

# Walking the St. John's Ward

*Jason Bong - Shahil Patel*

# Before the Walk

Welcome to St. John's Ward, or as you may know it, "The Ward". In the late 19th century and early 20th century, this was a dense slum, home for refugees coming from all over the world. Many immigrants would settle in The Ward before being able to stand on their own. Due to the slaves being captured in the south, many black families had escaped to Canada and ended up living in The Ward. Jewish families had also immigrated to Toronto in a big group. Thousands of Jewish people lived in The Ward, making it their own community. Many Chinese had also moved into The Ward community which ended up to creating Toronto's very first Chinatown. The Ward was also home for refugees who came from the European Revolutions in 1848 and the Irish Potato Famine. The Ward also took in refugees from Russia. As the Jewish immigrants began to move westward, The Ward became a centre for many Italian immigrants. Today, The Ward has been consumed by the central business district or downtown and the neighbourhood has almost completely disappeared. This tour will lead you to different places of importance with objects that are related to the past. You will find objects of significance that will give you an idea of what the same location in the past was like.

# Challenge!

At every stop, take a fun picture of yourself and the significant object and location together and post it on Twitter with the hashtag “#WardSearch2015”.

The most creative/fun picture that we can find on Twitter with that hashtag will be messaged with a secret prize that you'll enjoy! Good luck and have fun!

# Map

**A** - Elizabeth St. Playground

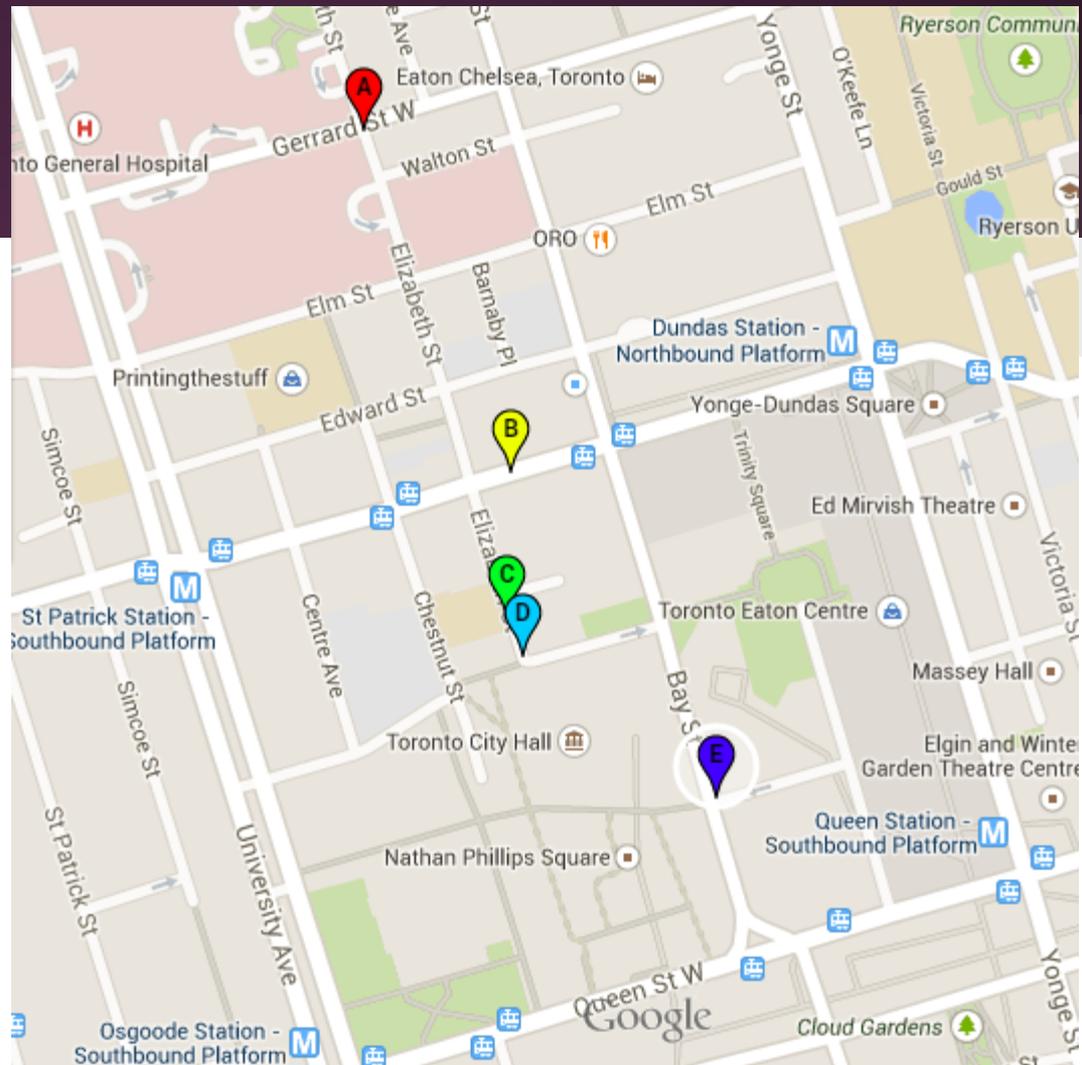
**B** - 67-69 Louisa Street

**C** - 21 Elizabeth St.

**D** - 9 Elizabeth St. (First Chinatown)

**E** - Bay and Albert St.

Please visit the stops in **alphabetical** order!



# Stop A: Elizabeth St. Playground

Welcome to the first stop of the walk! In this stop, you should find a swingset. This swingset symbolizes the Elizabeth St. Playground that was created here back in the early nineteenth century. The playground was very popular with immigrant children, specifically Jewish and Italian children as they had the largest populations around the area. As you can see in the photo, the amount of children in the one playground is immense, showing overcrowding. The large amount of children also shows that many of the houses in the slum did not have enough space in the backyard or anywhere around or in it for children to have fun or do what they want. This represents the overcrowded and poor conditioned houses they lived in. Off to the next stop we go!



Children enjoy an August afternoon at the Elizabeth Street Playground in 1913. The playground was a welcome addition to the Ward, given that by the 1910s, dirty and overcrowded premises like the one in Figure 13 meant that backyards offered little space for games, sports, and socializing. *Source: City of Toronto Archives (Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 52, Item 72).*

# Stop B: 67-69 Louisa Street

Welcome to the second stop of the walk! At this stop, we can analyze the housing and a tire repair store. The building quality of the structures should be looked at. Here, the finishing of structure on the side of buildings isn't very stable. The front of the buildings are made of plastic and bricks. In addition, you should find car which is parked on the side of the store. This might be the store owner's car. The owner must be very capable in terms of money because to get this type of property back then could be very costly. Overall you should find structure built during these times to be made out of bricks, plastic and metal.



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372. s0372\_ss0033\_it0174

A photo of an old tire repairing store on 67-69 Louisa St. from Toronto Archives

# Stop C: 21 Elizabeth St.

Welcome to the third stop of the walk! Here, at 21 Elizabeth St, you will find a bundle of different pieces of wood waste on the ground. The bundle of wood represent the poor conditions that the slum had. There was garbage and waste all over the place that made it hard to even look at. As you can see in this historical photo, the large bundle of wooden waste is larger than the person in the picture. You can see the comparison between a resident and the city hall building. This location was just one of the poor condition homes that thousands of residents had to live in. Possibly a Jewish family of around 8 people had lived here in this small house as Jewish residents were very common at the time this historical photo was taken. On to the next stop!



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372\_ss0032\_it0187

Rear of 21 Elizabeth Street 1913 (Photo Credit: City of Toronto Archives)

# Stop D: 9 Elizabeth St. - First Chinatown

Welcome to the fourth stop of the walk! Here, you should be able to find stores. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were many Chinese immigrants. The signs of these stores are in Chinese and English. The reason for the signs to be in Chinese is probably because the owners of these stores are immigrants from China that arrived in between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also, the front of the store should have hood tops. Here you might also find some cars of reputed and capable people of owning the car. In conclusion, there should be stores all around this area with people shopping of course!



Toronto's First Chinatown in the St. John's Ward, 1937

# Stop E: Bay and Albert St.

Welcome to the final stop of the walk! Here at Bay and Albert St, there used to be a large row of houses and shops. The object you should find here is the clock tower of Toronto's old city hall. The clock tower has been there along with the building for many years and has always represented city hall. Residents from the past have always seen the tower and even today, a hundred years later, we can also view it. This clock tower was also the tallest structure in Canada from 1899 to 1917 which is just before this photograph was taken. Be sure to finish up that challenge before ending the tour! Thank you for following our tour and we hope you enjoyed and learned something about The Ward.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, f1244\_r1002