

Local Boy makes Good

John Croft 1866 – 1904 Was born in Sutterby, Linconshire, England, and one of nine children

His mother was Emma Croft nee Snell 1844 – 1926 who was also born in Sutterby.

His Father (George Croft 1840 - 1900) came from Ormsby which is close by Sutterby and his Grandfather (George Croft 1818 – 1869) is buried in the churchyard at Sutterby.

The family moved to Sheffield, Yorkshire and then went to Canada in 1881, settling in the Port Hope, Ontario area. On July 31st 1885 John married Eliza Jane Cornish, they had five children. The family moved to Toronto Ontario around 1900. In Toronto John worked with the Canada Printing Ink Company before getting into the construction and demolition business.

He became the only causality of the Great Fire of Toronto Canada 1904 as detailed below :-

On the evening of April 19, 1904, a night watchman noticed flames in an elevator shaft of the E&S Currie Building at 58-60 Wellington Street West. Unfortunately, most of its neighbouring buildings were made of highly flammable wood and designed in ways that fuelled fires. The blaze quickly spread. Fire-fighters from as far as Buffalo assisted Toronto fire-fighters, with teams from London and Peterborough arriving too late to battle the flames. By 4:30 a.m., the fire was declared to be under control.

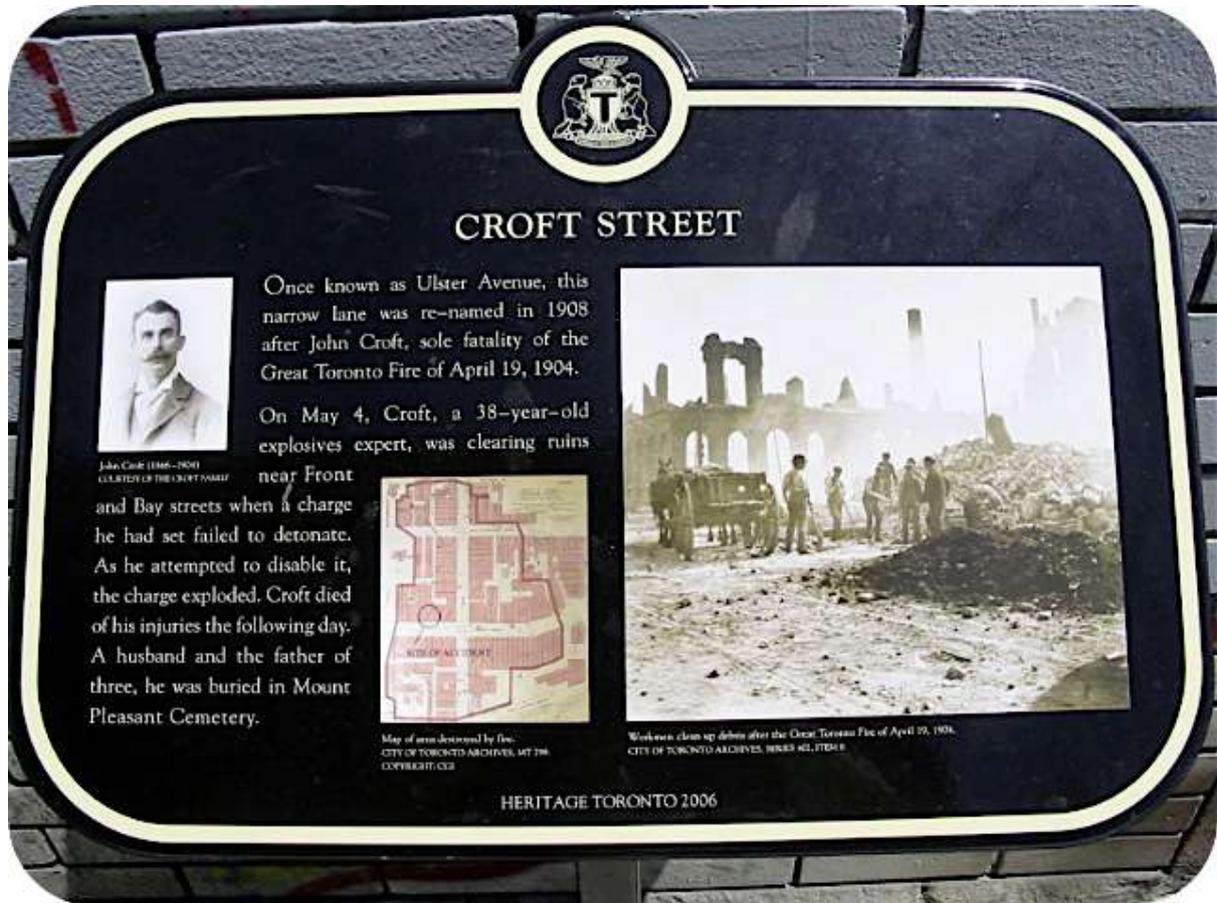
Insurance companies and city inspectors quickly assessed the condition of the damaged buildings and prepared a list of properties deemed too unsafe to remain standing. Property owners received notices asking them to bring down their walls immediately or allow the city to demolish the structures. No objections were received.

Over the next few weeks, safecrackers were hired to rescue important documents from the ruins, followed by demolition teams equipped with dynamite. Among the men hired for the demolition was Parliament Street resident John Croft, a recent immigrant from England who had occasionally assisted dynamiters in coal mines in his native land. He was assigned to the [W.J. Gage Building](#) at 54-58 Front Street West. His team was not given a storage battery to set off the dynamite and had to resort to lighting long fuses then running for cover. This worked for the first two explosions that were set on May 4th. The third try proved unlucky for Croft.

The following morning, *The Globe* reported on the incident and Croft's condition:

Croft, with two assistants, William Goudge and A. Ramsden, had set off 30 blasts yesterday morning and at 1 o'clock placed three charges under of portion of the W.J. Gage & Co. wall. Two were exploded safely, but the third fuse, set for a minute and a half, was slow. After waiting for some time, Croft went up the wall to investigate, and as he did the blast went off. The flesh on his right arm was torn to shreds, and he sustained a severe scalp wound and a broken rib. The sight of the left eye was destroyed.

Later that morning Croft died from the shock, leaving behind a wife and three children. He was [buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery](#). Four years later, the former Ulster Avenue was renamed in his honour. The mural was created a century later,



John Croft standing



Road Sign