

# NEWS FROM THE TRUST

February 2012

## Built 1797. Burnt 1813. Back 2012!

By Beth Anne Mendes

On February 17, 2012, the Ontario Heritage Trust opened the Parliament interpretive centre in Toronto. The opening event was held in conjunction with the Trust's annual launch of Ontario Heritage Week and to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

The centre, located at 265 Parliament Street East, sits on the original site of Ontario's first purpose-built parliament buildings, on the block bordered by Front Street East on the north, Berkeley Street on the west, and Parliament Street on the east. A park adjoins the southern boundary.

The Trust acquired this important property in 2005, retained the existing building – previously a car dealership – and recently adapted it to accommodate an interpretive centre.

The exhibit, Foundations & Fire: Early Parliament and the War of 1812 Experience at York, interprets the history of Ontario's first purpose-built parliament buildings and commemorates the War of 1812 bicentennial. The Americans attacked the then small town of York on April 27, 1813 and, during the ensuing occupation, burned the parliament buildings, Government House, the barracks (now Fort York) and military storehouses.

The interpretive exhibit showcases archaeological artifacts that were discovered on the Front Street property during the 2000 archaeological dig undertaken by Archaeological Services Inc. at the request of the City of Toronto. Objects and features were unearthed from four different periods of

use on the property – the first parliament buildings (1797-1813), the second parliament buildings (1819-1824) that were constructed using the ruins of the first, the Home District Gaol (1838-1864) and the Consumers' Gas Company Station "A" (1884-1963).

Figures of provincial and national significance – John Graves Simcoe and Isaac Brock – are closely associated with the site. The contributions of Elizabeth Simcoe, Chloe Cooley, Tecumseh and John Norton are also presented as they shaped the development of the province and War of 1812 events. Fellow heritage institutions – the Archives of Ontario, Archaeological Services Inc., The City of Toronto Museums Division and Parks Canada – all graciously lent exceptional artifacts to enhance the exhibit's interpretive themes.

The centre is now open to the public. School and youth groups are invited to visit this old but new

heritage destination! Exciting plans are underway to develop partnerships with local heritage groups and agencies through shared programming and events.

The multi-layered history of this piece of land provides an incredible glimpse into the history and development of Ontario and Toronto. We look forward to welcoming you at the Parliament interpretive centre.



PARLIAMENT

*Beth Anne Mendes is the Trust's Project Coordinator for the Parliament interpretive centre.*

# Doors Open Ontario – The next generation

By Mike Sawchuck



It's been over a decade since the first Doors Open Ontario event was held in April 2002. For many of us, especially those interested in history and conservation, 10 years doesn't seem like a long time. But in some respects, rewinding a decade can feel like time travel.

Take, for example, the evolution of the Internet. Ten years ago, popular websites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter were still years away from development. Only half of Canadians used the Internet when the first Doors Open Ontario website was launched in 2002. Today, more than eight in 10 Canadians are Internet users, spending an average of 43.5 hours online monthly.

The Ontario Heritage Trust has created a new, robust website in time for the Doors Open Ontario 2012 season. The new site is now up and running at its original URL ([www.doorsopenontario.on.ca](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca)) and packs a suite of new and improved tools that will benefit both general visitors and event coordinators.

For general visitors, the most notable change is the addition of a mapping tool. This tool not only helps visitors pinpoint the location of individual sites, but also allows them to plan their routes better from site to site. Visitors also benefit from a number of social media tools, enabling them to share Doors Open Ontario information within their personal social networks, thereby expanding the program audience exponentially. Those who visit the website on a regular basis can also now identify sites as "My favourites" to help plan their Doors Open itineraries.

Event organizers will benefit from a number of improvements to the "community organizers only" section of the website. Registered community organizers from across Ontario can now share information related to event development and management through a blog. The amount of information that can be posted on each event page has also expanded, allowing coordinators to promote the history of their communities or special events/anniversaries, to provide information on how you can become a Doors Open volunteer, and to upload multiple photographs of each participating site.

Doors Open Ontario 2012 starts in April, with nearly 60 events occurring through to early autumn. There are five new events planned for 2012 – Algonquin Highlands, Georgian Bay, Halton Hills, Lambton County and Quinte West. Many returning events have also developed unique and interesting themes that will encourage visitors to explore communities in a whole new light.

To discover which events are happening near you, visit our new website or call 1-800-ONTARIO (1-800-668-2746) for your free printed Guide.

*Mike Sawchuck is a Community Programs Officer with the Ontario Heritage Trust.*

# Not just another opening

By Ellen Flowers

It's Monday, December 15, 1913 and the city of Toronto is abuzz with excitement over the opening of a new theatre. Loew's Yonge Street Theatre (owned by Marcus Loew and designed by Thomas Lamb) will house two full-sized theatres stacked one on top of the other. Although the upstairs Winter Garden Theatre isn't scheduled to open for another two months, tonight will witness the grand opening of the Canadian flagship of Loew's vaudeville empire.

Loew's is not, however, the only vaudeville house in town. Just down the street is Shea's Victoria on Richmond Street, and The Grand Opera House and Majestic, both on Adelaide. But Loew's is different – here, a person can sit in extravagant décor for as little as 10 cents.

The troupe of comedians, dancers, jugglers and singers enter through the stage door off Victoria Street. A young performer can find lodgings for only 10 cents a week at one of several theatrical boarding houses nearby.

As the performers file in, they cross the stage where the stage hands are getting ready for tonight's inaugural performance. The fly man is at the pin rail – a modern feature for the theatre – making sure that all the scenery has been correctly lined-up to fly in. The theatre has a range of standard scenery flats such as a garden, a palace and a streetscape for the revolving acts of the vaudeville shows.

On this wintry night, the public comes to the theatre on the streetcar that rumbles down Yonge Street. Patrons buy their tickets at the outside box office, located just off the sidewalk in the exterior vestibule. Making their way through the opulent lobby are members of Toronto's elite – physicians, bankers and publishers. Dignitaries include the Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Gibson, and Toronto mayor Horatio C. Hocken. Also in attendance is a young composer by the name of Irving Berlin. Tonight, the headline act is Weber and Fields, two of the world's top comedians of the day.

Running down the stairs from the crowded dressing rooms, the performers take their places in the wings, awaiting their cues. The orchestra strikes the first chord and the curtain rises. Once onstage, the glare from the new electric footlights makes it hard to see the audience, but the sound of laughter and applause guarantees that a good time is being had by all.

Who knew that nearly 100 years later, this grand old theatre would still be a landmark on Toronto's cityscape, and a destination for theatre-goers from around the world.

*Ellen Flowers is the Acting Marketing and Communications Manager at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre in Toronto.*

To hear more stories about the world's last operating double-decker theatre and to see examples from the Trust's vaudeville scenery collection, join us for a public tour weekly on Thursday (at 5 p.m.) and Saturday (at 11 a.m.). Or book a private group tour by calling 416-314-2871.



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# In the coming months

The Ontario Heritage Trust regularly hosts or attends events that impact our rich and unique heritage. From provincial plaque unveilings to conferences, we are busy year-round with activities that promote heritage conservation in Ontario.

Here are some of the events and activities occurring over the next few months.



William Roache

**March 1, 2012 – Premiers' Gravesites Program marker unveiling commemorating the Honourable John Parmenter Robarts (Premier 1961-1971)**, The Cathedral Church of St. James, Toronto. Born in Banff, Alberta, John Robarts was Ontario's seventeenth premier. He was premier at a time of economic growth and his government was responsible for creating the community college system in Ontario.

**March 17, 2012 – An Audience with William Roache** at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre, Toronto. Coronation Street's Ken Barlow tells stories and spills the secrets of The Street. Purchase tickets by phone at 1-855-622-ARTS (2787) or online at [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca).

**April 13, 2012 – Canadian Songbook Concert – Steven Page** at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre, Toronto. Purchase tickets by phone at 1-855-622-ARTS (2787) or online at [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca).

**April 20, 2012 – Premiers' Gravesites Program marker unveiling commemorating the Honourable Frank Stuart Miller (Premier 1985-1985)**, in Gravenhurst. Born in Toronto, Ontario, Frank Miller was Ontario's nineteenth premier. He was elected to the legislature in 1971 and served as premier from February to June in 1985.

**April 28, 2012 – Launch of Doors Open Ontario 2012**, Guelph. From April to October each year, communities across the province open their commercial buildings, places of worship, gardens and other heritage sites to the public free of charge. Visit [www.doorsopenontario.on.ca](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca) for details of upcoming events in your area. To order a copy of the printed Guide (available in April 2012), call 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746).

**May 13, 2012 – Niagara Apothecary opens for the summer season**, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Step through the doors and see how pharmacists practised their profession over 100 years ago. Visit [www.heritagetrust.on.ca](http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca) for more information.

**May 19, 2012 – Opening of Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site for the summer season**, Dresden. Visit this intriguing museum and discover the achievements of Josiah Henson (Uncle Tom) through interactive exhibits, period artifacts and an interpretive video. Visit [www.uncletomscabin.org](http://www.uncletomscabin.org) for more information.

**Provincial plaque unveiling to commemorate Syl Apps**, Paris, Ontario. As captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Syl Apps led his team to three Stanley Cup victories. He would later become a Conservative member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and served as the Minister of Correctional Services from 1971-74.

**Visit our website at [www.heritagetrust.on.ca](http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca) for more details!**