

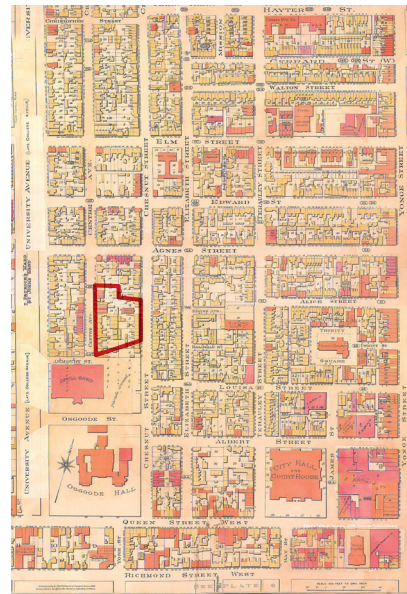
ARMOURY STREET DIG

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CITY

Uncovering the History of the New Toronto Courthouse Site

"Archaeological assessments are typically required in advance of any land development activity within the City of Toronto. The City's Archaeological Management Plan and Official Plan policies support the conservation, documentation, and interpretation of archaeological resources and sites. As demonstrated by the unfolding history of the new Toronto courthouse site, archaeology can add detail to the historical record and uncover new insights into Toronto's past."

Susan Hughes, Project Manager Archaeology,
City of Toronto Heritage Preservation Services



Under Toronto's surface, thousands of years of history lie waiting to be illuminated by archaeology. The City's archaeological program ensures the ongoing study and protection of this cultural legacy. As Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of the Attorney General develop a new Toronto courthouse on Armoury Street, archaeological work has provided insight into the site's history as part of The Ward, an area where newcomers established themselves for over a century. The findings reflect the settlement of the site by primarily Black, Irish, Jewish, Italian, and Chinese communities. The work at the courthouse site is one of the largest North American urban excavations in recent memory; only a fraction of the findings appear in this exhibit.

The archaeological assessment revealed hundreds of thousands of small artifacts, along with the foundations of houses, shops, factories, and places of worship. A drone photograph (right) shows the foundations of a house belonging to Cecelia Jane Reynolds – a formerly enslaved woman who found freedom in Toronto – and her husband, Benjamin Pollard Holmes. The two archival photographs (left) show their house in 1937, by which time the buildings depicted were 75 to 100 years old. In the top photograph, a glimpse of their porch is visible on the right; the photograph below shows the rear of their property on the right, as seen from a second storey rear window. Artifacts from this lot trace its residential use over more than a century. The artifacts, foundations, and other research weave stories that connect us to individuals from Toronto's past.



"The beautiful glassware, fine china, little children's toys, and other household items uncovered at the site of Toronto's new courthouse reveal St. John's Ward to have been a vibrant, working-class residential district... The narrow streets of St. John's Ward and the eastern part of St. Patrick's Ward were between the 1830s and 1860s lined with the tidy homes of industrious, hopeful immigrants, building new lives for their families on Toronto's northwestern outskirts."

Karolyn Smardz Frost,
Archaeologist, Historian, and Author of *Steal Away Home*, which tells the story of Cecelia Jane Reynolds

The artifacts in this case represent household items found on the courthouse site. From a pot of "highly scented" hair grease, to a glass bottle still bright with nail polish, these personal items offer glimpses of everyday life for The Ward's residents.

This exhibit is presented in partnership between Infrastructure Ontario, on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General, and the City of Toronto.



This exhibit shares a selection of the artifacts and stories unearthed in the archaeological assessment of the new Toronto courthouse site on Armoury Street, originally part of The Ward and just steps from City Hall. With thanks to the New Toronto Courthouse Heritage Interpretation Working Group, Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants, ERA Architects.