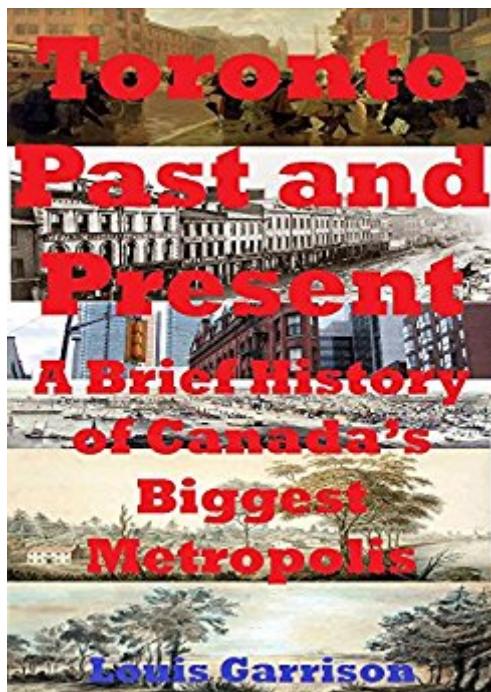


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Toronto Past And Present: A Brief History Of Canada's Biggest Metropolis



Synopsis

Toronto, Canada's biggest city, had humble beginnings. The city began its existence in the 1790s as a small, backwater, colonial administrative centre. Fast-forward more than 200 years later and it is a thriving metropolis with several million inhabitants. Toronto was founded in the 1790s, on land recently purchased from the First Nations Mississauga people. Originally named York, it became the capital of the newly created colony of Upper Canada (modern-day southern Ontario). The small town of York was captured and burned by American troops during the war of 1812. But it quickly recovered from this setback, and grew steadily throughout the 19th century, becoming the main city of English-speaking Canada. Growth continued through the 20th century. Physical growth was particularly great in the postwar era, when newfound prosperity, access to automobiles, and immigration led to the explosive growth of new suburbs around the city. By the late 1970s, Toronto had begun to surpass Montreal, which had traditionally been Canada's largest city, in size and economic importance. Even before the city was founded in the 1790s, what is now Toronto was frequented by many different groups of people. The area was covered by glaciers during the Ice Age, but as the ice receded indigenous American people moved into what was then a sub arctic tundra-like climate, complete with animals like woolly mammoths and caribou. Over time the climate warmed and the tundra creatures were replaced by the kinds of animals and vegetation that are found in the wild areas of the region today, such as deer and deciduous trees. By the European middle ages, Iroquoian-speaking farmers were growing corn in southern Ontario. Some established relatively large villages in what is now Toronto. But the Iroquoian farmers moved their villages every few years, as the soil began to lose its fertility. When Europeans first arrived, they found Iroquoian villages in what is now Toronto. Later on, however, for reasons that are unclear, the Iroquoian farmers disappeared from the Toronto area, and were replaced by the non-agricultural Algonquian-speaking Mississauga people. It was Mississauga chiefs who would sell the land that now makes up Toronto to the British in the 1780s.

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