

August, 2016



British Home Child Group International

“ONE NEVER KNOWS...” The Pearly Kings’ and Queens’ Motto by Sandra Joyce



The Industrial Age tenements of London were extremely filthy and overcrowded places where the poor or sick had to rely on the charity of others or be sent to the workhouse. This was long before any social assistance was in place.

Some of the child paupers, now called British Home Children, were sent to Canada by philanthropic organizations run by Annie MacPherson, Maria Rye or others such as Dr. Barnardo's. For a number of children, this was a godsend. Yet, through ineffective supervision of their placements, some suffered horrifically. Many of the children were ostracized and stigmatized. In any case, most of them lost their families forever.

Other groups chose to help the poor and needy in their own country, rather than send them away. The Pearly Kings and Queens (the Pearlies), a group that exists in London, England to this day, began their charitable work in the mid-nineteenth century squalor.

The Pearlies originated from the street traders, or the ‘Costermongers’ as they became known, who have been an important feature of London life since the 11th century - and for 900 years were unlicensed and itinerant- at times hounded by the authorities & bureaucrats.

Costers sold to the poor from baskets and barrows and their existence, like that of their customers, was day-to-day. They were all too aware that their fortunes could change quickly – a few bad rainy days, with no sales, could ruin them. Although each Coster family traded independently, they remained loyal to other Costers - collecting for those that fell on particularly hard times. Their philosophy of life was one of fate - some you win, some you lose. If things went bad you just had to pick yourself up and start all over again. Hence their motto – ‘One Never Knows’.

The Costers decorated their best clothing with mother of pearl buttons. They sewed the buttons on the seams of their trousers from ankle to knee and some did the front of their caps and the flaps of their pockets as well. The pearl buttons represented the poor man's jewellery, imitating a costume studded with real pearls that had become fashionable. The buttons were affordable as they were made from oysters, which were cheap at the time. The buttons also hid any threadbare parts of their clothes.

The tradition of the Pearlies and their connections to charity is attributed to Henry Croft, who was raised in a Victorian workhouse orphanage in St. Pancras (King's Cross), London, England. By the age of thirteen, Croft had left the orphanage to become a road sweeper and rat catcher. As he was on the street most of the time, he became fascinated by the Costermongers and their ‘best’ suits. *Continued on page 6.....*

Simcoe's Vision for Toronto: A City So Awesome It Would Undo the American Revolution

By Adam Bunch



1791. Just ten years earlier, John Graves Simcoe had been fighting on the British side of the American Revolution. He made a name for himself in that bloody war: the unit he commanded never lost a battle, he survived months in an American prison, and he even had a chance to kill George Washington, but ordered his men to stand down rather than shoot the future President as he fled. He had his dark moments too — he was an ardent supporter of the death penalty for desertion and he once ordered the massacre of American rebels in their sleep — but it seems he had a reputation for

being "brave, humane and honest." By the time the war was over, Simcoe had established himself as one of the rising stars of the British military.

So when the British decided to create a new province in Canada, they chose John Graves Simcoe to be the first Lieutenant Governor.

The province of Upper Canada was created in what we now call southern Ontario. While Québec and the Maritime provinces were already well-established colonies, the British saw the land to the west as an untamed wilderness. Dismissing the First Nations who already lived here, they figured it would make a perfect new home for those who stayed loyal to the Empire during the war. Many of the Loyalists had been driven from their homes by the American revolutionaries, their lives threatened, their property burned to the ground, forced to flee north to safety. Some of them had been born in the States to families who had lived there for generations. Some had arrived from Europe more recently — about 40% of the earliest Upper Canadians were German. Some were former slaves, promised their freedom in return for fighting against the American rebels. Others were still slaves when they got here.

As Governor, Simcoe would have tremendous power over this new province. He could veto laws, dissolve parliament and hand-pick public servants and an Executive Council. He had ambitious plans to use that power. He didn't just want Upper Canada to be a successful new colony with a thriving new capital: he wanted Upper Canada to undo the American Revolution by the sheer force of its own awesomeness.

He got to work on his plan as soon as he was named Lieutenant Governor in 1791, while he was still back home in England. One of the very first things he did was to write a letter addressed to one of the most famous men in Britain: Sir Joseph Banks.

CIVIC HOLIDAY

Did you know, in most parts of Canada the August long weekend is referred to as Civic Day, but in some parts it is referred to differently. Peterborough is Peter Robinson Day, Guelph is John Galt Day and Toronto is known as Simcoe Day after the First Lieutenant Governor. What does your town call it?

Simcoe's Vision for Toronto *continued....*

Banks was a scientist: a renowned and respected naturalist. Twenty years earlier, he had explored the South Pacific with the legendary Captain James Cook, becoming one of the very first Europeans to see Australia and New Zealand. It was Banks who first told Europe about kangaroos, and eucalyptus and acacia trees, along with thousands of other species of plants and animals. After that, he was named President of the Royal Society — a post once held by Sir Isaac Newton — and he was hailed as a national hero.

Simcoe (whose own father had also served with Cook) wanted to bounce his ideas off Banks before setting sail for Canada. So, in his letter, he laid out his vision for the new province and the new city he would build as its capital.

He called this hypothetical future metropolis "Georgina" — in honour of King George III (who had recently recovered from his first bout of mental illness). The city would be built, he hoped, on the banks of the La Tranche River (Simcoe later renamed it the Thames) on the spot where London is now. But that's not what happened. Instead, the new capital would end up being built here, on the northern shore of Lake Ontario. In the end, Simcoe didn't name the city "Georgina" after the King, but "York" after the King's son, the Duke of York. Decades later, it would be re-named according to an old Indigenous name for this place: Toronto.

His plan, in short, was to make our city and our province so undeniably amazing that Americans couldn't help but realize how terrible America was by comparison. They would voluntarily give up their silly notions of independence and beg to be let back into the Empire.

"I would die by more than Indian torture to restore my King and his family to their just inheritance," Simcoe wrote to Banks. "Though a soldier, it is not by arms that I hope for this result... the method I propose is by establishing a free, honourable British Government, and a pure administration of its laws, which shall hold out to the solitary emigrant, and to the several states, advantages that the present form of Government doth not and cannot permit them to enjoy."

As far as Simcoe was concerned, modern democracy was a dangerous idea. He had already personally witnessed the horrors of the American Revolution committed in its name, and now those ideas had spread to France, where an even bloodier and more horrifying revolution was underway. The U.S. seemed destined for more chaos and war. "I mean to prepare for whatever convulsions may happen in the United States," he told Banks. He might be able to lure them back into the fold, or at the very least provide an attractive destination for those Americans who became disillusioned with their own government. The key would be building a peaceful Canadian province with a glorious new capital home to an enviable culture of arts, science, learning and good government.

"[T]his colony," he continued, "(which I mean to show forth with all the advantages of British protection as a better Government than the United States can possibly obtain) should in its very foundations provide for every assistance that can possibly be procured for the arts and sciences, and for every embellishment that hereafter may decorate and attract notice, and may point it out to the neighbouring States as a superior, more happy, and more polished form of Government. I would not in its infancy have a hut, nor in its maturity, a palace built without this design."

FUN FACTS

East Gwillimbury, a small town located in the Regional Municipality of York was named after John Graves Simcoe's wife Elizabeth Gwillim. The Town of Whitchurch is also named after her hometown.

Simcoe's Vision for Toronto *continued....*

He already had some concrete ideas about how to establish this British utopia. His letter to Banks mentions a publicly-funded library "to be composed of such books as might be useful to the colony." Extracts from encyclopedias could be published in newspapers to further public education. The school-system would be an important institution and "a college of a higher class would be eminently useful." There would be an emphasis on scientific learning, too: "I should be glad," he wrote, "to lay the foundation stone of some society that I trust might hereafter conduce to the extension of science."

But he also wanted to restrict what he once called "tyrannical democracy" in favour of a powerful, British aristocracy. "There are inherent defects in the congressional form of Government, the absolute prohibition of any order of nobility is a glaring one," he wrote. "I hope to have a hereditary council with some mark of nobility." There would also be an official state church: the Church of England.

Those, unsurprisingly, would prove to be among the most problematic parts of Simcoe's vision. Our province was supposed to be a British province, our city a British city. And while Simcoe never did establish an official nobility, he did leave behind the Family Compact: a ruling class of Tory Protestants determined to uphold his ideal of a monolithic Anglican state. Those from other cultures who helped to build the colony faced discrimination, intimidation and violence. So did advocates for real democracy. During our city's first 40 years, Anglican priests were the only priests legally allowed to perform marriage ceremonies. Anti-Catholic riots would eventually become a familiar sight on our streets. The Anglican Orange Order would dominate Toronto for more than a century, well into the 1900s.

Still, many of the positive institutions Simcoe imagined in his letter to Banks have played a vital role in the building of our city. The Toronto Public Library has the highest per-capita use of any public library system in the world. King's College was founded in 1827 and later became the University of Toronto. We do have an enviable culture of arts and science. And in the few years he was here, Simcoe laid the foundation for our court system and established trail-by-jury. We still travel along roads he first imagined.

Simcoe never did manage to undo the American Revolution. But even that dream wasn't a complete failure. Upper Canada did attract many American settlers with the promise of a better life. And Toronto has long provided a new home for immigrants from south of the border — whether they're looking for a clean, peaceful city, a stronger social safety net, or the chance to avoid fighting in American wars.

Simcoe's greatest legacy, however, is something he didn't mention in his letter to Banks. One of the first laws he passed in Upper Canada was legislation he championed himself: the abolition of slavery. He wanted to ban it entirely; slave-owners in the Legislative Assembly forced a compromise that saw it phased out instead. Even so, it was the first law to abolish slavery anywhere in the British Empire. Simcoe's new capital would eventually become a terminal on the Underground Railroad, welcoming former slaves to freedom. He might not have been able to convince every American to rejoin the British Empire, but Simcoe did ensure his new province would be a safe haven for the Americans who needed it most.



Adam Bunch is the creator of the [*Toronto Dreams Project*](#). He writes a local [*history column*](#) for *Spacing Magazine* and his articles about the history of the city have also appeared on *The Huffington Post* and *Torontoist*. He's been a member of the *Polaris Music Prize* jury, is a former [*columnist*](#) for the *Canadian Music Hall of Fame*, is currently the Editor-in-Chief of [*The Little Red Umbrella*](#) (a Toronto-centric arts and culture blog) and the former Editor-in-Chief of *SoundProof Magazine*. His music writing has appeared in *PopMatters*, *Crawdaddy!* and *24 Hours* as well as on the *AUX.TV* website. He once gave a lecture at *Trampoline Hall* about not being naked.

In 2012, his work on the *Toronto Dreams Project* earned him an honourable mention for the *Governor General History Award for Community Programming*. The project has been covered in one form or another by *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Torontoist* and *blogTO*. Some of his dreams have been featured in the *Art Gallery of Ontario*.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University.

The Carthaginian by Sandra Joyce



Built in Glasgow by the Govan shipping company, the Carthaginian was launched by the Allan Line on October 9th, 1884. Her maiden voyage on December 6th, 1884 had her sailing from Glasgow to Boston. Her identical sister steamship - the Siberian - was also built the same year.

The Carthaginian mainly sailed with emigrants and other passengers between Glasgow or Liverpool to Quebec, Halifax, Baltimore, Philadelphia or Boston. There was accommodation for 64-1st, 32-2nd and 1,000-3rd class passengers on the single funnel, three mast steamship. Over the years, 2000 British Home Children in total, sailed across the Atlantic to Canada on her decks.

In the Sessional Papers of 1887 on the Settlement of Children to New Brunswick and Ontario in 1886, the Carthaginian was mentioned in a report to the Minister in Agriculture by Miss Sliman.

Miss Sliman brought children to New Brunswick and to Miss Billbrough, the matron of the Marchmont Home in Belleville, Ontario.

These are some excerpts from the report:

"In giving a brief report on my visit to New Brunswick and Ontario, I find it not quite easy to select and compress all I could wish you to know. I sailed on the 12th of October from Liverpool by the Carthaginian steamship, taking with me 13 girls and 9 boys.

"Our voyage was rough and tedious, but we arrived in safety on the 23rd of October. Without any delay we got train and after twelve hours of comfortable cars, we reached our destination, St. John, N. B., on Sabbath the 24th.

"Mr. Gardner, the immigration agent, met us at the station and conducted us to a plain boarding house... In the next morning's newspaper there was a notice of our arrival, which many must have read, for soon breakfast was over, the people of St. John and neighbourhood crowded in upon us to secure a boy or girl. Mr. Gardner was present with his long list of the names of those who had made previous application, and by him I was guided. By the end of the second day, all my company had been allotted and most of them had left... But my contribution was only 'a drop in the bucket' for about 150 applicants were still unserved and the agent assured me that 500 openings would await me by summer...

"My impressions of the country were highly favourable. The land is undulating, well-watered and productive and the farmers are intelligent and live in great comfort. Indeed the privileges of St. John socially, educationally and religiously are equal to those of our own country...

"The subject of emigration is everywhere being looked at. Indeed it seems 'in the air'. Philanthropists and statesmen are awaking to its necessity. See The Times of 14th of December, from which I quote: *"In England and Wales alone 82,000 children are maintained at an annual cost of a million and a half sterling. Let this living steam be converted into the thinly-populated colonies, where there is only one or two to the square mile (instead of 450 as in England) and it will be an unmistakable relief to our overcrowded labour market, and the remedial agency for our overcrowded country, beneficent to the children and advantageous to the Dominion."* Continued on page 7.....

“ONE NEVER KNOWS...” The Pearly Kings’ and Queens’ Motto *continued...*

After scouring the streets for ‘pearl’ buttons, Croft eventually covered a whole suit, including top hat and tails incorporating symbols and patterns and slogans. One of these was: ‘All for Charity’. Joining the Costers on their fundraising parades and carnivals, he attracted a great deal of attention and he began collecting pennies and ha’pennies to give to the orphanage where he grew up. As his popularity increased, other charitable organizations asked him to collect for them, too and the Costers realized the shimmering outfit Henry wore, raised a lot of money.

The ‘Pearly monarchy’ stems from the Costermonger tradition. Each Borough of London elected a ‘Coster King’ - they were chosen to fight for their rights - the first form of trade union. Coster Kings needed to be a hardy breed with leadership qualities, strong personalities, and physical strength. They also had to be loyal and quick-witted. And it wasn’t just the men - the female Billingsgate fishmongers were regarded as fearsome! Coster Kings and Queens brought up their ‘Royal’ children to follow in the tradition and inherit the title.



The Coster Kings and Queens became known as the Pearly Kings and Queens. There were 28 Pearly families, one for every Borough of London, one for the City of Westminster and one for the City of London.

These days, two very colourful events held each year are the Pearly Memorial service on the third Sunday in May and the harvest Festival service held on the first Sunday in October. Both events are held at St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. Pearly Kings and Queens, Princes and Princesses—young and old - gather together in their wonderfully decorated suits. They are dedicated to voluntary charity work and to preserving one of London’s most colourful traditions.

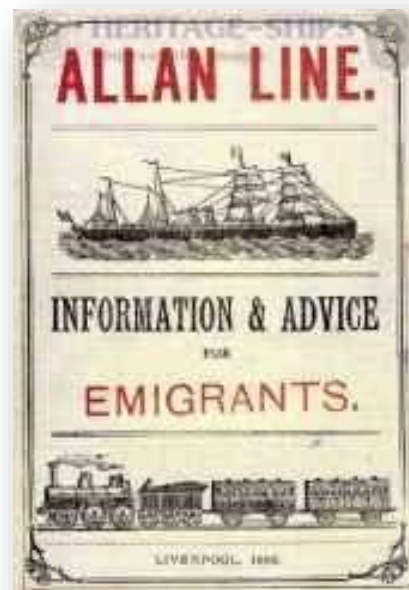
A Memorial statue of Henry Croft was placed in Finchley Cemetery, where Henry is buried, through donations by Hospitals, societies, and other charitable organisations Henry had helped in his lifetime. Sadly, the statue was vandalised on three occasions and laid in many pieces for six years. The Original Pearly Kings and Queens Association have now been able to repair the life-sized statue in all his finery and it is now on show in the Crypt of St Martin in the Fields.

The Carthaginian *continued....*

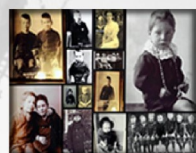
In 1913, no British Home Children were sent on the Carthaginian.

That year, in January, on their first voyage of the year, the captain, crew and passengers of the ship experienced tumultuous weather and high waves from the moment they left Glasgow on December 26th causing the captain to remain on the bridge constantly.

As the ship came to within 500 miles of St. Johns, it was discovered the some produce in the hold had caught on fire. At first, the news of the fire was kept from the passengers for several hours while the crew battled it. However, soon the passengers were called together and told that they must pitch in, in order to save the ship. The passengers, including two Scotch women, joined the bucket brigade or manned the nozzle of the hose to battle the blaze. Several times, Captain McKillop contemplated abandoning ship but decided if they did so, they would certainly all die a watery death. After nine hours, the hold was flooded and the fire extinguished. The Carthaginian lay low in water but was able to continue.



She was in service for the Allan Line from 1884 till 1915 when the entire Allan line was taken over by Canadian Pacific. The Carthaginian's luck finally ran out on the 14th of June 1916, On that date, she was sunk by a mine laid by the German Submarine U79 near Inishtrahull, off the coast of County Donegal. Fortunately, there was no loss of life.



British Home Child Group International

The British Home Child Group International, in collaboration with Fanshawe Pioneer Village in London, Ontario, are excited to present British Home Child Day on October 1st & 2nd, 2016. Admission is free for the event as part of Doors Open London and Culture Days.

Mark the dates in your calendar!!



**Ontario Genealogical Society Webinar**

September 1st - 7pm—8pm

Probus Club, Cooksville

September 15th - 10am - 12pm

Mississauga, Ontario

Grey Highlands Historical Society

September 28th - 7pm - 9pm

Flesherton, Ontario

Beach Celtic Festival

September 10-11

Kew Gardens, Toronto, Ontario

Waterford

September 15th 3:30-5pm

Barrie, Ontario

Be Sure to check our website to see all upcoming events!



British Home Child Group International

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