

Heritage Matters

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Ontario's theatrical heritage in the spotlight

In this issue:

Perspectives: The Elgin Theatre at 100 | From Stratford to Shaw: Transforming smalltown Ontario | Bringing vaudeville back into the limelight | Treading the boards



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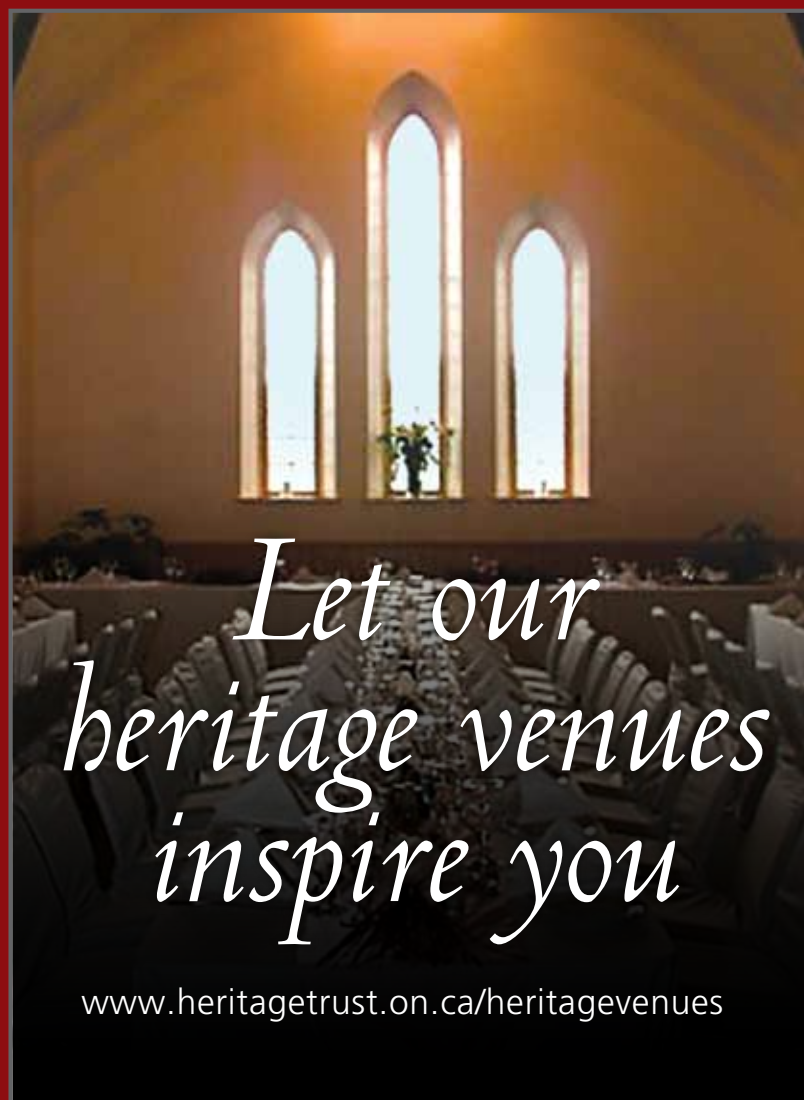
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A message from the Chairman



This edition of Heritage Matters marks an important anniversary. This year, Toronto's Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre – the last operating double-decker theatre in the world – turns 100. Over the decades, theatrical forms may have changed – from vaudeville and burlesque to musical theatre and operas to concerts and feature films – but the bricks and mortar of these resplendent theatres still resonate with the voices of past performers and audiences.

The story of the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres is just one of the many that make up Ontario's rich theatrical history. Local performances in town halls or courthouses – and even in local barns or open

fields – have entertained audiences for generations. As our province became more urban, purpose-built theatres began to appear. In some instances, those theatres have vanished over the decades as a result of urban expansion and redevelopment, the introduction and success of cinema houses, or neglect and abandonment. And sometimes, too, other buildings have been adapted for use as new theatrical venues. For example, the Toronto Dance Theatre and the Annex Theatre both occupy former churches, as does the Peterborough Theatre Guild.

Of course, in many communities, theatres have emerged as driving forces for jobs and improved local economies – one only needs to think of the Grand Theatre in London, the Ottawa Little Theatre, the Magnus Theatre in Thunder Bay or, of course, Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre and Massey Hall. Smalltown Ontario, too, has benefited, with theatres contributing to cultural identities and serving as economic engines. Stratford and Niagara-on-the-Lake are two examples of communities largely defined by their theatre heritage.

We hope you enjoy these stories that reflect the value and rich diversity of Ontario's theatre heritage, and that they may inspire you to join – in some way – the celebration of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre's 100th anniversary!

Tom Symons

Thomas H.B. Symons, C.C., O.Ont, FRSC, LLD, D.Litt., D.U., D.Cn.L., FRGS, KSS

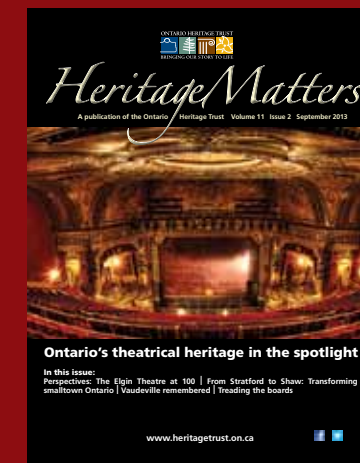
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Cover image: Toronto's Elgin Theatre at 100. (Photo: Edith Levy)

Feature story

Ontario's theatrical heritage in the spotlight



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Digging Spadina House

By Dena Doroszenko



Learning to record the colours of soil.

Every July, the Ontario Heritage Trust and the City of Toronto run a joint public archaeology program – Adventures in Archaeology – at the Spadina Museum. This year, the Trust continued the tradition of showing budding archaeologists, aged 10 to 14, the steps involved in digging into our past. Participants learned how to excavate and record what they found, and participated in artifact reconstruction, washing and sorting the artifacts they had excavated. They also attended artifact workshops. A field trip to the Toronto Archives provided participants with an appreciation of the neighbourhood’s history, as well as learning how written records help tell the story of people and communities. Excavation trenches were placed in an area that has been excavated for several years in hopes of determining the northern and western extent of a 19th-century building dating to the era of the Baldwin family (c. 1818-65). Several features were recorded. Discerning their true nature, however, was difficult this year due to the presence of extensive root systems from apple trees in the vicinity of the trenches. Nevertheless, it seems that there may be a boundary for the building in the western limits in one trench, while the other was inconclusive. Over 1,700 artifacts were recovered – including window glass fragments, iron nails and ceramics – providing an excellent and fun opportunity for young people to understand the significance of archaeology and to learn more about this site and its place in history.

Dena Doroszenko is the Archaeologist with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Celebrating Emancipation Day 2013

By Steven Cook

Emancipation Day commemorates the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act that became law on August 1, 1834. Since the passing of this act, which freed more than 700,000 enslaved Blacks throughout the British Empire, Emancipation Day has been an important expression of identity for the Black community. It provides an opportunity to celebrate the end of slavery in Canada and the British Empire, and acts as an enduring reminder of the tenacity and vision of early abolitionists and refugee slaves. Their legacy is our pride in a free Ontario. Sites such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site in Dresden tell the rich history of African-Canadians – from their trials and hardships to the triumph of emancipation and their everlasting contributions to Ontario’s heritage. Natasha Henry, author of two books about Emancipation Day in Canada, was one of many presenters at this year’s event at Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site on August 3. “Commemorating Emancipation Day reveals the struggles and accomplishments of African-Canadians to achieve equality, the efforts from which all Ontarians benefit today,” said Henry. Throughout the day, guests were entertained by soulful vocalists Jennifer Harvey and Juno Award-winner Sonia Collymore. Self-taught drummer and songwriter Odel Johnson joined artist, producer and radio host Kobena Aquaa-Harrison for a drumming clinic. Guests were encouraged to bring their own percussion instrument and join them onstage. And Toronto comedian Jay Martin’s unique take on growing up as a young Black man in Canada kept the atmosphere light and lively. The RBC Foundation has been a supporter of Emancipation Day at Uncle Tom’s Cabin for the past six years. Their support allows the site to provide exceptional entertainment and engaging speakers throughout the day-long event, which is free to the public. Through their funding, the



Members of the Junior Praise Choir from the Lamb of God Miracle Ministry entertain guests at the ninth annual Emancipation Day celebrations at Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site. (Photo: Jessica Glasgow)

RBC Foundation has demonstrated its commitment to supporting social development and diversity within our communities. Steven Cook is the site manager at Uncle Tom’s Cabin Historic Site, which is owned and operated by the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Partnering for conservation

By Erin Semande

The Ontario Heritage Trust has a number of conservation tools available to protect and preserve heritage throughout the province. Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements between heritage property owners and the Trust that protect significant features of a property. Recently, the Trust and the City of Toronto completed an easement agreement to protect the provincially significant John McKenzie House in North York. Located at 34 Parkview Avenue, John McKenzie House is owned by the City of Toronto and leased to the Ontario Historical Society (OHS) as its head office. The easement will protect the impressive Edwardian classical-style house constructed in 1913, as well as the attached coach house (1918), milk house (1907), stable (1915), the McKenzie Parkette and community garden. The house is representative of a significant economic pattern that occurred across the province – the subdivision, sale and development of farmland to residential neighbourhoods. In 1912, John McKenzie began dividing his farmland for development and created one of the earliest Willowdale subdivisions. McKenzie’s large Edwardian classical house was one of the first to be constructed in the newly surveyed subdivision. McKenzie continued to farm on a smaller scale, retaining a milk house and constructing a stable – two buildings that hearken to North York’s farming roots. Descendents of the McKenzie family lived in the house until the 1970s. By the 1980s, it was in the hands of a developer and then the City of North York, which planned to demolish the buildings for road construction. The OHS lobbied to retain the buildings and the City agreed to relocate the proposed road. In 1993, the OHS proposed the restoration of the property as its headquarters, which resulted in a long-term lease agreement with the City. Today, much of the area surrounding John McKenzie House is heavily developed with highrise condominiums lining nearby Yonge Street. The easement will ensure that the heritage features of the property – including the buildings and its open space – are preserved for present and future generations. Erin Semande is a Researcher with the Trust.

With 2013 marking both the 125th anniversary of the Ontario Historical Society (OHS) and the 100th anniversary of the John McKenzie House, this easement is indeed a timely victory for all Ontarians. It represents an important step forward for the OHS in its over 20-year campaign to preserve this valuable heritage asset for current and future generations. – Rob Leverty, Executive Director, Ontario Historical Society



The 1913 John McKenzie House.

Treading the boards By Thomas Wicks



Larger centres such as Stratford, Cobourg and Carleton Place (shown here) included performance venues within their civic buildings.

Performance venues command an important presence in Ontario communities. They tell us about the aspirations of the people who built them, and they reflect the development of the province as a whole.

Starting in the late 18th century when Upper Canada was established, the formation of military settlements created the first ready audiences capable of making theatre viable. Although the development was slow in this early period, the preconditions required to give rise to performance venues had taken root. As the population increased, so too did the demand for live entertainment.

Although live theatre was an irregular activity in the early 19th century, American touring companies, by the 1820s, began visiting towns and villages in Ontario as part of their tours. As settlement began to reach farther into new territory and rapid industrialization led to a network of railway lines, reliable communication and travel opened the province up to the itinerant theatre troupes common in the period. By the late 19th century, there were about 250 touring companies on the road in Ontario.

In the second half of the 19th century, with urban expansion and its associated civic pride, town halls became more than just council chambers, and included jails, firehalls and performance venues. Many of these structures and their theatre spaces still exist behind edifices both modest and grand. Town halls in Acton, Aylmer, Clinton and Woodstock are significant examples. These structures – built in architectural styles

including Italianate, Second Empire and neoclassical – included large assembly spaces still in continuous use.

Larger centres such as Stratford, Cobourg and Carleton Place incorporated performance venues within their civic buildings, too. Stratford's Queen Anne-revival city hall – by architects George W. King and John Siddall, constructed in 1899 – and Cobourg's Victoria Hall in the English Palladian style – by architect Kivas Tully, completed in 1860 – include impressive multifunctional performance spaces. Carleton Place's town hall in the Richardsonian Romanesque style – by architect George W. King – includes a second-floor auditorium that features a decorative pressed-metal, barrel-vault ceiling with floral motifs, a balcony and a rare raked stage.

When Toronto built its classical revival St. Lawrence Hall in 1850 to the designs of provincially significant architect William Thomas, it included the city's largest performance venue at the time, attracting the internationally acclaimed Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind.

Civic pride and a growing hunger for entertainment set the stage for some of the province's earliest purpose-built theatres. The former St. Marys Opera House is one such example. The three-storey limestone building – designed in the Gothic revival style and constructed in 1879-80 – is an impressive early example. Converted into a flour mill in the 1920s and then into apartments in the 1980s, this structure still dominates St. Marys

waterfront. The conversion of this theatre also shows the adaptable nature that many early venues possessed.

Courthouses became venues for theatre as well and Niagara-on-the-Lake's neoclassical courthouse, also designed by William Thomas in 1846, houses a theatre within a converted courtroom. This space was used for the earliest performances of the Shaw Festival in 1962 and continues to be used by the Festival to this day.

Adaptability, however, was often a two-way street with a number of other historical structures being converted into performance venues. Cobourg's Firehall Theatre, for example, is housed within the Second Empire-style former Second Street Fire Hall, constructed in 1882.

Churches have also been successfully converted into theatres with Galt's First Delta Baptist Church, designed in a mixture of Romanesque and Italianate styles by architect Thomas Boughton in 1887, converted to a theatre in 1982. Similarly, St. Brigid's Church in Ottawa and the Century Church Theatre in Hillsburgh have recently found new uses hosting various public performances within their walls.

Even barns have been repurposed as theatres – as seen in the 4th Line Theatre in Millbrook, which provides the setting for a series of summer performances, a nod to the tradition of outdoor theatre.

Seasonal venues continue to thrive, including the Kee to Bala, a dance hall and performance space for live bands in Muskoka, and various bandshells erected in community parks across Ontario. Port Hope's bandshell, conceived as a memorial to the town's fallen soldiers in 1945, is one such example, as is Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition bandshell, which was inspired by the art deco Hollywood Bowl and constructed in 1936.

All of these venues attest to the importance of live performance space in the evolution of Ontario's communities. As a reflection of the history of Ontario, they retain their value not just from the architectural, historical and contextual significance, but also from their ongoing use and existence.

Thomas Wicks is the Heritage Planner with the Trust.



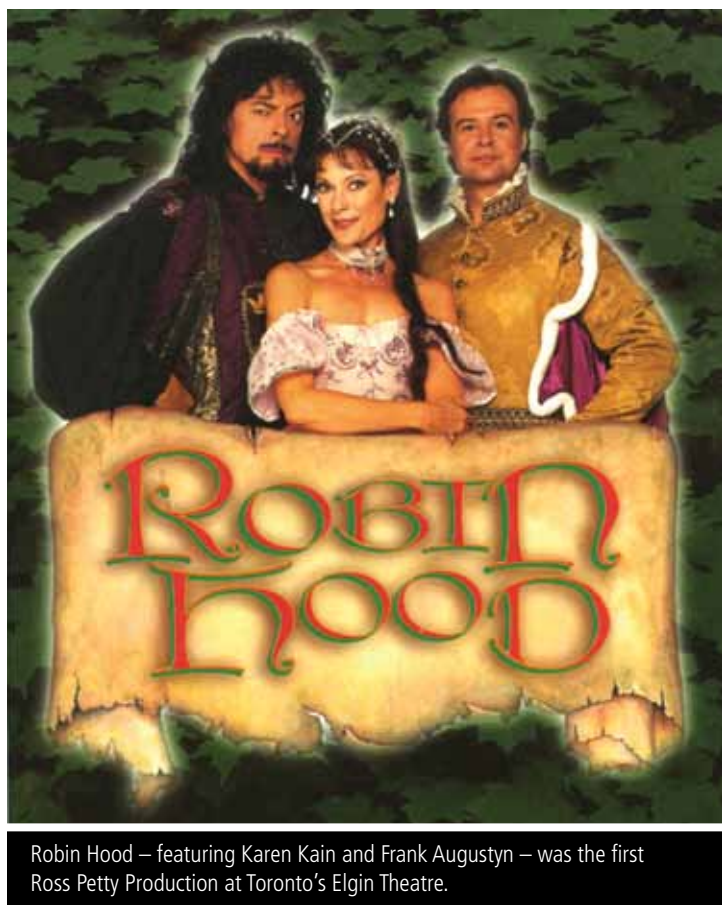
Churches have also been successfully converted into theatres. St. Brigid's Church in Ottawa (shown here) recently found new use hosting various public performances within its walls.



Stratford's Queen Anne-revival city hall features an impressive multifunctional performance space, shown here.

The evolution of the panto

By Ellen Flowers and Gordon Pim



Robin Hood – featuring Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn – was the first Ross Petty Production at Toronto’s Elgin Theatre.

It is always entertaining to watch a troupe of actors sing, dance and throw their audiences into hysterics. This is something we witness every year at the Elgin Theatre when Ross Petty Productions repackages a classic fairytale and offers up a comedic pantomime that leaves audiences rolling in the aisles.

The pantomime – or panto as it has become known – has been making people laugh for generations. It is a theatrical form with a long history of slapstick, bawdy humour, cross-dressing characters and often raucous audience participation. Grounded in classical theatre, there is evidence of pantomime having been performed in ancient Greek and Roman times. Today’s panto takes elements from the Italian *commedia dell’arte* (several of the characters – Harlequin and Columbine – and traditional comi-tragic storylines still resonate in modern pantomime), mummers’ plays from the Middle Ages (British folk plays performed at holidays with both religious overtones and the coarse humour and stage fights we associate with pantos today), and 16th- and 17th-century theatrical forms. One can argue that Shakespeare himself – who was so fond of putting characters in gender-bending roles facing often outrageous plotlines – was drawing on the traditions of pantomime.

The panto that we see on world stages today has been fine-tuned largely by the British, who, in the 19th century, replaced some of the classical tales with increasingly popular European stories. Celebrity actors of the time, David Garrick and Joseph Grimaldi, transformed the pantomime into a hilarious clowning phenomenon. With comic antics to entertain both young and old – and bawdy language to provide secret

guffaws for the adults – the panto became an annual tradition that has, over the years, helped define the British sense of humour. Even gripping events in the daily press – like the 1605 Gunpowder Plot (the attempted assassination of King James I) – spawned pantomimes that wove the story of Guy Fawkes into the national consciousness.

In Ontario’s theatrical history, pantomimes have played their parts in shaping our theatrical landscape. Toronto’s Royal Alexandra Theatre opened in 1907 – and its opening play was, not surprisingly, a pantomime. When the Orillia Opera House was nearly destroyed by fire in 1915, the subsequent rebuilding and reopening in 1917 was marked by a pantomime. And now, since 1996, Petty’s annual panto at the Elgin Theatre has become an anticipated part of the holiday season for many.

“The popularity of panto,” notes Petty, “comes from the unique element of audience interaction with the performers and ad libs about daily news events. There’s as much entertainment value for adults as for children.”

The modern pantomime continues to be an important part of our theatrical repertoire. And given the popularity of these annual productions for celebrities who clamour for an opportunity to bring “play” back to the stage, the panto shows no signs of disappearing – despite all the “boos” and “hisses.”

Ellen Flowers is the Manager of Marketing and Communications at Toronto’s Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre. Gordon Pim is the Senior Web Communications and Marketing Specialist at the Trust.



The Elgin Theatre. (Photo: John Allman)

Looking back by Wayne Kelly

When theatre entrepreneur Marcus Loew brought Loew’s Theatrical Enterprises to Toronto in 1912, he envisioned an “intricate, money-making machine,” a double-decker theatre designed, decorated and equipped to be profitable by showing films and vaudeville acts. Vaudeville shows – songs, dances, gymnastics, ventriloquists, farces and light drama, from 10 to 15 minutes each – ran continuously in the lower theatre. In the upper theatre, the same show was presented once an evening to reserved, higher-priced seats, theoretically bringing two audiences to each show, thereby doubling the box office take.

To make his dream a reality, Loew purchased property in the theatre block between Yonge and Victoria streets, north of Queen Street, and enlisted the help of leading theatre architect Thomas White Lamb to design his Canadian flagship. Loew’s Yonge Street and Winter Garden theatres was the 48th theatre project designed by Lamb, and the first double-decker one in Canada.

The classical architecture of these theatres was typical of vaudeville stages, set apart by its lavish interiors. The lower theatre (the Yonge Street theatre), renowned for its “warmth of colour and coziness,” was decorated in modern French Renaissance style – with gilt, imitation marble, red damask and ornamental plasterwork

of festooned grapes, ribbons and musical instruments. The Winter Garden, inspired by the European tradition of rooftop theatres, was enchanting. Its walls were decorated with garden murals. Beech leaves and branches were suspended from the ceiling, illuminated by every colour of twinkling light, above which floated a peaceful moon that was said to “suffuse its rays over the whole fairylike picture.”

The lower and upper theatres opened in December 15, 1913 and February 16, 1914 respectively. Both theatres presented vaudeville acts and silent moving pictures until 1928, when the Winter Garden was closed and Loew’s Yonge Street transitioned from vaudeville shows and silent movies to talkies, culminating in the golden era of moviegoing. Throughout its life, the theatre witnessed significant periods of Canadian history, and served a cross-section of Toronto society and people over time – from the First World War and the Great Depression to the Second World War and post-war economic boom.

After the lower theatre closed in 1981, the Ontario Heritage Trust acquired the building, restoring and upgrading it. The Elgin and Winter Garden theatres were designated as National Historic Sites in 1982, the double-decker complex being recognized as provincially and nationally significant for its architecture. The building is one of the few surviving theatres designed by Thomas Lamb, built during an



Popular events, like Canada's Walk of Fame, close down Yonge Street. Inset: Out front of Loew's Yonge Street theatre in the 1920s. (Photo: Toronto Transit Commission Archives)

experimental period in the history of theatre architecture. Its layout combines the 19th-century rooftop garden theatre with the 20th-century movie palace – marking the transition from vaudeville shows to sound movies. Today, the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre is the last of its kind in operation.

Wayne Kelly is the Manager of Public Education and Community Development at the Trust.

Deluxe redux: Loew's Yonge Street Theatre reimaged

by Romas Bubelis
The autumn of 1989 was a remarkable time for Toronto's theatrical community. Ambitious restoration plans for the Elgin, Winter Garden and Pantages theatres had been realized and these dormant historical theatres once again opened their doors to the public. Together with the venerable Massey Hall, this collection of performance spaces was collectively known as Toronto's Theatre Block. It was in this context that the renewed Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre (EWG) had been conceived.

In 1981, when the Ontario Heritage Trust stepped in and purchased the theatre, the Winter Garden had been abandoned for more than 50 years and the Elgin had just closed, creating a vacant building under threat. But the Trust had a plan – to revitalize the facility as a commercially viable heritage, cultural and economic resource for the performing arts, in support of Ontario's growing indigenous commercial theatre industry.

The inherent design of the EWG presented challenges. The double-decker theatres were essentially vaudeville houses for continuous performance with no intermissions. Generous lobbies, washrooms and other amenities were considered unnecessary when the building was designed in 1913. The Grand Staircase to the upper theatre, despite its grandeur, carried with it concerns about patron comfort and safety. Back of house, an old stair tower rising 62 feet (19 metres) provided access to a warren of 23 small dressing rooms designed for actors scurrying between two simultaneous shows. In short, the historical theatre building, despite the opulence of its front-of-house spaces, lacked the basic infrastructure required for modern theatre production.

Project Architect Mandel Sprachman provided the needed amenities by incorporating the "cascading lobbies" – a series of new, interconnected terrace levels equipped with escalators and stairs, rising



Inside the Winter Garden Theatre. (Photo: Josh McSweeney)

in stepped fashion above the Yonge Street lobby, connecting the various orchestra, balcony and mezzanine levels of the two theatre spaces. A new eight-storey addition was constructed adjacent to the theatre's fly-towers, providing modern production, loading, dressing and rehearsal spaces. Additional administrative and lounge areas were provided through the excavation of a partial basement.

The most visible and anticipated aspect of the project was the restoration of the two theatre interiors. The Elgin had suffered extensive alterations through its declining years of use as a movie theatre. The proscenium arch had been destroyed to accommodate a wider screen and the opera boxes had disappeared. With the original architectural drawings and archival photographs as reference points, the interior of the Elgin with its gilt ornamental plaster surfaces, red damask wall coverings and imitation marble features was painstakingly restored or reconstructed.

By contrast, the Winter Garden had remained a virtual time capsule since its closing in 1927. Its one-of-a-kind interior of scenographic, garden-themed murals needed only to be cleaned and touched up. The hanging leaf ceiling with patio lanterns was replicated using local beech trees and the missing theatre seating was replaced. The assembly of rare trade skills needed to perform this work spurred a renewed interest in long-forgotten architectural decorative arts.

The reimagining and restoration of the EWG was the largest project of its kind in Canada. Today, it remains a unique example of Ontario's theatrical heritage.

Romas Bubelis is an Architect with the Trust.

Remount: Revisiting Loew's Yonge Street and Winter Garden theatres

by Brett Randall
Julius Bernstein, one of the first General Managers of Loew's Yonge Street and Winter Garden theatres, would find both differences and similarities between today's Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre and the grand building he managed in 1913. For more than 30 years, Bernstein oversaw the transition of the theatres from a populist vaudeville house to a cinema that showed first-run movies such as *Gone with the Wind* in full colour Cinemascope with surround sound.

While much of what Bernstein managed has been restored, he would still no doubt be impressed by today's plush seating with ample leg room, better sightlines, improved audience amenities and production support facilities that performers and technicians in his day could only dream of. While much of the technical side of theatrical performances is automated, audiences have changed very little. People still gasp in their seats when an actor "magically" disappears through a trap door in the stage and then reappears later in a ghostly form through smoke and mirrors – just as they did in 1913. And, indeed, just as they've done in theatres throughout the ages.

Not only has the Ontario Heritage Trust successfully restored Marcus Loew and Thomas Lamb's 1913 vision, it has also adapted the theatres to meet the needs and expectations of today's audiences. Each theatre sits comfortably in the intermediate range offered by Toronto theatres, with the Elgin being large enough to stage full-scale musicals, and the Winter Garden a bit smaller but still large enough to be a stepping-stone venue for emerging talent.



The Davies Takacs Lobby greets visitors to this resplendent theatre centre.

Today, the Elgin Theatre is regarded by patrons and performers alike as one of the best venues in North America. Its ambience allows an audience to appreciate theatrical talent at its best. Where else could Opera Atelier so successfully achieve the accolades it receives for its brilliant productions of baroque opera? Or Ross Petty present his popular family musicals for nearly 20 years? Or the legendary Christopher Plummer portray earlier legend, John Barrymore, so convincingly? Patrons of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), too, return every year to spend 10 days at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre, which is regarded as one of the best TIFF venues.

Upstairs from the Elgin, the Winter Garden Theatre has emerged as one of the best mid-sized concert venues in Toronto for jazz, blues, new music and stand-up comedy due to its superb acoustics. It, too, has become a venue for TIFF, following the installation of a new surround sound system. It may have taken nearly 100 years, but talkies have finally arrived at the Winter Garden!

Were Julius Bernstein, Marcus Loew and Thomas Lamb to walk through the Yonge Street entrance today, they would instantly feel at home. The marvel that they created and managed still thrills its audiences as much as the shows they've come to see, and continues to make that unique experience one that keeps theatre alive.

Brett Randall is the General Manager of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre.

Looking forward by Beth Hanna

Walk with me through the lobby of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre. Feel the anticipation as we pass the mirror-lined, columned entranceway. For me, there is a growing sense of wonder of being in a special place.

We pass through the stained-glass doors towards the theatres themselves. We can continue forward to the magnificent Elgin Theatre, filled with classical motifs, rich gilded finishes and marble-inspired scagliola. Or up seven storeys to the Winter Garden – an atmospheric theatre with trailing vines, beech leaves and hand-painted garden murals.

We settle into our seats, aware of the patrons around us, to share this live-theatre experience. The curtain rises and the magic begins. This personal connection between the audience, performer and the stage is not available in most art forms. And so it has been for 100 years.

But what about the next 100 years? How do we ensure that this experience continues into the 21st century – the age of digital media and reality television? Connecting the audience not just to the stage, but to the building itself. To conserve this National Historic Site is about more than safeguarding the building and its special architectural features – although being good stewards is a critical part of the Ontario Heritage Trust's role. This is the last operating double-decker theatre in the world – a huge part of our cultural identity as a city, a province and a nation.

Conserving the theatres also includes telling the story of how they were created and for whom, the story of the performers and audiences that have come together over time. They are inextricably linked to other performance spaces, like Massey Hall, and form part of the living memory and culture of our community. Conserving them is about sharing our understanding of why they are valued and protected, how they enrich the quality of the urban landscape, and the unique role they play in inspiring artists.

How do we provide the public with new and innovative opportunities to interact with the space, with the opportunity to experience live theatre, and to understand better how both have evolved over time? Located on one of Canada's busiest streets, with 65,000 square feet (6,039 square metres) of programming space, how do we open the doors in new ways to more diverse audiences? Our Yonge Street neighbourhood is changing, with residential units blending with the developing commercial, university and retail landscape, with the theatre centre evolving accordingly.

For many years, the Elgin and Winter Garden Volunteers have offered twice-weekly tours, lifting the curtain to the world behind the scenes. Through the generosity of the RBC Foundation and working in partnership with Ryerson and OCAD universities, the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres, in addition to being a stage and screen venue, will add gallery space, featuring the work of emerging visual artists. Similar collaborations are being explored that will further enliven the celebration and interpretation of this site, creating a vibrant arts, cultural and hospitality hub.

These vibrant theatres make the past tangible, relevant and understandable – a truly inspiring setting for music, theatre, dance and film, for visual arts and cultural expressions of all types. So come, explore and stay awhile. The magic awaits.

Beth Hanna is the Executive Director of the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Second run: A new life for an Ontario theatre

By Pamela Cain

Since the early 1970s, Magnus Theatre in Thunder Bay has made a commitment to urban renewal and the reuse and repurposing of community buildings. The theatre has occupied facilities that have ranged from "very thoroughly condemned" to challenging at best. Despite these spaces, Magnus has been able to develop theatre in northwestern Ontario and Thunder Bay specifically.

Burton Lancaster established the theatre company in 1971, sharing "The Spike" – a two-storey, brick-façaded east-end hovel, with the local amateur group – the Cambrian Players. Working from what was described as not much more than a storage and rehearsal room, Magnus Theatre was onstage and on the road – touring with Theatre North-West.

In 1974, Lancaster discovered the Slovensky Dom, an ethnic community hall constructed in the early 1900s in Thunder Bay's east end. The two-storey brick building was of unremarkable architecture, but the swelling roof in the rear inspired Lancaster, who set out to develop it into a theatre.

The hall was transformed and the flat floor raised to provide seating for 194 people. Even with a small lobby, a challenging stage and a filled basement, Magnus was to become the only professional theatre company between Winnipeg and Sudbury by 1977. By the mid-1980s, however, the shoebox Slovensky Dom was bursting at the seams.

The City of Thunder Bay offered an opportunity to participate in a multimillion-dollar 1,500-seat arts complex – but Magnus chose to remain close to its roots – "for drama needs closeness, the intimacy of the artists and the audience."

In 1983, the sale of the Central School, a heritage building in the Waverley Park heritage conservation district, presented an opportunity to

realize the Magnus in the Park theatre project. The Central School stood for years as a landmark on Algoma Street, sitting atop the hill overseeing the harbour below. Designed by architect Robert J. Edwards, the building was constructed in 1884 as the city's first permanent school in the community. The landmark featured a brick façade dominated by a central tower with a large wheel window and a 1901 addition that blended into the original structure.

Functioning as a school until 1965, the building was later used by the Board of Education and the city. Municipal heritage designation was secured in May 1983. In 1992, discussions arose concerning the reuse of the building and the fear that age and neglect might lead it to be condemned.

Central School stakeholders considered the proposal by Magnus as well as a condominium proposition. After Magnus's plan was approved, the theatre undertook a four-year fundraising campaign (1997-2001) to offset a \$5.5-million renovation. Magnus opened its 30th anniversary season in 2001-02 in this transformed building. By renovating the original Central School for use as offices and administrative space, and adding a theatre at the back of the 1901 addition, Magnus finally had a state-of-the-art facility – the Dr. S. Penny Petrone Centre for the Performing Arts.

Pamela Cain is the Heritage Researcher for Thunder Bay's Heritage Advisory Committee. For more information on the city's heritage resources, visit www.thunderbay.ca/living/culture_and_heritage.



Magnus Theatre 2002. Photo: Thunder Bay City Archives. Inset: Central School Thunder Bay. From the collection of the Thunder Bay Museum.

From Stratford to Shaw: Transforming smalltown Ontario

By Ellen Flowers and Gordon Pim

It's hard to imagine either Stratford or Niagara-on-the-Lake being where they are today without their world-renowned theatre festivals. But, before these festivals opened their doors, both small towns had other identities entirely. By adapting to change, these communities avoided becoming outmoded or marginalized. Elements of each town's unique history, geography and architectural character helped make them ideal locations for their respective festivals.

Stratford, incorporated as a city in 1885, had already enjoyed a boom time. With a burgeoning manufacturing industry aided by the Canadian Pacific Railway that ran through and dominated the town, Stratford quickly became a thriving commercial centre along the Avon River. So successful was the railway development that, in the early 20th century, a number of local advocates – particularly local businessman R. Thomas Orr – had to fight to prevent the scenic Avon waterfront from being developed by the railway. But the Great Depression devastated the community's economy and the city's industrial base slowly declined.

But people did not give up on Stratford. Orr was instrumental in developing the extensive parks system that still runs along the river. Orr also developed links between his city and the birthplace of William Shakespeare.

Tom Patterson, inspired by the beauty of his hometown, became obsessed with establishing a theatre festival that would put Stratford on the map. In 1952, Patterson established the committee that would become the Festival's board of directors. Later that year, with assistance from Canadian director Dora Mavor Moore, an introduction was made between Patterson and British director Tyrone Guthrie (who became the Festival's first Artistic Director). Guthrie was intrigued by the opportunity to launch a Shakespearean festival.

The Stratford community rallied around Patterson and the Festival. Local citizens became volunteers on the gates and at the box office, and even opened their homes to provide accommodations for the actors and theatre patrons. The Stratford Festival opened to rave reviews on July 13, 1953 with a production of *Richard III*.

Today, the Stratford Festival remains the city's largest employer, generating approximately \$140 million in economic activity annually. The community still rallies around the internationally acclaimed festival and enjoys significant economic spin-off – with restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and local shops all benefiting from the hundreds of thousands of tourists flocking to Stratford each year.

Stratford has become synonymous with the arts in Canada and is a leading contributor to the growth of the city's creative economy. This vitality has also encouraged the development of a progressive business park and has attracted the University of Waterloo to open a campus in Stratford that specializes in digital media and technology.

Moreover, Stratford's heritage conservation renaissance over the last 25 years has been fuelled by the success of the Festival. In recent years,

a large number of historical buildings in Stratford have been adapted to house services and businesses that directly and indirectly support the Festival. Additionally, a heritage conservation district protects the downtown.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has a similar history that places it firmly on the map as far back as the arrival of John Graves Simcoe and the American Revolutionary War. Following the War of 1812, when much of the town was destroyed, Niagara-on-the-Lake slowly regained its economic health. But its preferred geographic location was further eclipsed in the 1830s when the Welland Canal was built.

Despite these setbacks, the town continued to expand throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Tourism blossomed during the 1870s when hotels started to appear. Leisure activities flourished and some summer tourists eventually became year-round residents.

By the mid-20th century, however, Niagara-on-the-Lake was seen as somewhat adrift. Visitors and residents alike referred to it as quiet and unhurried or just plain dull. While it could still boast beautiful historical buildings, some of them were falling into disrepair. With steamers and trains now bypassing the town, sleepy little Niagara-on-the-Lake was slowly disappearing.

Then, in 1962, the town's outlook changed. Brian Doherty, a Toronto lawyer who had moved his practice to Niagara-on-the-Lake, brought together a small group of people to generate ideas to revitalize the town. The conversation almost immediately turned to theatre – Doherty's passion. He had not only written for the stage (and enjoyed modest success on Broadway), but he had also produced theatrical productions and was on first-name terms with several leading London and New York actors. When the discussion turned to their preferred focus, George Bernard Shaw's name rose almost immediately to the top of the list.

With a local organizing committee, the backing of an enthusiastic town, an obliging council and with actors and a director secured, the "Salute to Shaw" – as the first season was known – opened on June 29, 1962 with a production of *Don Juan in Hell*, followed by *Candida*. The Shaw Festival was born.

In the years following the Festival's launch, interest in architectural preservation grew in the community. The town became known as a centre for conservation expertise and many of its landmarks were restored and rehabilitated in the 1970s. In 1986, the town designated its downtown core a heritage conservation district. In 2003, it became a National Historic District – another example of how the arts and culture served as the catalyst for a renewed interest in heritage conservation and pride of place.

Since the Shaw Festival emerged, Niagara-on-the-Lake has flourished, contributing over \$75 million to the local economy each year. The Niagara region continues to prosper as over 80 wineries now populate the countryside. Today, visitors come to the town with many objectives in mind – touring heritage sites, visiting local wineries and seeing a play at

Stratford has grown up around the Festival, maintaining its historical and natural beauty, while also encouraging small businesses that cater to both the local and tourist populations. Shops, restaurants, small inns and B&Bs abound. Because of the Festival, Stratford now boasts an internationally acclaimed chef's school, a public art gallery, a music festival and many other cultural activities, existing in a remarkable symbiotic relationship.
– Anita Gaffney, Executive Director, Stratford Festival



Stratford's Festival Theatre. (Photo: Erin Samuell)

the Shaw Festival – while spending money locally on accommodations, restaurants, shops and attractions.

Throughout the centuries, the towns of Stratford and Niagara-on-the-Lake have each contributed to Ontario's heritage in unique and compelling ways. Yet each place has also influenced the founding of their festivals through economic circumstances, geography and supportive communities. As these festivals grew and prospered, so too did the communities. It begs the question: Who saved whom?

Ellen Flowers is the Manager of Marketing and Communications at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre. Gordon Pim is the Senior Web Communications and Marketing Specialist at the Trust.



The Shaw Festival's Edwardian Royal George Theatre on Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake. (Photo: Andrée Lanthier)

The historical setting and natural beauty of the town has played a large role in how The Shaw has marketed itself. The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is steeped in tradition, with many families able to trace back their roots to the War of 1812. Careful consideration of local traditions and sensitivities of those living in the town for many years has impacted how The Shaw has done business, how we communicate to our local audience and how we partner with local businesses.

– Odette Yazbeck, Director of Public Relations, Shaw Festival

Bringing vaudeville back into the limelight

By Jim Leonard



Lyons and Byron toured with one of the Marks Brothers troupes for at least one season.



LC Simmons in grotesque makeup, c. 1910.



Mabel Grace Marantha "Gracie" Marks (left), wife of Joe Marks and Katherine "Kitty" Marks, wife of Ernie Marks. Gracie and Kitty were known for their sister act.

The vaudeville era is one of the more remarkable chapters in the history of theatre and performance. Vaudeville was a dazzling and colourful genre of live entertainment that reached its peak at the turn of the last century, only to be replaced by radio and motion pictures. Vaudeville was popular throughout North America, with troupes of comedians, dancers, acrobats and musicians travelling anywhere they could get bookings.

Ontario had its own array of talented vaudeville performers who travelled throughout the continent. Perhaps all but forgotten today, many of these performers were immensely talented and entertained grateful audiences in the heyday of the vaudeville era.

Historical documentation about Ontario's vaudeville legacy is limited, but what does survive is captivating. For instance, there is a series of 70 or so remarkable photographic images captured on glass plate negatives in 1910 by the Roy Studio in Peterborough. Known simply as the "Vaudeville Series," these photos capture images of different travelling companies, including perhaps Canada's best-known – the Marks Brothers Dramatic Company, known as The Canadian Kings of Repertoire.

The Marks Brothers Dramatic Company originated in the 1870s in Christie Lake, a small town near Perth, Ontario. They performed

for nearly 50 years, delighting audiences across North America, and were known for lavish and dazzling stage design and flamboyant performances. In a Maclean's magazine retrospective written in 1958, they were called "the most remarkable theatrical family in Canadian history." But with the decline of vaudeville, the Marks Brothers touring company folded in 1920.

In 1910, the Marks Brothers troupe arrived in Peterborough, Ontario for a series of shows at a local theatre. It is not certain how the Marks players and the Roy Studio collaborated. Fred Roy, the owner of the studio, had a keen and discerning eye for dramatic and visually interesting subject matter.

The Roy Studio, which opened in 1896, was another family business that ran for generations. The studio, widely known for its exceptional portraiture, postcards and photo-journalism, operated from the 1890s until 1992 and amassed a staggering 300,000 glass plate and film negatives.

In 2000, the entire collection – which captured virtually every facet of daily life in a small Ontario community – was acquired by the City of Peterborough, thanks to a generous donation from Jim Balsillie, co-founder of Research in Motion (makers of the BlackBerry) and a former Peterborough resident.

The Peterborough Museum and Archives, after acquiring this nationally significant collection, launched a relocation project to transfer it from the basement of the studio to a purpose-built storage facility at the local public library. A collections management plan was developed focusing on conservation and documentation. The plates were inspected, cleaned and stabilized. Digitization was another key task, since there was a tremendous public interest in seeing the images.

The Vaudeville Series captured public attention well before the Roy Studio acquisition was finalized. Some of the images from this series had surfaced over the years, but only after public acquisition could the full breadth and scope of the photos be revealed. Glass plate negatives produce images of unusual clarity and crispness. Some of the negatives are as large as 16 x 20 inches (41 x 51 cm), providing even sharper detail.

Many of these negatives had not been seen since they were created in 1910. They show performers in full costume. Some are conventional portraits. Most of them, however, depict troupe members in dramatic poses presumably as would be seen onstage. We also see performers looking into the camera lens wearing comical or grotesque makeup.

Fortunately, the Roy Studio adopted a solid record-keeping system from the beginning. All of their negatives were routinely housed in paper sleeves. Photographers jotted down information about the subject along with key dates and other pertinent details.

Not long after the Peterborough Museum and Archives secured public ownership, it became clear that this visually stunning vaudevillian series could be the focus of a travelling exhibition. Funding was secured from the federal department of Canadian Heritage. In August 2005, the museum launched "Voices of the Town: Vaudeville in Canada," which explores the remarkable history of vaudeville using the Roy Studio images.

The exhibit has travelled the country and is still touring today – a testament to the allure of vaudeville, the quality of the Roy Studio images and the curatorial expertise of the Peterborough Museum and Archives. Vaudeville may now be a distant memory, but at least this archival treasure survives and the historical information it holds can be revealed and shared.

Jim Leonard is the Ontario Heritage Act Registrar with the Trust. From 1994-2003, he was Peterborough City Archivist. In 2000, he coordinated the relocation of the Roy Studio negatives. The Trust wishes to thank Susan Neale, Jon Oldham and Michelle Watson for their assistance with this article.

All images: Balsillie Collection of Roy Studio Images, Peterborough Museum and Archives.

WHAT'S ON . . .

. . . the shelf

The Opening Act: Canadian Theatre History 1945-1953, by Susan McNicoll. Ronsdale Press, 2012.

The conventional opinion is that professional Canadian theatre began in 1953 with the founding of the Stratford Festival. But Susan McNicoll asks how this could be, when the majority of those taking the stage at Stratford were professional Canadian actors. To answer this question, McNicoll delves into the period to show how in fact the unbroken chain of Canadian professional theatre began just after the Second World War, when a host of theatre people decided that Canada needed its own professional theatre groups.

Drawing on personal interviews with many of the actors and directors active in the period after the war, McNicoll explores the role of such companies as Everyman in Vancouver, New Play Society in Toronto, Canadian Repertory Theatre in Ottawa, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal, and many more. In 1953, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival ultimately showed the world that Canada was ready for centre stage, but the real birth of professional theatre happened in the years leading up to that moment.

The volume includes over 45 photos of scenes from plays of the time and selections from McNicoll's interviews with such luminaries as Christopher Plummer, Joy Coghill, Amelia Hall and Herbert Whittaker.

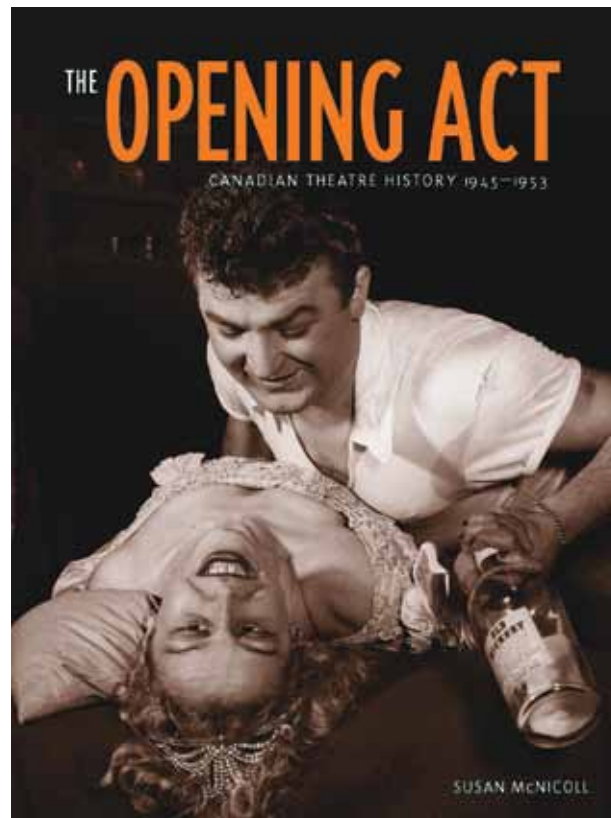
"This is a delightful trip through a time when English Canada's theatre scene mercifully turned 'pro' and brought all us eager young hopeful thespians some dignity and recognition on our own home ground."
– Christopher Plummer

. . . the web

Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia – This online encyclopedia collects and disseminates information on plays, playwrights and theatre practitioners from across Canada. www.canadiantheatre.com

National Arts Centre – The National Arts Centre (NAC) raised its curtains for the first time in 1969. Created by the Canadian government as a centennial project during the 1960s, the NAC has become Canada's foremost showcase for the performing arts. <http://nac-cna.ca/en>

Ryerson Theatre School – Training the next generation of theatre and dance artists is an important task for all at the Ryerson Theatre School. The 2013/14 season will showcase



the accomplishments of the four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts in Performance program (acting, dance and production). www.ryerson.ca/theatreschool/index.html

Shaw Festival – Inspired by the wit and passion of George Bernard Shaw, the Shaw Festival is a contemporary theatre that features a smart, provocative, potent and diverse mix of plays from the past and present. www.shawfest.com

Stratford Festival – With William Shakespeare as its foundation, the Stratford Festival aims to set the standard for classical theatre in North America. Embracing a heritage of tradition and innovation, the Stratford Festival seeks to bring classical and contemporary theatre alive for an increasingly diverse audience. www.stratfordfestival.ca

TheatreCanada.com – This online directory provides information on live theatres and performing arts venues across Canada. Study resources and a special section for children. www.theatrecanada.com/index.shtml

Theatre Museum Canada – The only museum devoted to celebrating Canada's theatrical heritage. www.theatremuseumcanada.ca

Theatre Ontario – A charitable, not-for-profit association of professional, community and educational theatre organizations and artists with a variety of programs and services. <http://theatreontario.blogspot.ca>

In the coming months . . .

Here are some of the events and activities occurring over the next few months. Visit our website at www.heritagetrust.on.ca for more details!

October 18, 2013 to October 20, 2013 – Doors Open Niagara, Niagara, Ontario and New York. Join us as the 2013 Doors Open Ontario season comes to a close with this exciting binational event. Visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca for more information. #DOntario

October 24, 2013 – Niagara Escarpment Commission Leading Edge 2013 Conference, Country Heritage Park, Milton. Leading Edge 2013 explores the vital natural, cultural and economic resources of the Niagara Escarpment. For more information, or to register, visit www.escarpment.org.

October 25, 2013 to October 27, 2013 – Ontario Archaeological Society Symposium 2013, Niagara Falls. This year's symposium speaks to the theme of the archaeology of the Niagara peninsula. For more information or to register, visit <http://ontarioarchaeology.on.ca>.

October 31, 2013 to November 2, 2013 – Heritage Canada Foundation 40th Anniversary Conference, Ottawa. In association with the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals, Heritage Canada hosts this annual conference at Ottawa's Fairmont Chateau Laurier. For more information or to register, visit www.heritagecanada.org.

November 6, 2013 to November 8, 2013 – Ontario Museum Association 2013 Annual Conference, Markham. The conference focuses on the accomplishments of Ontario museums and how they build stronger communities. For more information or to register, visit www.museumsonario.com.

November 8, 2013 at 8 p.m. and November 9, 2013 at 3 and 8 p.m. – Tango Fire, Elgin Theatre, Toronto. Burning with passion and desire, Tango Fire returns to Toronto. For more information, call Ticketmaster at 1-855-622-ARTS (2787) or visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg.

November 15, 2013 at 8 p.m. – Emilie-Claire Barlow, Winter Garden Theatre, Toronto. Canada's incomparable vocal-jazz jewel leads her stellar band through innovative arrangements of American songbook treasures, rhythmic bossa novas and elegant ballads. For more information, call Ticketmaster at 1-855-622-ARTS (2787) or visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg.

November 16, 2013 – 19th Annual Edwardian Christmas Tea, Fulford Place, Brockville. Come and enjoy an Edwardian-themed tea with delicious fancy sandwiches, sweets and beverages served by costumed maids. Tour the mansion that is decorated for Christmas and enjoy live musical performances throughout the afternoon. Tickets go on sale November 1 (call 613-498-3005).

November 19, 2013 to December 15, 2013 – Trees for Children, Fulford Place, Brockville. To highlight this new partnership event between Brockville's Little City Charm Daycare and Fulford Place,

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local businesses will decorate trees with the theme of "A Christmas Long Ago." Proceeds will be divided equally between a local elementary school, children's mental health programs and educational programs at Fulford Place. Call 613-498-3005.

November 20, 2013 to November 22, 2013 – 19th Annual Latonnell Conservation Symposium 2013, Nottawasaga. This year's theme is Prescription for a Healthy Environment. For more information or to register, visit www.latonnell.ca.

November 22, 2013 to January 4, 2014 – The Little Mermaid, Elgin Theatre, Toronto. For their 18th season at the Elgin Theatre, Ross Petty Productions presents a deluge of comedic "sea-nanigans" with their first-ever production of The Little Mermaid. Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg for details.

December 14, 2013 at 8 p.m. – The Bad Plus, Winter Garden Theatre, Toronto. After two sold-out Glenn Gould Studio concerts in 2010, The Bad Plus brings their unique jazz stylings to the enchanting Winter Garden Theatre. For more information, call Ticketmaster at 1-855-622-ARTS (2787) or visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg.



October 26 to November 2, 2013 – Abduction from the Seraglio, Elgin Theatre, Toronto. A revival of Opera Atelier's highly successful production, this opera – featuring some of Mozart's most demanding arias – is the perfect showcase of vocal prowess and comedic acting. Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg for details. (Photo: Bruce Zinger)

BRINGING OUR STORY TO LIFE

Ontario Heritage Trust

Photo: Fulford Place, Brockville

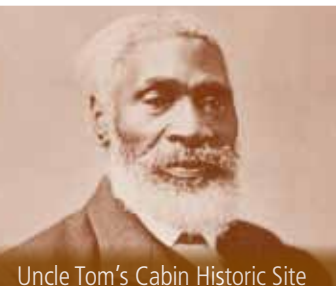
For more information, visit
www.heritagetrust.on.ca/museums
or snap this tag:



ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST



BRINGING OUR STORY TO LIFE



Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site



Enoch Turner Schoolhouse



Parliament interpretive centre



Fulford Place

MISSING:

Elgin Theatre Chandelier

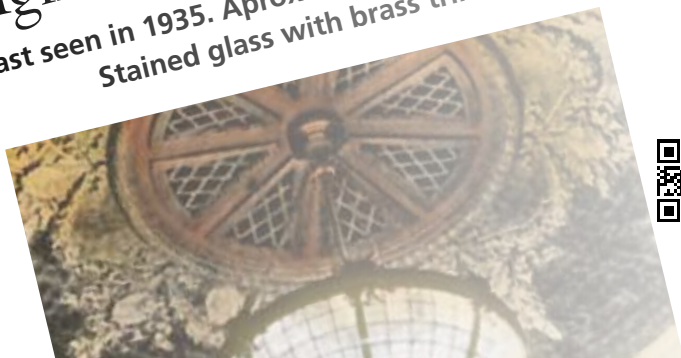
Last seen in 1935. Approximately 100 years old.
Stained glass with brass trim.

Last seen in 1935. Approximately 100 years old.
Stained glass with brass trim.

Please contribute to the Chandelier project.

Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/EWG100
or call **416-325-5025**.

Illuminate our past. Light our future.



THE ELGIN AND WINTER GARDEN
THEATRE CENTRE

