

## TORONTO



COLIN VAUGHAN

# Myth, merits of the Rock

**O**N Friday, two local worthies dallied on a curb in Yorkville arguing the merits of the Rock. Even at this early stage, the Rock has become a centrepiece, a talking point, an attraction.

The Rock, of course, is the 500-tonne granite outcrop now being swung into place at Cumberland Park, a wondrous transformation of parking lot into park, a metamorphosis of eyesore into eye-opener.

The two antagonists argued on. The one, a besuited business type, was expansive and was certain the Rock and the park were just the fillip a depressed Yorkville needed in these depressing times. The other could only whine on about the cost: "The money should have been used to create jobs." Precisely.

The Rock represents about \$283,000 of the cost of the spectacular \$3-million park now taking shape. The billion-year-old Rock itself cost a mere \$1,500, the amount paid to a surprised Gravenhurst-area farmer after a crowd of crazy city folk descended on his property and let him know they coveted one chunk of his share of the Canadian Shield. As anyone who has landscaped a yard and hankered for a granite outcrop at the bottom of the garden will tell you, \$1,500 is a bargain. A rock-bottom price, so to speak.

If the naysayers who argue for jobs before art would stop long enough to catch a breath, they might just figure out they have completely missed the point. The rest of that \$283,000 represents jobs — the jobs of those who cut out, loaded, transported and are now reassembling the Rock in its new urban setting.

As the two adversaries drifted off, still arguing, rubbernecker, paused to absorb the lesson of the Rock. They looked over the shoulder of a watercolourist with easel and paint box — "I record the urban experience" — already rendering his version of the Rock. A local property owner stopped by to complain, at first, about the cost. He wandered off marvelling at "our beautiful park" and making a pitch for a new opera House. Art triumphant.

No need to dwell here on the mythic symbolism of the Rock. The Rock upon which the True Church is founded. Or the place of the Rock in the Canadian consciousness. Suffice it to recall that David prevailed over the Philistine with sling and stone.

Why the sudden mean-minded outburst? We have rocks all over. There are those planted in the Ryerson outdoor rink and others incorporated in the memorial to Chinese railway workers near SkyDome. How did these rocks sneak in with nary a murmur?

All of which put me in mind of the time when Phil Givens fought, and lost, a mayoral contest over the esthetics of the new City Hall. Passions ran high. The building looks like a silo, some said. Henry Moore's *Archer* was likened to bronze scrap. When the dust had settled, the rubbernecker of that era dropped by, took in the scene and concluded, "Not bad." An election lost, maybe, but a giant gain in civic pride and maturity.

The Rock: magnificent. The park: superb.

And to cap it off, these lines from, appropriately, T. S. Eliot's *Choruses from 'The Rock'*: "The endless cycle of idea and action, Endless invention, endless experiment, Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence."

Amen.

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