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- Digging up yesterday
- The birth of Black History Month

Our cultural heritage places

www.heritagefdn.on.ca

February 2006
A message from The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, Chairman

Last year, many changes occurred when the Ontario Heritage Act was passed. In addition to strengthening regulations to protect Ontario’s unique heritage sites, the new legislation also changed the Ontario Heritage Foundation’s name to the Ontario Heritage Trust. We remain the province’s lead heritage agency, working with a broad range of ministries, stakeholders and partners throughout Ontario to ensure that our shared heritage is protected and preserved. In addition, we have assumed the coordination of Ontario Heritage Week from the Ministry of Culture.

Since 1985 – when the Ontario government launched the program – Heritage Week has been a time to come together and showcase our heritage. We commend the Ministry of Culture for its excellent work over the past 20 years and look forward to developing and expanding this exciting annual event with our partners in the years ahead.

This year’s theme – Our Cultural Heritage Places – encourages the celebration of our cultural structures, including: concert halls, opera houses, theatres, First Nations longhouses, community halls, museums and art galleries. I urge you to look at these spaces in your own community. What role have they played in its cultural development? Are they protected and appreciated? Do they continue to be actively used?

This expanded issue of Heritage Matters also explores this theme with stories on community museums, heritage conferences, archaeological discoveries, restoring heritage wallpaper and magnificent Vaudeville scenery flats, Black History Month – and much more. Each issue will now bring you even more news about what’s happening in heritage both at the Trust and across the province as we work together to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario’s heritage treasures.

Enjoy!

Robert J. Burns, Ph.D.
Heritage Resources Consultant
• Historical Research and Analysis
• Home and Property History
• Corporations and Advertising History
• Heritage Product Marketing Research

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For more information, please contact the Trust’s marketing and communications unit at 416-325-5015 or marketing@heritagefdn.on.ca.
Our cultural heritage places

How heritage buildings adapt

By Sean Fraser

Although heritage remains a year-round activity for many of us, Heritage Day is celebrated annually on the third Monday in February. This year’s theme speaks to “Our Cultural Heritage Places,” with an emphasis on museums, concert halls, libraries and galleries.

Most of these unique spaces continue to operate as they were originally intended. Over time, however — and with careful management — many sites have been adapted to bring new life to their activities while maintaining their heritage fabric.

Conservation easements are covenants between owners of heritage properties and groups such as the Ontario Heritage Trust, municipalities or conservation organizations. These agreements are registered on title in perpetuity and are binding on all future owners. Conservation easements conserve the heritage features of the site — ensuring that these features are preserved, interpreted and well maintained.

Many Ontario Heritage Trust conservation easement sites are operated as museums, galleries, libraries, archives, theatres and concert halls. These sites possess inherent architectural and historical value, making them even more precious to those who visit and work in them. In addition, they heighten the cultural experience offered on the premises. In this article, we’ll take a closer look at three cultural heritage places in the Ontario Heritage Trust easement portfolio.

Ontario Northern Railway Station (Cobalt)

Built in 1910 for the Timiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, the Cobalt Station is associated with the early development of rail transportation and settlement in Northern Ontario. Designed by prominent Toronto architect John M. Lyle, the station is a long, low brick building with an impressive broad-hipped roof. The interior boasts massive timber roof trusses and a wooden ceiling. Typical of railway stations built during the first part of the 20th century, the station was designated the Cobalt Station under the Ontario Heritage Act and, in 1982, the Ontario Heritage Trust secured a heritage easement to protect the exterior and restored interiors of the house.

Allan Macpherson House (Greater Napanee)

This house was built by Allan Macpherson, a leading local businessman, militia leader, magistrate and Napanee’s first postmaster. Sir John A. MacDonald, a relation of the Macpherson family, was a frequent guest at the house. The house remained in the Macpherson family until 1896. It was purchased by the Lennox and Addington Historical Society in 1962, restored and opened as a museum in 1967. It continues as a museum today.

The design of this two-storey frame house is a vernacular Georgian form with Neo-Classical features. The interior is arranged around a central hall, also typical of Georgian design. Exterior distinguishing features include: an imposing Neo-Classical front and rear entranceway with wide rectangular transoms; wide six-panel doors and pilasters with decorative moulding; and simple window frames with plain dripboard cornices and a twelve-over-twelve window sash. The house is located in a park-like riverside setting on the banks of the Napanee River. In 1977, the Town of Napanee designated the house under the Ontario Heritage Act and, in 1982, the Ontario Heritage Trust secured a heritage easement to protect the exterior and restored interiors of the house.

Peel Heritage Complex (Brampton)

Designed in 1866 by Toronto architect William Kauffman, the Peel County Courthouse is a remarkable Venetian-Gothic landmark in downtown Brampton. Distinguishing features include: a rusticated limestone foundation, paired round-headed windows, fanlights and broad decorative eaves. Above the classically inspired pediment is an onion-shaped dome rising above the cupola. The brick limestone jail boasts a hip roof and six large brick chimneys. The Courthouse, Jail and Land Registry were Peel County’s judicial and administrative centre from their construction in 1867 until 1973, and continue to embody Peel Region’s civic pride. The Region of Peel created the Peel Heritage Complex in 1985 in an effort to save this collection of significant heritage buildings and bring together many of the community’s cultural heritage services on one site. As a cultural heritage landmark, the Peel Heritage Complex offers a congress hall in the former Court Room, a regional museum and archives located in the former Jail and an art gallery in the former Land Registry. The Ontario Heritage Trust secured a heritage easement to protect the exteriors of this complex, as well as the interior of the historic courtroom and entry corridor.

These three sites were converted from their original use to suit new public, cultural functions. Not all easement sites have undergone adaptive re-use in the same way, but these examples demonstrate what can be achieved when we work creatively to retain, protect and celebrate our cultural heritage places.
Historic Scenery Makes Second Debut

By Simonette Seon-Mlichte

Important conservation work is necessary to return pieces of this unique collection to their place in Canada’s cultural history. To make a donation, please complete the form included in this magazine and return it to the Ontario Heritage Trust. Or contact us at 416-325-5000.

The EWG—built in 1913 as Loew’s Yonge Street Theatre—is a National Historic Site owned and operated by the Ontario Heritage Trust. It is the last operating double-decker theatre in the world. The theatres featured vaudeville acts and silent films until 1929 when talking pictures led to the closure of the Winter Garden. The lower theatre then became one of Toronto’s most prestigious movie palaces. After years of neglect, the theatres underwent a $29-million, 2½-year restoration between 1987 and 1989 by the Trust. One of the great surprises during the restoration was the discovery of the world’s largest collection of vaudeville scenery—hand-painted cloth flats, drops and curtains dating from 1913-1920s. The Scarab set, c. 1920s, is a light interior comedy stage setting decorated with bold contrasting colours of black, gray, cream, purple and gold depicting abstracted beetles in Art Nouveau and Deco motifs. The flats were painted on a fine open-weave cotton linen by Marcus Loew Studios (Albert Howard, Scenic Artist) in New York. The flats were decorated with tempera paint consisting of chalk, glue, dry pigment and metallic bronze powder. This particular set consists of 12 individual flats of varying widths, each measuring 16 feet high.

A meticulous and challenging conservation treatment was conducted over several months, beginning in September 2005, by a team of professional conservators and conservation interns. The project was supported by generous donations from individuals and corporations. A meticulous and challenging conservation treatment was conducted over several months, beginning in September 2005, by a team of professional conservators and conservation interns. The project was supported by generous donations from individuals and corporations.

The flats were first thoroughly examined to learn more about the paint, materials and artist’s working methods. The paint layer and metallic bronze powder. This particular set consists of 12 individual flats of varying widths, each measuring 18 feet high. The flats were decorated with tempera paint consisting of chalk, glue, dry pigment and metallic bronze powder. This particular set consists of 12 individual flats of varying widths, each measuring 16 feet high.

The Scarab set scenery flats were installed in December 2005 and are currently displayed in the cascading lobbies at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre.

Simonette Seon-Mlichte is the Cultural Collections Coordinator at the Ontario Heritage Trust.

ICOMOS Canada 2005

By John Blumenson

Until the late 1800s, heritage had been primarily a national, almost insular concern. The concept of international heritage preservation began to be seriously considered in the 1930s, following several key conventions throughout Europe. In 1965, the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was founded. Since then, ICOMOS has significantly raised awareness of international heritage concerns and, more critically, helped save heritage sites globally by inscribing them to UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

From September 29 to October 1, 2005, ICOMOS Canada held its 28th Annual General Assembly and Congress in Toronto. In partnership with the Ontario Heritage Trust, Ryerson University, the Ontario Ministry of Culture and the City of Toronto, the Congress hosted over 100 heritage professionals, academics and students from around the world. This year’s theme—The Significance of Setting—coincided with the chosen theme for the ICOMOS International General Assembly in Xi’an, China in November.

A pre-Congress workshop at Fort York provided an energized and creative introduction. Organized by the Ryerson School of Architecture, more than 30 students interpreted heritage settings in Australia. Walker suggested that “place” or location of heritage resources differs greatly from its “setting,” the area around the resources that can be defined as the visual catchment area of the heritage resource.

The Ontario Heritage Trust also hosted the inaugural Martin E. Weaver Memorial Fund Lecture—dedicated to Martin Weaver—scholar, lecturer, prolific writer, ICOMOS colleague and mentor to many young heritage conservationists. Norman Weiss, Weaver’s colleague at Columbia University, gave this lecture.

In 2005, the prestigious Jacques Dalibard Award—named after ICOMOS Canada’s founder—was presented to Francois and Renée LeBlanc for their many years of dedicated service to heritage conservation in Canada and internationally.

This year’s Congress—The Significance of Setting—coincided with the chosen theme for the ICOMOS International General Assembly in Xi’an, China in November.

For more information on ICOMOS, visit www.international.icomos.org.

John Blumenson is an author, historian and columnist for the Toronto Star.
There are countless examples across the province of successful restorations of Ontario’s treasured heritage sites. Although the challenges are great—funding being the primary hurdle—we are winning the battle.

One such victory is Peterborough’s Market Hall—the premier heritage structure in the city. In 1999, the City of Peterborough acquired the building and determined the extent of the restoration required. Proposals were developed and grant applications submitted. A formal request was made to the Ontario Heritage Trust (then the Ontario Heritage Foundation) under the now-expired Heritage Challenge Fund Community Program. A $150,000 grant was awarded to the City of Peterborough for this project and over $475,000 was raised through individual/small business donations, organizations and service clubs, foundations and corporations.

The restoration required at this site was significant. Extensive repairs were necessary to the tower (including the cupola, clock faces, roof, walls and cornice work), windows, masonry and dormers. The large ornamental coat of arms had deteriorated beyond repair and a replica was required.

In addition to new lead-coated copper metal shingles and restoration of the clock faces and hands, paint restoration was a highlight of this project. Samples of paint from the building were taken to the microscopy lab at Trent University where original colours were matched using sophisticated computer technology. The new paint matches authentic colours while protecting the building from the elements more effectively.

Overall, this project lasted nearly three years. Community support for the restoration of the Market Hall and the old clock tower was inspiring. The Save the Market Hall fundraising team created posters, T-shirts and brochures to publicize the campaign and raised nearly $170,000 in the first seven months of the drive. Special community benefits were held, including dances, walkathons and theatre productions. Local media interest, too, was significant both in raising funds and awareness, but also chronicling the progress of this important restoration project.

Today, Peterborough’s Market Hall remains a vital part of the landscape in this community. The complex now houses ground-floor commercial space with the Market Hall Performing Arts Centre above. Not only was this project successful from a restoration perspective, but it also united the community and validated their efforts by showing to the world the proud heritage that continues to tower above their historic downtown.

“The restoration of the building has been a major part of the reconstruction of the downtown as a place to be,” said Erik Hanson, Heritage Preservation Officer for the City of Peterborough. “It was inconceivable to the townspeople that the building would be lost, and they responded admirably with a campaign that raised nearly half a million dollars for the restoration work. The Market Hall is Peterborough’s premiere heritage icon. It centres people in the town and roots them to the place. It is a powerful symbol of our history.”

Gordon Pinn is a Marketing and Communications Coordinator for the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Behind the Scenes: nearly 20 years with volunteers

They have meticulously laboured over 60,000 glass beads to replicate 45 light fixtures; they have conducted more than 30,000 guided tours for tens of thousands of people from around the world, and they have helped to preserve more than 5,000 branches of beech leaves from various woodlots across Ontario. They are the more than 100 volunteers of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre. Since 1987, the EWG volunteers have participated in a multitude of activities.

For nearly 20 years, volunteers have contributed thousands of hours by staffing exhibits, raising funds, working at the lobby gift shop and information booth and guiding public tours. They lovingly show the complex at Doors Open Toronto, Heritage Week, Kidsummer and Arts Week events each year.

In addition, they develop projects that promote and ensure the ongoing preservation of this unique double-decker theatre complex—the last operating double-decker theatre in the world.

One such initiative, begun in 2001, has turned into an annual event—the Halloween Tour. On October 31, 2005, patrons were treated to two special tours, which, in addition to recounting the history and restoration of the complex, also gave details of some of the “ghosts and spirits” that are said to inhabit the building. Part of the tour was conducted by “Sam”—acting as the spirit of a trombone player who allegedly fell to his death more than 70 years ago. Several other “spirits” also appeared that night and visitors experienced some strange happenings.

It was another successful event hosted by this group of dedicated volunteers and another example of how the Elgin and Winter Garden Volunteers continue to support this National Historic Site.
On August 3, 2005 the provincial government announced the creation of the Natural Spaces Program, which included a $6-million allocation to the Ontario Heritage Trust for the acquisition and stewardship of provincially significant lands. The announcement was made by Premier Dalton McGuinty, in the presence of The Honourable David Ramsay, Minister of Natural Resources and The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture.

The Ministry of Natural Resources’ Natural Spaces Program is designed to restore natural areas and reduce further loss of greenspace. Reducing loss of greenspace will improve air and water quality, and protect important natural features and wildlife habitat. The Trust will manage the Acquisition and Stewardship Program.

Land acquisition will focus on lands not currently protected from development by other provincial plans or by public ownership. These will include: significant components of natural heritage systems in Southern Ontario; the completion or connection of key trails; source water protection; habitat for species at risk; increased ecological representation in provincial parks and protected areas; and large woodlands or wetlands and associated connecting linkages.

The program was established as a partnership model for the conservation and protection of provincially significant natural systems in Southern Ontario. The properties acquired will be retained as provincial heritage lands it holds in trust are managed in partnership with local and regional groups – conservation authorities, land trusts, municipalities and trails organizations. These partnerships are critical to the preservation work we all do.

Protecting Natural Spaces in Southern Ontario

Doors Open: Ontario’s living heritage exhibition

Doors Open is Ontario’s biggest heritage event where cities, towns and villages across the province are turned into a living exhibition for everyone to enjoy. This grand festival is about seeing, exploring and understanding our built, cultural and natural heritage. By opening the doors to our magnificent places and spaces – including such cultural landmarks as theatres, libraries, museums and galleries – we also open people’s eyes and minds to the importance of preserving these great treasures.

It is amazing to see, year after year, how many people take advantage of the Doors Open program to discover and celebrate Ontario’s rich and diverse heritage. Over 1.5 million visits have been made to Doors Open Ontario heritage sites since the Trust launched the program in 2002. For the past two years, Doors Open Ontario has also been nominated as one of Ontario’s Top 50 Festivals.

The success of Doors Open has been instrumental in raising the profile of heritage and showing the world that Ontarians are passionate about preserving and celebrating their history. As more people become aware of this heritage festival, it continues to expand its reach. In 2006, 45 events – 13 of which are first-time participants – are taking place across the province. The Doors Open Ontario 2006 season kicks off in Guelph on April 22.

You can order your free Doors Open Ontario 2006 Guide by calling 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746) in April. This handy guide provides a snapshot of each community event, highlighting some of the participating sites as well as Ontario Heritage Trust properties and plaques located in each participating region. For a detailed list of participating sites, visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca. This website is updated regularly throughout the Doors Open Ontario season.

Doors Open Ontario 2006

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<th>Event</th>
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<td>April</td>
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<td>Guelph</td>
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<td>Oxford</td>
<td>September 9-10</td>
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<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>May 6-7</td>
<td>Chatham-Kent NEW!</td>
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<td>Gravenhurst-Muskoka</td>
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<td>Gravenhurst-Muskoka</td>
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<td>Brockville</td>
<td>May 27-28</td>
<td>Thousand Islands</td>
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<td>Toronto</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>Whitby</td>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>Whitby-Stouffville</td>
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<td>Ottawa</td>
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<td>Belleville</td>
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<td>Cornwall-Seaway Valley</td>
<td>September 9-10</td>
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The success of Doors Open has been instrumental in raising the profile of heritage and showing the world that Ontarians are passionate about preserving and celebrating their history. As more people become aware of this heritage festival, it continues to expand its reach. In 2006, 45 events – 13 of which are first-time participants – are taking place across the province. The Doors Open Ontario 2006 season kicks off in Guelph on April 22.

You can order your free Doors Open Ontario 2006 Guide by calling 1-800-ONTARIO (668-2746) in April. This handy guide provides a snapshot of each community event, highlighting some of the participating sites as well as Ontario Heritage Trust properties and plaques located in each participating region. For a detailed list of participating sites, visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca. This website is updated regularly throughout the Doors Open Ontario season.

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Working with the Historic Places Initiative

In 1999, Parks Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage held a series of wide-ranging consultations to determine the best means to protect and celebrate Canada’s unique heritage, resulting in the development of a multi-phased program to be administered by the Government of Canada in collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments. The program – the Historic Places Initiative (HPI) – is a federal-provincial-territorial partnership and is now regarded as the most significant conservation-based development in Canada’s history. The first phase of HPI was launched in 2001 when the federal government announced a $24-million investment toward the project. At that time, the four main objectives of the program were: (1) creating a national registry of historic places; (2) instituting a set of standards and guidelines for conservation practice; (3) launching a funding program in support of conservation; and (4) developing federal legislation to protect historic places. The development of the Canadian Register of Historic Places, the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places and the Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund address the first three objectives. Development of legislation, however, is still under way.

Ontario’s partnership in the program is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture. The Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) has made a commitment to HPI through the nomination of property profiles for the online Canadian Register of Historic Places. Profiles are being composed for the properties held in trust by the OHT and a large percentage of the 195 properties protected by OHT conservation easement agreements. Through this process, the Registry will serve as both an integral tool for heritage research and a portal by which to increase exposure of the Trust and its properties.

### Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Canadian Register of Historic Places</th>
<th>Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places</th>
<th>Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Online database</td>
<td>Policy document</td>
<td>Grant program</td>
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<td>Objective</td>
<td>To provide a comprehensive listing of Ontario’s formally recognized historic places.</td>
<td>To provide sound, practical guidance for achieving good conservation practices.</td>
<td>To engage taxable Canadian corporations in preserving Canada’s heritage properties by rewarding good conservation practice with monetary compensation.</td>
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<td>Description</td>
<td>The Register is a searchable online database containing information about Canada’s historic places.</td>
<td>The Standards and Guidelines are intended as a benchmark for assessing proposed conservation interventions to promote responsible conservation practices and provide direction on how such practices are to be interpreted and applied.</td>
<td>The Incentive Fund is designed to present financial awards to eligible commercial properties listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. To be eligible for funding, a property must be owned by a taxable corporation, defined as “commercial” and involved in a rehabilitation project.</td>
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More information


**DIGGING UP YESTERDAY**

By Dena Doroszenko

John and Theresa Reesor live on a property near Bass Lake, Ontario that is protected by an Ontario Heritage Trust natural heritage easement. They lovingly care for this land and are interested in its history. The easement protects a portion of their property – specifically, a wetland area which also has a remnant of the original Old Barrie Road through the south end. The area surrounding Bass Lake is known to contain numerous archaeological sites, so it is not surprising that an Iroquoian site was discovered on the Reesor property in 2001.

It was announced on December 21, 2005 that the site of Ontario’s first parliament buildings in Toronto has been saved. The Ontario Government, in partnership with the City of Toronto – and with the strong support of local heritage groups – has acquired a significant part of the site of Upper Canada’s first parliament. The Ontario Heritage Trust has assumed ownership of this portion of the site. The Trust will work with stakeholders – including the federal and Ontario governments, the City of Toronto and community groups – to develop options and strategies for the long-term preservation of the site.

Artifacts now lying underground mark the site of Ontario’s first parliament buildings. The brick buildings built specifically for the legislative assembly in the late 18th century were burnt to the ground by invading American troops during the War of 1812.

“We are delighted to assume the lead role in the preservation of this significant heritage site,” said The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, Chairman of the Ontario Heritage Trust. “It is the birthplace of our systems of courts, land ownership and civil freedoms – democratic traditions that are the very measure of our strength as a province and as a society.”

For more information, contact the Ontario Heritage Trust at 416-325-0000.

**BREAKING NEWS: SAVING OUR First PARLIAMENT**

In summer 2005, during a routine Trust site visit, John Reesor brought out a find he made while digging near his c. 1840 farmhouse – a remarkably well-preserved 17th-century French trade axe (shown here). The term “French trade axe” or “hache de traite” applied to many types of axes traded during the French regime in New France. Iron axes were tools commonly used by aboriginals following contact with Europeans. Based on its weight, markings and measurements, this particular axe can be dated to the 1640s.

This remarkable find is not uncommon. Throughout Ontario, people are digging up yesterday with sometimes surprising, yet always fascinating, results. They may not be as old as a 17th-century axe, but every shard of our past tells us something more about our unique heritage.

Dena Doroszenko is the Ontario Heritage Trust’s Archaeologist.
Small-town museums key to small-town success

By Tim Mallon

For 18 years, my wife and I raised our two sons in the Town of Richmond Hill just north of Toronto. When we moved to the small town of Penetanguishene in February 2004, Richmond Hill had approximately 160,000 residents. And, as is sometimes the danger, much of that small-town charm has been subdued or erased entirely by rapid urban sprawl.

Richmond Hill does not have a local history museum and, as a result, lacks the same rich heritage experience that many smaller communities enjoy. Penetanguishene, on the other hand, has become a successful small town because it has a keen sense of its past. And the Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives (shown right) has become a focal point for many of the events that bring the town’s 8,500 residents together.

Most Canadians are aware of the larger professional museums and galleries that preserve our national heritage. What is exhibited, however, can often seem distant from our lives. But in small towns, local museums hold the collective memory not of our nation, but of our towns. They preserve the personal history of its residents, many of whom donated the unique items that are on display.

Penetanguishene, on the shore of Georgian Bay, was incorporated in 1875 and is considered the oldest town in Ontario. It has a rich history with three founding cultures: First Nations, French and British. Most of the current residents are descendants of those early pioneers. Our museum’s manager (Pierre L. Moreau) and curator (Nicole Jackson) are ambassadors for the town, promoting and preserving its past while rallying its citizens to celebrate the present to create tomorrow’s history.

While financial support from the three levels of government assists with the acquisition of special exhibits, there are other groups that make small-town museums successful across Ontario. A huge contribution is always made by local families. In our case, the C. Beck Manufacturing Company, operating from 1875 to 1969, had a significant impact on the local and continental lumber industry and the history of the town. The Beck family and company were instrumental in preserving Penetanguishene’s unique history by donating their former general store and lumber office as our town’s first museum. (The company was honoured in September 2005 with a provincial plaque unveiled by the Ontario Heritage Trust.)

Another key to a successful small town is its volunteer corps. Since 1991, the “Friends of the Museum” have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for our museum and helped run annual community events. As well, our museum’s genealogy centre is one of the best in Ontario, thanks to volunteers.

Numerous clubs and organizations also hold meetings and events at our museum. Special exhibits celebrate our past, while current events such as art exhibits and summer concerts promote local anglophone and francophone artists and musicians. By supporting small-town museums, you help to preserve and promote the past in a more personal way. It is this personal touch that makes the museum a focal point in the town, and a more substantial touchstone to its unique history.

Tim Mallon is the Chair of the Penetanguishene Centennial Museum and Archives.

Historic wallpaper: Finding what’s beneath

By Romas Bubelis

Wallpapers first appeared in Canada as early as the mid-17th century. These oldest papers were block-printed, hand-painted or stenciled. Pattern and colour was applied to squares of handmade paper that were pasted together to form a larger wall covering. From 1840 onward, machine roller printing made continuous roll wallpaper increasingly available to both the upper and middle classes.

While intact 19th-century papered walls are not common in Ontario, period wallpaper samples can often be found in historic buildings – if one knows where to look. The evidence is usually found in concealed locations and places where earlier wallpaper has been covered by later additions: behind switch plates, applied mouldings and built-in cabinetry.

As with all historic buildings, what one often finds is a surprise. During the restoration of the Bethune-Thompson House in Williamsburg, exploratory investigations revealed that the original c.1804 “Bethune” walls of the dining room and parlour, complete with their c.1825 block-printed wallpapers, had been covered by secondary walls built by subsequent owner David Thompson. The second walls were too significant to remove, but a glimpse of the oldest surviving paper was provided by wall mounted cabinet doors that open to reveal the original papered surfaces beneath, providing a window on to the past.

In most cases however, surviving scraps of origi- nal wallpaper are small and are used primarily to guide decisions about period restoration. The options are one-off custom reproduction papers or the selection of historically appropriate wallpaper from standard period patterns available from manufacturers. At George Brown House in Toronto, a scrap of the original c.1830 wallpaper used by Brown was found on a central hall wall, behind a later decorative mantelpiece. The original pattern was a bold plumede motif in a Rococo-inspired style, executed in metallic bronze ink on a thick embossed paper likely meant to imitate leather. Working with a commercial man- ufacturer, this historic pattern was accurately transferred and adapted to modern printing techniques.

For the later Art Nouveau-inspired dining room in the same house, an old black and white photograph provided sufficient detail to redraw the pattern, while a tiny scrap of original wallpaper found beneath mahogany trim served as a guide for the colour. These custom repro- duced wallpapers for George Brown House were also made available to the general restoration market as a new “heritage” product line of period pattern wallpaper.

In dealing with historic wallpaper, whether the approach is to conserve, display and interpret samples of historic material or to reproduce and restore period appearance, the starting point is always finding what’s beneath.

Romas Bubelis is an Architect with the Ontario Heritage Trust.
Snapshots of the past

A flash of phosphorus. A whiff of smoke. And an image is captured. Photographs have chronicled our lives for over 150 years, remaining one of our most enduring testaments to the past.

There is something incredibly nostalgic, even wistful, about looking at a stack of old photographs – whether curling snapshots or mounted studio portraits. Even if we don’t know the people, there is a story told in their eyes . . . their stance . . . their attire. A wary or haughty look, a blurred pose – every movement reveals something remarkable about the people from our past.

Photographs have chronicled our lives for over 150 years, remaining more than a glimpse or a snapshot. In their own right, they are historical artifacts that speak volumes about the people who lived in the past. They show us people who, in some cases, have only ever lived for us in books. One such man was George Brown, founder of The Globe newspaper, champion of anti-slavery and a Father of Confederation.

George Brown (1818-1880) was born and raised in Scotland. Despite early academic achievements, he joined his father’s wholesale trade business. Early on, he exercised his family’s ardent Liberalism and showed a tendency toward reform and progress. Brown’s strong Presbyterian background, too, established in him an ambition to make a difference in the world. Coming from a large family, Brown quickly developed a strong voice and became keenly interested in public speaking.

A flash of phosphorus. A whiff of smoke. And an image is captured. But a financial crisis in London, coupled with personal business losses, brought hard times to the Brown family. And they chose to emigrate to America.

George and his father sailed to New York in April 1837 when George was just 18 years old, leaving his mother and siblings behind in Edinburgh until the following year. It was here that George and his father started writing for a local newspaper, eventually launching a successful journal of their own. With an eye on the recent union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841, as well as events in the Church of Scotland back in Edinburgh, the Browns were soon persuaded to re-establish themselves in Canada. In 1843, the Browns moved to Toronto.

After establishing The Globe in 1844, with financial support from Reformer friends, Brown found himself becoming more entrenched in the politics of the day. He entered parliament in 1851 and quickly rose to the leadership of the powerful Reform or Liberal party of Upper Canada. He also played a central role in the Abolitionist movement, co-founding the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada in 1851.

During this hectic time, Brown’s health suffered and he decided, in 1862, to take a much-needed convalescent holiday in Britain. It was during this holiday that Brown met Anne Nelson – an intelligent and refined woman with whom he fell deeply in love. The couple was married in November after a brief courtship.

After returning to Toronto, Brown was ready for the increased political pressures and consultations that resulted in the Confederation of Canada. The British North America Act was passed in March 1867 in London, England – with many resolutions drafted by Brown himself. Political changes and competing business interests – as well as devotion to his growing family – took Brown out of the political spotlight. Yet he remained an active Liberal party supporter, personally and through his newspaper. In 1874, Brown was appointed as a senator.

On March 30, 1880 at The Globe offices, an employee dismissed for drunken behaviour shot Brown in the leg. The wound became infected and ultimately took Brown’s life on May 9. He died, surrounded by family, at his Toronto home (Lambton Lodge) at the age of 61.

Despite his many accomplishments, Brown remained humble and devoted to his family. His refusal of the lieutenant-governorship in 1874 and a knighthood in 1879 added to his distinction. Following his death, Anne Brown and their children returned to Scotland. Lambton Lodge had various lives over the years – from private dwelling to school for the blind – and was declared a National Historic Site in 1976. In 1989, the Ontario Heritage Trust restored George Brown House and reopened it as a conference facility and offices. The Victorian Library was recreated in the House by Parks Canada – complete with 2,000 books from George Brown’s personal collection.

Many of George Brown’s accomplishments survive. Fortunately, too, a photographic trail exists. And as he confidently addresses the camera lens, you get a better sense of the measure of the man.
The Story of Fairbank Oil –
by Patricia McGee

From Brown Graphics and Printing Inc. Oil defines today’s civilization. It ignites our economies in a thousand ways and it is so critical that nations wage war to get it. As an industry, oil exploded into a global juggernaut. This galloping tale is peppered with the colourful accomplishments of the four generations of Fairbank men who witnessed, recorded and made history. It opens with John Henry Fairbank and how he became Canada’s biggest oil producer, built the biggest mansion in Lambton County and owned the largest hardware store west of Toronto. Three times the oil property and the hardware store have passed from father to son and the businesses survive, to ship its crude to Imperial Oil for more than 120 years.

Strengthening Ontario’s Heritage.
© Queen’s Printer for Ontario 2005. The Ontario government is helping communities across the province preserve and protect their local heritage with the release of Strengthening Ontario’s Heritage: An introductory guide to identifying, protecting and promoting your community’s heritage. The first of several products being developed to respond to the need for additional resource materials, this free 38-page publication will be distributed to provincial heritage stakeholders, including: municipalities, municipal heritage committees, provincial heritage organizations and community museums. The general public can access the guide online at the Ministry’s website (www.culture.gov.on.ca) or through Publications Ontario (1-800-668-9938).
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