. Just click on [the events page](#) and RSVP for Focus Group Option 2.

Historical Context Statement - West Annex Themes




Community and Social Context


- How has its unique origin as a residential-only neighbourhood impacted the development of community, gathering, and social interaction in the West Annex?
- How have demographics and social dynamics changed over time?




1910-1911 – Firehall #23



1929 – McNicol Hall, Toronto Bible College
1962 – Native Canadian Centre of Toronto



1899 – Norman B. Nash House
1978 – Spadina Station northeast entrance



1958 – Huron Street Public School



Heritage in the Making

You might have noticed increased action on the site of the soon-to-be Keskus Centre. Now there's a chance to learn more about what's happening by attending the community engagement session scheduled for tomorrow, March 24, at 7:00 pm. You are urged to attend, "from wherever in the world you are," for project progress updates. Details are available on the [Keskus website](#) under

"News and Events." But for simplicity's sake, we'll give you the zoom link here:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87012407085>.



An historic house is about to be demolished – to make way for a significant community treasure.

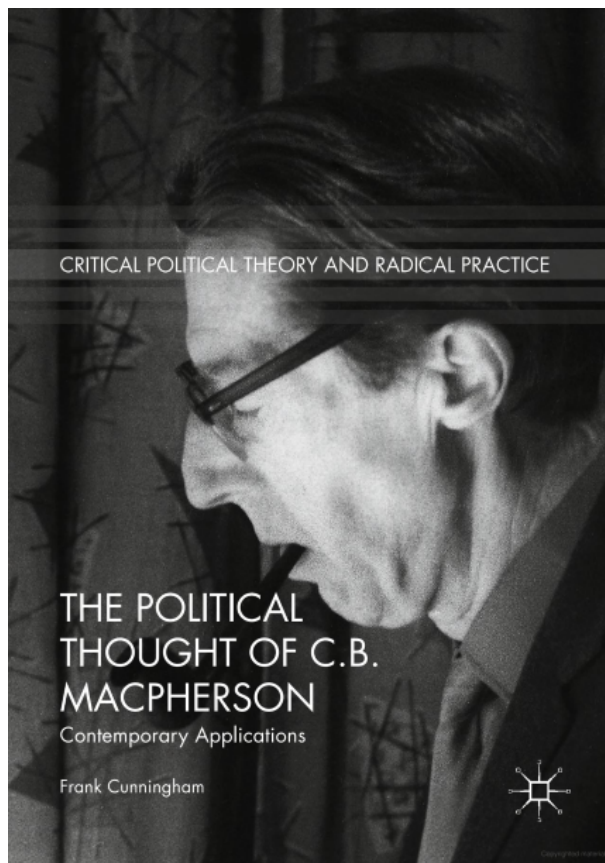
ARSC Walkabout Gets Exposure

It was a cold and wintry day when our fearless road safety champion, Henry Wiercinski, led a gaggle of politicians and City staff through the obstacles that constitute a walk up Avenue Road from Bloor to St Clair. The event made an impression on Councillor Josh Matlow significant enough for him to include it in [his March newsletter](#), complete with a photo of the intrepid crew (it really was a nasty day, weather-wise). This is great publicity for the Avenue Road Safety Coalition as it continues to pressure City Hall to do something by way of civilizing that stretch of highway in our midst.



Frank Cunningham Amplified

Many of us were saddened to learn of the passing of Frank Cunningham, first announced in these pages in the [February 9th newsletter](#). We knew him primarily as a committed Annexionian who devoted countless hours to the community. But just this past Saturday came our opportunity to learn much more about the man when Judy Stoffman's sensitive, insightful, and comprehensive recital of his life and influence was published [in the Globe](#). You can read a pdf version of [the obituary here](#). *PS: Judy is the mother of sometime contributor to this newsletter, Nicole Hoffman. Clearly talent runs in the family!*



The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

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The Annex Residents' Association



This Week in the Annex:

March 23, 2022 News Flash

CORRECTION!

In this morning's newsletter we incorrectly reported that the house on Madison was about to be demolished to make way for the Keskus Centre next door. Blame your addled reporter for jumping to conclusions.

As Ellen Valter from the Estonian Centre quickly alerted us:

The heritage house is not being demolished!! Au contraire, the project is restoring it to City's heritage standards: ie removing the non-original porch that housed a wheelchair lift, and returning the stairs to where they originally were, on the left side of the face of the building.



This is all coming at considerable expense and, unfortunately, a reduction of square footage.

But it will be much more beautiful after it's done - and more importantly, it will be right. I think all will agree the way it has been painted up and the box add-on in the front does not fit with the streetscape. But yes, it does look harsh and will likely continue to look worse before it gets better.

In other words, no the project has not gone rogue! The goal is to be a responsible and vibrant part of the Annex community and, moreover, the heritage district.

The heritage house will look like that on the left in the image below, once the project is finished. The Estonian Centre has invested considerably in a heritage architect to work with the City to make sure that the streetscape is respected - indeed one of the main reasons for the jumbo glass on either side of the north wing is so that the heritage building can be enjoyed from the south.



Ellen encourages you to join tomorrow evening's Zoom construction progress report at 7:00 pm. Details are available on the [Keskus website](https://www.keskus.ca/news-events) under "News and Events." But for simplicity's sake, we'll give you the zoom link here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87012407085>.



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