

THE WAY MUST BE TRIED YORK UNIVERSITY

A lively and candid account of the growth of a great Canadian University.

IN 1955 A GROUP OF TORONTO PROFESSIONALS began discussions on expanding adult education in their city. The outcome was York University, which was founded

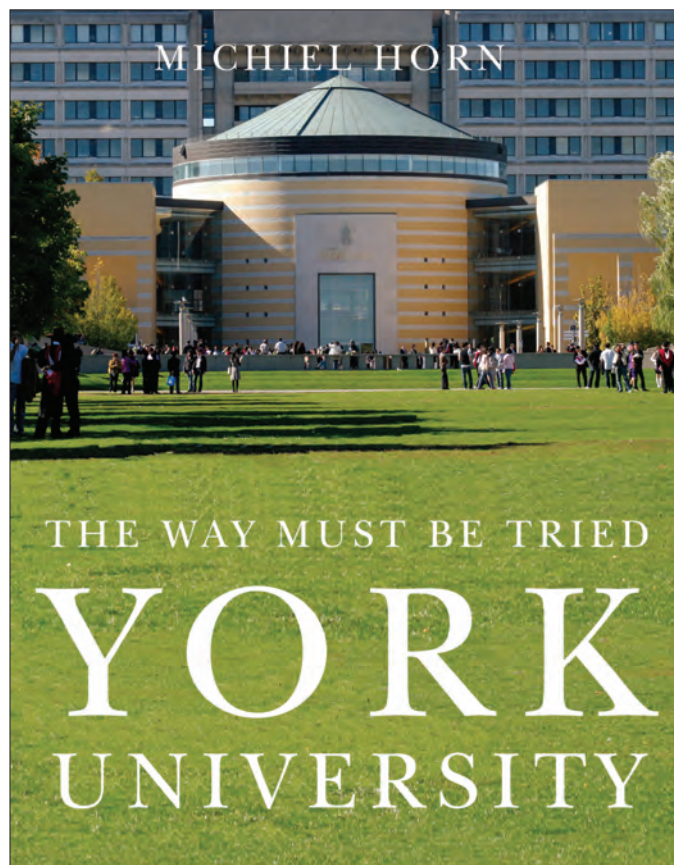


in 1959 and opened in 1960 with 76 students. Today, with over 50,000 students in eleven faculties on two campuses, York is the third largest university in Canada. Faculty and staff have grown from under 20 to nearly 8,000.

In *York University: The Way Must Be Tried*, Michiel Horn weaves archival research and interviews into a compelling narrative, documenting the development of an institution committed to helping professors and students reach across disciplinary boundaries.



MICHEL HORN is professor emeritus of history, York University, and the author and editor of numerous books, most recently *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History*.




York University
The Way Must Be Tried
Michiel Horn

Release Date: January, 2009
Publisher: McGill-Queen's
Education, Canadian History
List Price: \$49.95
9x11, 320 pages
ISBN: 978-0-7735-3416-2

YORK **U50**
UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY
redefine THE POSSIBLE.

YORK UNIVERSITY: THE WAY MUST BE TRIED

Dennis Smith, the first registrar, and President Murray Ross in front of Keefe Hall on the University of Toronto campus.



the move that would take place before the fall of '66. The new university also had to develop its own curriculum, to plan for the opening of its faculty of part-time studies, and to secure land that would serve York as a campus on which it could eventually expand.

According to the affiliation agreement with the University of Toronto, formally signed on 30 June 1960, the affiliation would last for at least four and up to eight years. During that time, York courses would be essentially the same as those offered by the older university, and York graduates would receive its degrees. York employees and students had access to the University of Toronto's library, laboratory, and athletic facilities. The arrangement gave the fledgling university a stature it would otherwise have lacked, making it easier to attract both faculty members and students.

In January 1960 the provincial Committee on University Affairs recommended that York get a promotional grant of \$20,000 in 1960-61 to cover York's operating expenses. The grant allowed York to begin hiring staff. The University of Toronto continued to carry Ross and Bill Small on its payroll in 1960-61, as well as Ross's secretary. The first incumbent of this position was Jackie Adams, succeeded a few years later by the ever-discreet Yvonne Aziz. The first employee to be paid by York was Dennis Smith, a young political scientist whom Ross put to work as registrar, charging him with student recruitment and the preparation of the first calendar. Smith recalled undertaking these tasks with some trepidation, since he had not been trained for them. In June he got the assistance of a young woman, Yvonne O'Neil Draper, whom he remembered as "extremely competent" and who herself remembered that Smith "wrote beautifully." But in

1961, he was happy to pass his registrarial functions on to a newly appointed lecturer in history, Don Rickard. Years later Draper, having filled several positions of increasing responsibility, became registrar herself.


Smith's name appeared among several whose appointment Ross announced at a meeting of the Board of Governors in late January. They included the librarian and poet Douglas Lochhead and the philosopher George Grant, both recruited from Dalhousie University, and Ross's friend John Seeley. A well-known sociologist, Seeley was the co-author of *Overwood Heights* (1956), the landmark study of suburban life in the Toronto suburb (as it then was) of Forest Hill. Ross also persuaded the historian Edgar Melnikis to come to York. A former professor at the University of Toronto and national president of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, he was a real catch. "Many of our colleagues at the University of Toronto had expected York to use senior PhD students from their departments," Ross later wrote, "but when Professor Melnikis was appointed it was obvious we were winning high."

A month later, Ross announced the names of several more recruits, among them York's first female faculty member, the mathematician Alice Turner, a very young psychologist, Norman Endrey, and a veteran geographer, George Tatham. Especially Tatham, who had taught at the University of Toronto since 1949, was an inspired choice, a scholar who shared Ross's commitment to general education and, his biographer John Wadkinson writes, may have understood it better than Ross himself. "Wiry and fit, keenly interested in the welfare of the students, Tatham was a prominent man about campus. Until his retirement in 1978, he served the university in several positions, among them dean of the faculty, dean of students,

LEFT: One of York's first employees, York Draper, began her career as the registrar's assistant and eventually became registrar herself.

MIDDLE: The mathematician Alice Turner was the first woman appointed to the York faculty.

THE WAY MUST BE TRIED



THREE FIVE YEARS 1

He covers the challenges York has faced through the years – from the 1963 faculty “revolt,” to the troubled search for a successor to founding president Murray Ross, to the budgetary problems that led to the resignation of President David Slater, as well as its many innovations and triumphs – including bilingualism at Glendon College, the arrival of Osgoode Hall Law School and the phenomenal growth at York's Keele campus, including the Schulich School of Business. The philosophies that guide the faculties and York's groundbreaking research are explored in detail.

Horn's narrative is complemented by little-known archival images and contemporary photographs commissioned from renowned photographer Vince Pietropaolo. Prose and pictures chart the creation of an important Canadian institution whose commitment to solving real-world problems has led to important innovations in education and beyond.

SITE OF THE STUDENT CENTRE SCHEDULED OPENING FEBRUARY 1995



ing, designed by Raymond Moriyama, began along The Pond Road between Ian Macdonald Boulevard and Seneca Lane.

In the early years of the new century there was a further burst of construction. The Computer Science and Engineering Building (2001) filled in the space between Ferguson and Seneca. The Technology Enhanced Learning Building, a facility shared with Seneca College and constructed with funds in part obtained from the Superfund program, was completed west of Seneca Lane in 2003. The William Small Centre, housing Security Services and the Computing Commons, with a parking garage attached, opened in 2003 east of Stong College and south of the new Chemistry Building. By that year the Student Services Centre and Parking Garage was under construction, as was the Recell Centre, built for Tennis Canada close to Black Creek south of Shearham Drive. The centre, which alternates with the Uniplex Stadium in Montreal in hosting the annual men's and women's Rogers Cup (the Canadian open tennis championships), consists of a 12,000-seat stadium, a 5,000-seat grandstand court, and sixteen other courts. These facilities were completed in 2004, as was the Pond Road Residence. The Tat McKeown Physical Education Centre was expanded in 2005. In 2008 the Sherman Health Sciences Centre was under construction on the site of the old Ice Palace. On the south campus, Tribecca Communities has been building a planned housing development consisting of 536 dwellings called the Village at York University.

Back in 1985, the Keele campus resembled a sprawling suburb more than anything else. An excess of open spaces made walking around it a thoroughly unpleasant experience in winter: the words "windwept" and "Siberia" have come easily to the lips of people interviewed for this book. By the time the second of the Accolade buildings opened in 2006, however, the campus had been built up and looked rather like a sizable town. The comparison is apt. Given that enrolment is now approximately fifty thousand, and that the faculty and administrative and support staff number over seven thousand, the Keele campus has a Yorkville population larger than the central Ontario town of Belleville. And just as towns are friendlier to pedestrians than suburbs, so the campus of today is more agree-

LEFT: Robert Castle and Mervyn Macdonald await the construction of the Student Centre.

MIDDLE: Helen and George Varti with an architect's drawing of Varti Hall, 1989.

RIGHT: Susan Mann was president and vice-chancellor from 1992 to 1997.




ics (in time he would serve on the Board of Governors), was "very happy with the structures that we had" and remembered with particular pleasure courses taught by George Dooney and an Australian immigrant, James Curt, who "was very young and very eager to help students."¹⁰ David Bell, another 1962 entrant (and later dean of graduate studies and then environmental studies), said that York had "the best scholarship program in the province" at the time, and that attracted some excellent students. Moreover, young academics "had time for students," and a "really terrific" student life was one result. He recalled with great pleasure tutorials in which he and Gorbett met two-on-one with Laurel Bulloff.¹¹

Rephrasing about the French Revolution, William Wordsworth exclaimed: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven."¹² It requires little exaggeration to apply this sentiment to York's

first class. Like most freshmen, they took to university life with gusto, and because they were all in first year there was none of that knowing to upper-year students that is a normal part of the freshman's experience. "We were like prima donna," McGee recalled, "we felt very special."¹³ Clara Thomas, appointed to the English Department in 1966, used similar words in her memoirs. The first class "had been treated as such a special breed and with so much press publicity," she wrote, "that they were notably inclined to prima donna behaviour."¹⁴ One of those students, John Court, commented: "Dunn straight, Clara, and still proud of it."¹⁵

The half-dozen faculty members surviving from that first year remembered a small, cozy group, housed in a mansion that had just enough space to provide offices, with one large room in which classes and special functions took place. Among these was the "Tea and Talk" series, which brought distinguished visitors to the campus and created an opportunity for students to talk with them. The early speakers included the novelist Moseley Callaghan (his son Barry would teach in Atkinson College), the theatre director Mavor Moore (later a member of the Faculty of Fine Arts), and



YORK PAST AND PRESENT 107

THREE FIVE YEARS 7