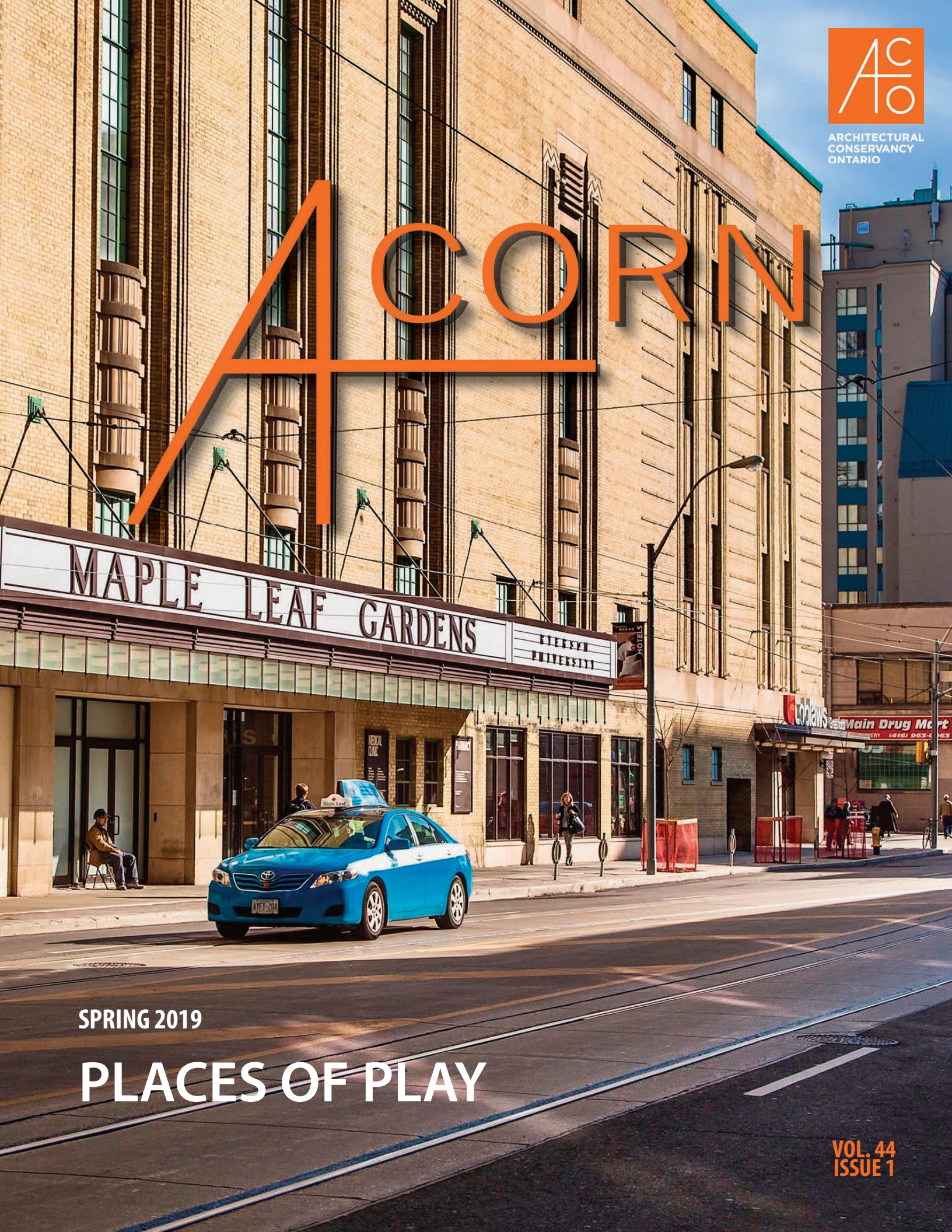

SPRING 2019

PLACES OF PLAY

VOL. 44
ISSUE 1

ACO HERITAGE AWARDS 2018

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE NOMINEES AND AWARD RECIPIENTS!

The ceremony was held on October 11, 2018, and the awards went to...

Junction Craft Brewery and PLANT Architect Inc., Toronto

Paul Oberman Award for Adaptive Reuse (corporate): For the impressive adaptive reuse of an abandoned incinerator.

Schmaltz Appetizing, Toronto

Paul Oberman Award for Adaptive Reuse (small scale): For respecting and re-imagining a historic commercial building to suit a new use.

Fiona McKean, The Opinicon, Elgin

Peter Stokes Restoration Award (corporate): For an exceptional restoration of a historic resort, and for preserving its cultural heritage.

The New Petrie Building, Tyrcathlen Partners, Guelph

Peter Stokes Restoration Award (corporate): For completing an exemplary restoration of a neglected historic building.

Spire Restoration at Ste. Anne Church, Tecumseh

Peter Stokes Restoration Award (small scale): For overcoming challenges to undertake a technically challenging restoration of a community landmark.

The Working Centre, founders Joe & Stephanie Mancini, Kitchener

A. K. Sculthorpe Award for Advocacy: For their advocacy, restoration, and re-use of eight heritage buildings in downtown Kitchener.

Eve Guinan, Toronto

James D. Strachan Award for Craftsmanship: For her impressive body of work in stained glass, and her training of skilled apprentices to keep the art of stained glass restoration alive.

Simon Brothers and Dean Robinson, Stratford

ACO Media Award: For creating the documentary "GRAND TRUNK: A City Built on Steam, Stratford Ontario," and for their success in raising awareness of Stratford's railway legacy.

Stephanie Mah, Toronto

Mary Millard Award for Special Contributions: For her exceptional involvement with ACO early in her career, and for her contributions to ACO NextGen, as well as her graphic design and social media work.

Sampoorna Bhattacharya, Ottawa

ACO NextGen Award: For her exceptional involvement with ACO early in her career, and for her contributions to ACO NextGen.

Leaside Matters, Toronto

Margaret and Nicholas Hill Cultural Heritage Landscape Award: For illuminating the community of Leaside as a unique cultural landscape within the city of Toronto.

The tenants of 401 Richmond and Margaret Zeidler, Toronto

Special Jury Award for Advocacy: For an outstanding advocacy effort that led to the creation of the Creative Co-location Facilities Property Tax Subclass. The campaign's success created the potential for tax relief for similar properties across Ontario, a significant benefit to the heritage sector.

Janet Hunton, London

Eric Arthur Lifetime Achievement Award: For her significant contributions to conservation in the city of London that have earned her the respect of so many.

STAY TUNED: NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2019 AWARDS WILL BE OPEN SOON

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY ONTARIO

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The south elevation of 50 Carlton Street, formerly Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, showing the restored marquee. **Photo** ERA Architects, 2012

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ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY ONTARIO

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Architectural Conservancy Ontario gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Honourable Michael A. Tibollo, Minister.

SSN:0704-0083

Correction: In the Fall 2018 ACORN "The Conservation of Craft," the architect of the Petrie Block in Guelph was incorrectly identified. We are grateful to Robert Hill, Editor of the *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950*, for correctly identifying the architect as John Day (1849-1896) of Guelph. For more information about this architect and others, please visit http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/835

FROM THE CHAIR

F. Leslie Thompson
MFA MBA FCSI ICD.D HRCCC
ACO President and Chair
Photo Matthew Plexman

Where are your places of play? Where are those magic spaces that rekindle the expansive imagination, free of judgement that we had as children?

This past summer I had one of those boundary-breaking experiences at *Free Space*, an exhibition of architecture curated by architects Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara for the Biennale Architettura 2018 in Venice. Their manifesto is "space is the craft of architecture." One of the highlighted projects was a place with a heritage of play that shares attributes and perhaps insights with some of the projects described in this issue of ACORN.

Eva Prats and Richardo Flores designed the Sala Beckett theatre in Barcelona that occupies an existing abandoned building that was once a workers' social club. It is a repurposed building with a history of play that continues as a theatre and creative incubator. As the façade did not really change, perhaps it is the organic flow of the interior space — the surprise of light flowing through a floor or a roof or the juxtaposition of relics of past — that gives licence to imagination and to play in this space. One can imagine that the human flow, the dance, the play, has not been interrupted.

A similar sensibility is evident in the repurposed Maple Leaf Gardens described by Scott Weir in this issue. Riding the escalator by the east wall past the both the relics of the seats and the cobalt blue delineation for the wild fans, you can almost hear the past cheers as you transverse the space in the opposite direction. Similarly, in Jack Hutton's story of Dunn's Pavilion (1942) we learn of the original owner's expansive design and collaboration with a local boat builder to span the dancefloor without the weight and expense of steel. These are stories of applied imagination where the crafting of space and signifiers of the building's past realize a continuation of play.

In this issue of ACORN we are challenged to acknowledge not only the history of places of play, but to *preserve* the joy of play and the outcome of uninhibited imagination in the repurposing of places of play. At time of writing, Ontario Place, a place of play and Eb Zeidler's space of inspiration, is at risk. Please reflect on your own memories of fun and play at Ontario Place and share them with us. Although our ACO colleagues are hard at work educating and advocating for this landmark, your own stories have a cultural and social heritage value.

This message is my last as the Chair and President of ACO. It has been my pleasure to write about heritage preservation, visual literacy and design in a conceptual context. Thank you.

— Leslie

The exterior of Sala Beckett, Barcelona, Spain. **Photo** Adrià Goula, 2017

The interior of Sala Beckett designed by Eva Prats and Richardo Flores. **Photo** Adrià Goula

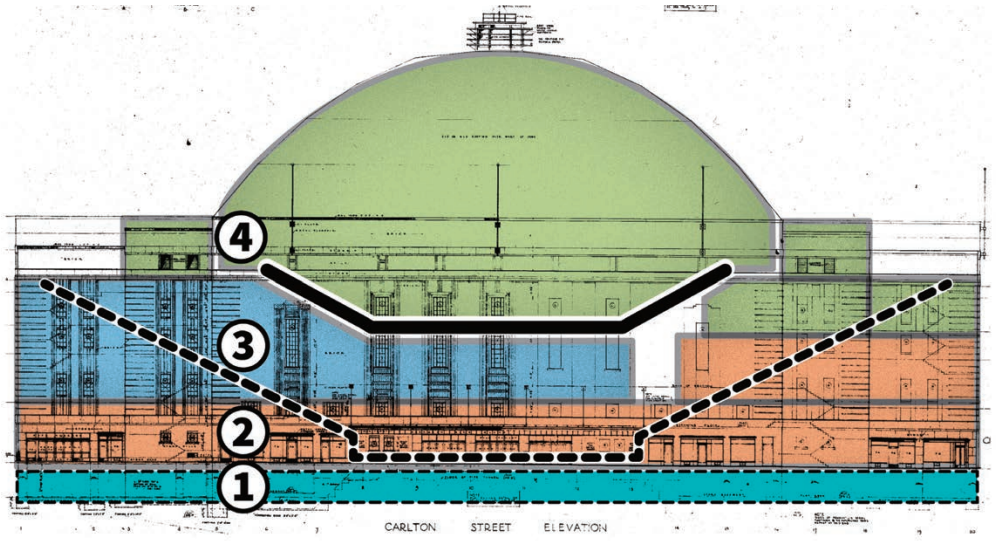
ADAPTING MAPLE LEAF GARDENS

by Scott Weir

The adaptive reuse of Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG) included a significant effort to support its continued role as a facility for hockey and athletics. Following the sale of MLG by Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, the building was no longer going to be used for its original purposes. A creative adaptation had to be designed to provide a sustainable use, protect the significant heritage of the site, and improve the building's relationship to the surrounding neighbourhood.

MLG is a national historic site and "the cathedral of hockey", whose value is tied both to the history of use as a hockey arena and public forum, and to its architectural form within the city. This might be the only building that I've worked on where the client and consulting team including the mechanical and electrical engineers were as excited about the heritage value of the place as the heritage architects. This interest was understandable. The building had filled an incredibly significant role for Toronto not only as a site for hockey but also as a gathering place for cultural events such as concerts, political rallies, and other sporting activities.

Maple Leaf Gardens was designated in 1990 and recognized as a National Historic Site in 2006. The 1931 building was designed by Ross & MacDonald, in collaboration with Jack Ryrie and Mackenzie Waters Associates. Construction of MLG proceeded when it was decided that the Arena Gardens rink on Mutual Street was too small for Toronto to compete with Chicago and New York which had bigger arenas. Bigger arenas led to more ticket sales, which allowed for higher salaries, enabling the purchasing of top hockey talent. The new building was built with 12,000 seats, each having unobstructed views of the ice. Due to availability of labour in the Depression MLG was built in five months and 12 days, with the awarding of shares in the future arena to construction workers in lieu of 20 percent of their wages.



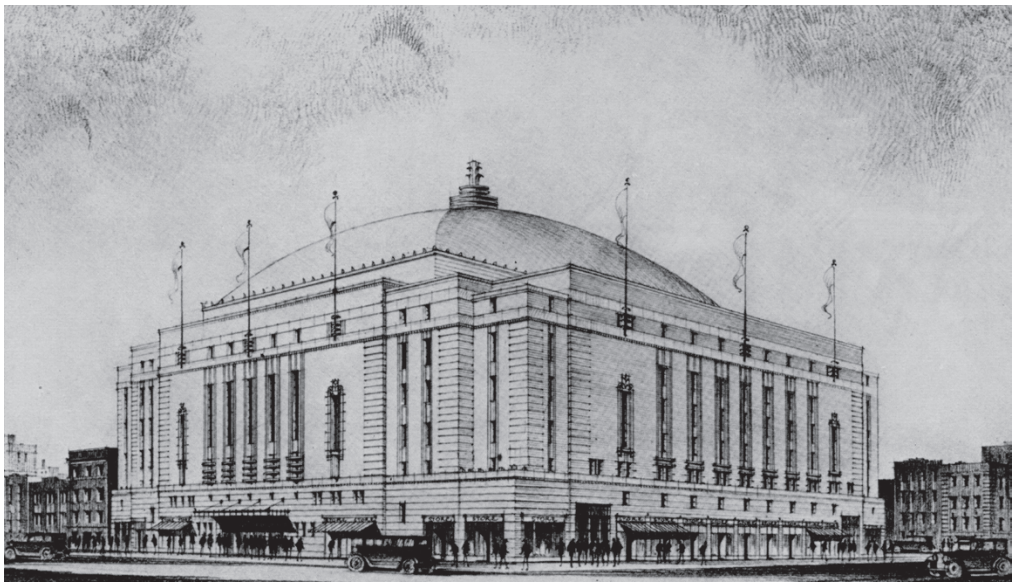
Sketch made by Carl Shura, ERA Architects showing the shift of the ice upward. 1. The area dug out below the ground floor for parking; 2. Retail area; 3. Ryerson athletics facilities; 4. Ryerson's hockey arena. The dotted line shows the original location of the ice and bleachers, the solid line the new location of ice and bleachers.

The architecture and structure of the building is significant, but its purpose-built form with few windows made it somewhat challenging to adapt to new uses. The structure is comprised of a concrete post and beam system surrounded by a solid masonry brick box, but with an innovative roof system. Four concrete piers support the 63 x 68 metre structural steel truss and girder dome comprised of four diagonal trussed ribs, four perimeter trusses and an infill truss structure. The whole thing was constructed such that one corner was pinned with the other three on rollers to allow for expansion and contraction. From the ice surface to the top of the stair above the score board was 46 metres.

It is interesting to note that, of the original six NHL arenas, Maple Leaf Gardens is one of only two that still stand, and the only building in which hockey is still played. In 2004 Maple Leafs Sports and Entertainment moved to the Air Canada Centre and the building was sold to Loblaws for redevelopment, with the condition that the arena could not be used in competition with the Air Canada Centre. This type of agreement had previously led to the demolition of the Detroit Olympia among other buildings; combined with the challenging-to-adapt form it could easily have led to the loss of the building.

In this case Loblaws took the time to study how to best adapt the building. It entered into partnership with Ryerson University to construct a mixed-use building that incorporates commercial uses on the ground and second floors, and allocates the upper floors to Ryerson's Mattamy Centre athletic facility. By shifting the ice rink and its bleachers straight up two stories, the building

The refurbished rink in Ryerson's Mattamy Athletic Centre. **Photo** ERA, 2012



"Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, Ontario: perspective view", 1931. Ross and Macdonald fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, ARCH33050.

was allowed to retain its original use as a hockey arena, while also making room for a basketball/volleyball court, workout gym and supporting spaces. This was accomplished by preserving the structure supporting the roof and the masonry envelope through significant structural gymnastics, and removing the remainder of the interior and underpinning down one level to support specialized requirements of the new uses.

A dead zone on the street was activated by introducing major commercial activity with a Loblaws, LCBO and Joe Fresh visible from grade. The adapted building represents the collaborative work of Turner Fleisher Architects, BBB Architects, EXP structural engineers and ERA Architects.

The interpretation for the building extends beyond the requisite plaque and interpretive panel and includes panels throughout the building, reinstallation of original elements like seating, the use of the Gardens' supergraphics for wayfinding (and even to demarcate Loblaws departments), the reinstatement of the original format for the marquee, and the expression of demolished elements like stairways and floor slabs on the interior face of the envelope. The story of change is visible and expressed throughout the building.

The team's strategy to adapt the site incorporated three elements: avoid putting the building at risk; achieve an ecological and holistic sustainability goal — one that is social, environmental and economic; and innovate and adapt where necessary to achieve project objectives within major constraints (physical/structural, municipal/legislative, and environmental). MLG, while protected and of great interest, was a purpose-built building that had lost its purpose, one that could not be reinstated. A new economic generator had to be established that could sustain the building for future generations. Ultimately the project's holistic goal was achieved through collaboration that allowed for a challenging element to be reused while turning a neighbourhood liability into an asset.

About the author

Scott Weir is a Principal at ERA Architects Inc., and holds a post-professional Master's degree in Architecture. Scott has been with ERA since 2000 and he specializes in heritage conservation, adaptive reuse, new design, heritage planning, and advocacy for heritage buildings.

SAVING A COMMUNITY TREASURE

by Francine Antoniou

At 4709 Dundas Street West, just east of Islington Avenue in Toronto, stands an important heritage building. Montgomery's Inn has occupied an important place in the Etobicoke community since 1830. From my office window, I observe what is now a vibrant and bustling community museum. Though I feel lucky enough to view this historical treasure every day, I've also been fortunate to have worked on this property for the last six years.

The site was a tavern for some 25 years in the nineteenth century. The building was used by many groups in the twentieth century until it was recognized for its heritage value and opened as a museum in 1975 to offer a wide range of community programs. Montgomery's Inn Museum has recently undergone a major project to overhaul its interpretation and has had its finishes refreshed in order to offer the best possible experience to visitors.

The first structure was the stone farmhouse, built around 1830 for Irish immigrants Thomas and Margaret Montgomery. It was located on the northwest corner of a 400-acre lot. As Dundas was the main road west out of the city, this was an ideal location for an overnight stop for travellers and farmers delivering goods.

Montgomery's Inn Museum located at the corner of Dundas Street and Islington Avenue. **Photo** Richard Seck, 2019

In June of 1831, a surveyor recommended in his journal, "Come to T. Montgomery tavern on Dundas Street." Quoted on the Etobicoke Historical Society website, this is one of the earliest references we have of the inn.

Montgomery's Inn operated as a gathering place for locals and rest stop for travellers until 1856, a year after Margaret Montgomery's death. After being handed down two more generations within the family, the property changed hands several more times. Chinese market gardeners farmed the land. Then in the 1940s, the Kingsway Presbyterian Church transformed the building into a worship space by removing interior partition walls from the first floor. After deciding it wasn't suited to their needs, the church sold the building to property developer Louis Mayzel, who planned to demolish it. Thanks to overwhelming community support — led by the Etobicoke Historical Society — the building was saved. The community decided to restore the building as a living history museum to be run by the Etobicoke Historical Board. The museum, which opened in 1975, focused on educational programs and domestic crafts of the nineteenth century.

An addition built in 1990 on the footprint of the former drive-shed facilitated the relocation of all administration offices and created community spaces. This enhanced the historical experience of the building. In 2011, the museum was under threat of closure, but once again the community saved it. Since then, museum staff have greatly supplemented the community-focused programs, including a weekly Farmers' Market, monthly pub nights with live music, and a variety of youth and senior programs.

The expanded programming made it clear that the Inn had aged and needed to be refreshed. A master plan was produced to define the current and future needs of the site. The plan included much-needed maintenance work and restoration of the rooms in the historical inn, as well as making spaces more flexible, providing more outdoor gathering spaces, designing a more prominent entrance, making the reception and gift shop more accessible and larger, and improving circulation.

George Robb Architect worked with museum curator Alexandra Kim and Sandra Lougheed from the City of Toronto's Museum and Heritage Services on two distinct projects dubbed "Re-restoration" and "Re-circulation."

The restored kitchen is greatly enhanced by the new lighting design. **Photo** Richard Seck, 2019

A gathering in the newly landscaped side yard. **Photo** Francine Antoniou, 2017

The Inn's previous overall restoration was carried out in 1975 and it was time to review the base of its theme. The re-restoration of the historic inn incorporates recent academic thinking into nineteenth-century taverns and the research of Ken Purvis, Museum Coordinator. Changes were made to some of the rooms, for example creating an upper parlour based on written and visual descriptions. Paint was analyzed, walls were repainted, and some of the antique furniture suitable only for display was replaced with new usable furniture. Other elements like replacing curtains and adding a chiming clock, have also helped enhance the charm and hospitality of the spaces.

An interesting part of this project was the museum's desire to reveal layers of history. This allowed construction to proceed and the museum to operate for normal hours while the restoration work was integrated into the house tours. Because of this, additional investigations were welcomed which further enhanced the Inn's narrative as well as correcting old, and occasionally incorrect, assumptions. An abandoned window from the 1838 addition was revealed. Layers were left exposed when adding a reinstated partition wall.

Now a more interactive museum, the biggest rooms needed to be made more accessible and flexible. Paul Boken, a lighting specialist from Mulvey and Banani, provided a lighting solution that achieves this. Small wires were imbedded in plaster walls, antique lanterns were electrified and LED strips were hidden from view. The larger spaces can now easily transform from a period place, to a farmers' market, to a gathering room — simply by adjusting the lights.

The museum entrance is through the 1990 addition and the old layout made it difficult to navigate. The update to this area creates a more inviting space for visitors. This renovation opened the space up, allowing visitors to experience the true heritage of the old stone wall juxtaposed against the new modern architectural finishes in the addition. A large new window opening toward the adjacent park and Islington Avenue allows visitors a continuous sense of orientation for added comfort. A high-quality vinyl reproduction of the 1856 map of Etobicoke not only provides the floor finish but has created the perfect starting point for an introduction to the Inn's history. This new open concept and larger space invites further flexibility of use and a place for spontaneous gatherings.

The museum is continuously expanding the theme of community and gathering and this major renovation more than satisfied the current needs, while providing a bright outlook for the future. Montgomery's Inn continues as an essential part of the community after 188 years!

About the author

Francine Antoniou is an architect at George Robb Architect. She has been working on restoration and adaptive reuse projects for over a decade. She is a member of both ACO and CAHP.

THE QUEEN'S HOTEL, PORT HOPE

by Jackie Tinson

There has been a place of refreshment and relaxation at 81 Walton Street in Port Hope since 1802. From coffee house, to inn, to home-away-from-home for commercial travellers, to a place for sedate family dining, to bikers' watering hole, this is the history of The Queen's Hotel.

Little is known of The Coffee Exchange which operated in the early 1800s other than that it was a frame building. Presumably it was one of the many coffee houses popular at the time where men supped and discussed business. In the 1850s, innkeepers began advertising accommodations at the site in The Port Hope Evening Guide. John Hetherington, operating an inn under the name Durham House, upgraded the former coffee house and guaranteed, "Proper and Respectful Attendance" to all guests and invited the public to "a fair trial of the accommodations." He offered three meals daily: "Breakfast, 8 o'clock a.m., Dinner, 1 o'clock, p.m., Tea, 6 o'clock, p.m.".

In 1859, the building was gutted by fire and the lot was bought by William Bletcher, co-owner of the Peterborough to Port Hope stage coach line. He put up a brick building and leased his property to Thomas Hastings. Hastings ran the inn as The Prince of Wales in 1860, no doubt to honour the visit of His Royal Highness that year.

The Queen's Hotel in 1897 (the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee) after the 1870s improvements and incorporation of the building to the west. **Photo** courtesy of The Long Family Collection

Inns were patronized not only by travellers but also by residents looking to "unwind" (although they surely would never have used that word). Bar rooms were social centres and in 1857 Port Hope had 12 inns and 8 saloons. Quality varied, but booze flowed freely and liquor-fueled fights were common. No doubt the Prince of Wales saw its fair share.

In 1871, the property was owned by James Cochrane who undertook extensive improvements and it was probably he who incorporated the building next door. This necessitated the raising of the floor on the west side 18 inches (46 centimetres) to accommodate the Walton Street hill. Cochrane doubled the number of rooms to 40, 20 with the spa-like luxury of bath and shower. He named his establishment The Queen's Hotel. There were two shops on the ground floor and the entrance to the hotel was between the two shops with a clock above. The façade was in the (very modern) Italianate style.

Port Hope's Music Hall, later known as the Opera House, opened in 1871 on the corner opposite The Queen's. This no doubt added to the attraction of the hotel.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the hotel was extended and an additional storey was added. The Queen's was now catering to commercial travellers who could disembark at the Town Station (corner of Lent's Lane) and walk the few steps up the hill to the hotel. Several large sample rooms were available to them but the dining room — "a model of convenience and comfort in its appointments" serving "the best cooked meals it has ever been his or her lot to share in a public hostelry" — attracted townspeople and travellers in equal measure. The well-stocked bar "where the choicest of wines, liquours [sic], ales, lager and cigars can be had at all times" would have encouraged conviviality (Port Hope Archives, 1907). At the end of the day, patrons could be seen relaxing

in wooden rockers on the front verandah, smoking and chatting. Arthur Richard Denison (1857-1923), a Toronto architect, designed an addition in 1902 for Louis Bennett. The Queen's remained solidly middle-class through the early 1900s.

One resident tells of her father taking her mother to dinner there when they were courting as it was considered "a pretty high-class place." When her mother commented that she liked the pattern of the liqueur glass, her father slipped the glass into his pocket.

Menu of The Queen's Hotel dining room, probably in 1940 when hamburgers could be bought for 20¢. **Photo** courtesy of The Long Family Collection.

Presenting the bill, the waiter explained: "Well sir, this amount is for your drinks, this amount for the food, and the last charge is for the restaurant property that is in your jacket pocket." The daughter still has the glass.

As the economy contracted, the hotel went into a slow decline. No longer considered middle-class, it became popular as a bikers' watering hole, and in 1978 a biker was fatally shot in the bar apparently as the result of a feud with Satan's Choice. The liquor license was revoked shortly afterward under health and safety regulations and the hotel closed.

The building stood empty and neglected until 2012 when it was bought by SideStreet Developments. It is now being repurposed as a condominium, with 18 luxury suites above (each with balcony or terrace for summer leisure activities) and shopping and commercial space on the ground floor. Several layers of paint and whitewash are to be removed from the brick to expose the Stanley Reds. All windows, restored several years ago by the Port Hope ACO, have been incorporated into the design. The complex has been named The Walton and can be viewed on their website: www.thewalton.ca.

Artist's rendering of the repurposed Queen's Hotel, 2019. **Courtesy** of SideStreet Developments.

About the author

Jackie Tinson is a member of the Port Hope and the Cobourg East Northumberland branches of the ACO. She is a retired lecturer in Classics at Trent University.

THE QUEEN CITY YACHT CLUB: A PLACE TO PLAY AND WORK

by Joanna Kidd

Queen City Yacht Club members prepare for repairing the clubhouse foundations in 1995. **Photo** Ron Mazza

Every Friday during the summer months, people gather at the foot of York Street in Toronto to take a small tender — the *Algonquin Queen* — to the Queen City Yacht Club. Laden with supplies and sailing gear and accompanied by kids and dogs, club members leave the city behind and head across Toronto Bay to the island for the weekend. Some may take part in a Saturday race out in Lake Ontario. Some may go for a leisurely sail around the Toronto Islands with friends. Some may merely sit on their boats at the dock and gaze at the distant city skyline. And as they have for more than a century, some will roll up their sleeves and get down to work.

"The Bay" is one of Toronto's great recreational assets. Protected from Lake Ontario by the curved barrier of the Toronto Islands, it has long been used by paddlers, rowers and sailors for recreation. Organized sailing started on the bay in 1850, with the founding of the Toronto Yacht Club which soon morphed into the large and well-heeled Royal Canadian Yacht Club. The Queen City Yacht Club was established by a group of sailing enthusiasts in 1889 as an alternative to the RCYC. Its aims were to promote affordable sailing at a time when the sport was largely perceived as an elite (and expensive) activity. The fledgling club rented modest quarters and set an annual membership fee of $5.00, attracting 60 members in its first year. Members' boats — about 20 in number — were mostly small skiffs, 14 to 22 feet in length (4 to 6.7 metres), which were relatively cheap to buy, store and maintain. The little club filled a niche and, over time, it grew and flourished.

By the summer of 1902, QCYC members were able to celebrate the grand opening of their own clubhouse designed by architect and club member E. J. Lennox (the designer of Toronto's Old City Hall, the King Edward Hotel and Casa Loma). With its wrap-around balconies, the three-storey, wooden clubhouse was a handsome addition to the "boating row" on the central waterfront that then included the Toronto Canoe Club and the Argonaut Rowing Club.

But as shipping, industrial and rail use began to increasingly dominate Toronto's central waterfront, QCYC started to think about moving to the islands. The question of whether to move or not was ultimately decided in the summer of 1920, when Toronto Harbour Commission dredging undermined the foundations of the QCYC clubhouse, causing it to collapse into the bay. The club subsequently leased a 2.5 acre lot (roughly one hectare) on the eastern end of Sunfish (now Algonquin) Island and opened a new clubhouse there in the summer of 1921.

At that time, Sunfish Island was a bleak, treeless landform created by the Harbour Commission from sand sucked from the bottom of the bay. In 1938, QCYC got its first neighbours when the development of Toronto's first airport led to the relocation of cottages from Hanlan's Point to the newly-renamed Algonquin Island. Additional houses were added after the Second World War, when Toronto was experiencing a housing shortage and returning veterans were encouraged by the city to take up leases and build there. Relations between the club and island residents strengthened and the club cemented its reputation as a self-sufficient "working man's club."

QCYC yard with the island clubhouse in the background. **Photo** Unknown, 1955

The Queen City Yacht Club of today remains a modest size. It has about 480 members and provides mooring for over 150 keelboats and space for about 40 drysailed dinghies and small keelboats. Only ten minutes from the bustle of downtown Toronto, members escape to a different world, one with clean air and relative quiet; proximity to the beaches and amenities of Toronto Island Park; learn-to-sail programs for kids and adults; an active racing and cruising schedule; and popular events and dances. After racing on Wednesday nights, members eat and drink in the historic Great Hall, surrounded by memorabilia, where the polished wooden floor reflects the hanging burgees from scores of sailing clubs around the world.

In keeping with its roots as a low-cost way to enjoy the sport of sailing, QCYC is a "self-help" club. There are very few staff, and members keep the cost of membership down by contributing "work hours" at painting, gardening, and maintaining the club's docks, locker buildings and 98-year-old clubhouse.

Nothing encapsulates the Queen City ethos as much as the perennial spring launch and fall haulout of boats. Today, most yacht clubs handle these tasks with rented cranes or purpose-built mobile lifts operated by professionals, but at QCYC, launch and haulout are done in much the same way they have always been carried out. In a manner described as "anachronistic, almost deliberately defiant of technology," members use the simplest of tools and the might of collective human power.

An inclined marine railway powered by a diesel winch is used to pull boats on cradles out of the water or lower them down into it. Boats are moved perpendicularly to and from the railway by scores of members who pull and push them along timber ways. Members self-organize into various teams: the cradle crew to orient and move empty cradles; pushers and pullers to move boats along the ways; trained drivers to coax the temperamental and aging winch into doing its job; and experienced loaders to ensure that each boat is sitting properly on its cradle before being hauled up the marine railway. A flag person shouts orders and the Yard Chair ensures that the correct cradle is matched to each boat. Most of the time, but not always, the operation proceeds like a well-oiled machine.

At the end of a day of launching or hauling out boats, tired members put tools away and gather near the winch house to enjoy a well-deserved beer and bask in the sense of accomplishment that comes from working collectively on a challenging job. If it is spring and the last boat has been launched, they can look forward to starting to work on their own boats the following day, in preparation for another summer on the water. This spring will mark the 98th year this ritual has unfolded at QCYC on the island.

About the author

Joanna Kidd is a writer, editor and environmental consultant. A long-time Toronto Island resident, she has sailed on Toronto Bay for over 50 years, and has been a member of the Queen City Yacht Club since 2012.

RIVERSIDE PARK, CAMBRIDGE

by Marilyn Scott

The entrance gates to Riverside Park, circa 1950.
Photo City of Cambridge Archives Photograph Collection

For over 130 years, Riverside Park has been a destination for generations of folks seeking a welcome refuge for relaxation and recreation. The park's river and ponds, wide open spaces, secluded natural trails, privacy or the company of others are restorative when one's obligations are set aside.

Located at 49 King Street West in what was formerly the Town of Preston, Cambridge's largest community park at 102 hectares (or 252 acres) wasn't always known as Riverside. Originally it was named Speed Park, but we'll get to the reason for the change shortly.

In 1888, local merchant and elected official William Schleuter sold 32 acres of land along the Speed River to the Preston Riding and Driving Association, which later sold the property to the Town of Preston. The community was prospering, and the officials transformed the site into public parkland, featuring a wooden grandstand and oval track where harness racing drew crowds.

By the late 1890s, the Preston Curling and Skating Club had built a multi-use rink near the park entrance. A combined power plant and water pumping station was completed nearby in 1908 with two arc light generators to power street lamps introduced to the neighbourhood in 1901.

This part of town was a hub of activity. An electric railway running past the park and through the town was a boon to locals and visitors alike. Just a block away, several hotels featuring mineral springs and spa treatments attracted international patrons. Directly opposite was a flour mill built in 1807; it is still in business today. The Waterloo Historical Society plaque says it is the "oldest continuous business in Waterloo County."

In 1911, The Town of Preston bought the curling/skating club property and hired Frederick G. Todd, the first practitioner in Canada to use the title "Landscape Architect," to design the expanding park. Born in New Hampshire in 1876, Todd had apprenticed in 1896 with Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, the successor firm of Frederick Law Olmsted who is widely considered the father of American landscape architecture. Todd's work took him to Montreal where he married and settled. His other commissions included Ottawa's preliminary plan of parks and parkways for the nation's capital, as well as designing numerous private gardens, city parks and institutional grounds across Canada.

The Prestonian published an article in September 1919, that gives a sense of how important the park was to the citizenry. The local paper titled its piece "Parks Board Planning – Many Improvements Contemplated For Speed Park … Property Has Great Possibilities … How Driveway Will Open The Eyes of Citizens." The article went on to state "The parks board are fully alive to their opportunities and all they need is the hearty co-operation of all the citizens of Preston to make Speed Park one of the most beautiful and most useful 25 acre tracts in the Province.

> "WE DON'T STOP PLAYING BECAUSE WE GROW OLD;
>
> WE GROW OLD BECAUSE WE STOP PLAYING."
>
> GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The description continued: "Already workmen have been engaged to roughout, this Fall, the contemplated driveway through the natural wooded portion of the property. When the driveway is completed the citizens will be able to inspect with comfort, the full extent and possibilities of their valuable natural asset. A little development work will put Speed Park in such shape that everyone can derive benefit and enjoyment from it."

The article summarized the many improvements envisioned, among them to provide a bathing pool "with pure filtered running water from the Speed River"; to improve the river bank; and possibly provide boathouses to encourage canoeing, "for which the pond adjoining the park is admirably adapted…. Of course, money is necessary to make all these improvements."

The reason for the name change to Riverside Park is amusing. On December 21, 1920, a local newspaper reported the Preston Parks Board's decision: "The name Speed was not considered a suitable one, for the reason that strangers coming to town mistook the meaning of the name, not knowing that the park was named after the River Speed but thought that by speed they could enter the park with automobiles or motorcycles and travel with all the speed they could get out of their machines." All of this was a century ago!

Soon after the First World War, a new entrance to Riverside Park was created to commemorate the Preston soldiers who fought and died in the war.

As noted in Canada's Historic Places, imposing new columns and railings were erected as well as a dedicated plaque listing the names of the veterans from 1914 through 1918.

Over the decades, the park has seen amenities come and go as tastes changed. Once there was a zoo; now there are purpose-built skateboard and BMX facilities. Once there was a swimming pool; now there is a splash pad. Years ago, the playground equipment included metal slides that singed a backside. Now there are safety-conscious accessible slides and climbers.

Through all seasons, there are well-kept nature trails for walking, running, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, and bird watching. Sport facilities include softball and slo-pitch baseball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis courts, and outdoor ice rinks. Numerous picnic areas are in demand and must be booked well in advance.

Leisure Lodge, a large dance hall with a summer beer garden, opened in 1948 and attracted pleasure-seekers from miles around. Many famous musicians played there, including Count Basie, Woody Herman, and Buddy Rich. A fire destroyed it in 1980, but a bronze plaque was installed in 1999 to mark its former location.

Today the park continues to be central to community life. Besides being the venue for festivals and carnivals, it is the finish line for the July 1st Canada Day parade. The annual celebrations are capped off as tens of thousands of people gather for the fireworks spectacle. For well over a century, the catchphrase has been "let's go to the park!"

Warming up for a performance at the Cambridge International Festival. **Photo** Courtesy of Cambridge Times, 2014

Residents and visitors flock to the park each year for Canada Day celebrations. **Photo** Courtesy of Cambridge Times, 2018

In 1973, the municipalities of Galt, Preston, and Hespeler were merged to become the City of Cambridge. The first mayor, Claudette Millar, and other local dignitaries welcomed Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh to mark the amalgamation on June 28 at Riverside Park.

As is tradition, gifts were exchanged. The gift for the Queen was a tartan sash, a tartan tie for the Prince, plus a bolt of tartan was presented to be taken back to England. The tartan design was symbolic of the Hespeler Textile Festival at the time and it is registered in Ottawa.

About the author

Marilyn Scott is a member of ACO Cambridge & North Dumfries (formerly Heritage Cambridge), and a former board member. She would like to thank the staff at the City of Cambridge Archives and local residents for their assistance with research and firsthand accounts.

GAGE PARK: HAMILTON'S URBAN PLAYGROUND

by Yvonne Battista

Often referred to as one of the crown jewels of Hamilton's park network, Gage Park offers 28.8 hectares (71 acres) of open public space in the heart of the city. It has continuously supported play, recreation, and leisure of all kinds for nearly a century — from sports and festivals to wedding photography along the picturesque flower beds and floral shows in the greenhouse.

Gage Park Plan, Dunnington-Grubb, 1920. The park is located at 1000 Main Street East, Hamilton. **Courtesy** City of Hamilton

While Gage Park has clear landscape heritage value from an aesthetic and cultural perspective — it was designed in the 1920s during the City Beautiful Movement — the park also plays an integral environmental role in the city's stormwater management system that helps prevent neighbourhood flooding.

The grounds of Gage Park used to be the site of vegetable gardens and apple and pear orchards grown by a prominent Hamilton lawyer, Robert Russell Gage (1840-1918), as well as home to The Hamilton Riding and Driving Park, which hosted the Queen's Plate (Canada's oldest thoroughbred horse race) in 1866 and 1874. The property was sold to the City of Hamilton in 1918 for $320,000, approximately $4 million in today's money. Greenhouses were constructed in 1919, with the annual Chrysanthemum Show beginning in 1921, and the land formally became a city park on January 23, 1922.

The Board of Parks commissioned Howard and Lorrie Dunington-Grubb in 1920 for $10,000 to design a master plan for Gage Park. Looking at their design — with the graceful Beaux-Arts sweeping pathways intended for strolling, the great meadow, geometric flower beds, and strategically placed groups of trees all framing views to the Niagara Escarpment, more commonly known as Hamilton Mountain — it is clear why Dunington-Grubb is often considered the founder of landscape architecture in Canada. The plan led to several recreational additions, including tennis courts in 1924 and the lawn bowling green in 1925.

In 1926 Robert and Hannah Gage's daughter Eugenia, seeking to secure the park's name in memory of her parents, donated $20,000 and commissioned the addition of a memorial fountain and wading canal. Architect John Lyle completed the iconic Beaux-Arts design in 1927.

The park continued to evolve with the addition of more amenities for leisure, such as the Brick Pergola in 1935 by Matt Broman, designed on axis with the formal west end garden. The band shell, constructed in 1947, honoured Lieutenant George R. Robinson (1840-1917) for his dedication to and national promotion of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment. Upon Eugenia Gage's death in 1952, the city acquired the final puzzle piece, the Gage family house. After some debate, The Retreat, built in 1875, was conserved and for forty years has served the community as the Hamilton Children's Museum.

As one of Hamilton's most popular public spaces, Gage Park began to deteriorate over time through heavy use and the increasing demands of a growing population and changing environment. This led the city to commission DTAH, the landscape architecture, architecture, and urban design firm, to develop a new Master Plan for the park, which was completed in 2010. The plan is for long-term management and rehabilitation of the historic park, balancing the past vision and use with current urban pressures and community needs. A significant conservation challenge was the need to design new innovative stormwater management measures to protect the adjacent

Revitalized wading canal and fountain with Hamilton Mountain in the background, 2015. **Photo** City of Hamilton and Francis Fougere Photographics

neighbourhood while respecting the park legacy.

Prior to the finalization of the master plan, the first implementation stage was completed in 2009 and included restoration of the formal gardens and two park entrances as well as the construction of the first of two significant stormwater management measures. To resolve the issue of localized ponding and to lessen the burden on overtaxed stormwater infrastructure, below-grade stormwater storage chambers were installed under the central plaza south of Main Street East.

Revitalized water fountain, Gage Park, 2015. **Photo** City of Hamilton and Francis Fougere Photographics.

Children playing in the fountain at Gage Park, 1953. **Photo** Hamilton Public Library, Local History & Archives

Building on this, DTAH also worked with Wood PLC to develop stormwater management relief on the east side of Gage Park, an area of concern identified in the 2010 master plan. There the Rothsay community had been struggling with basement flooding. The old, original infrastructure was designed to be a "combined sewer system" where all waste water from the houses, such as toilets, sink and bathtubs, was mixed with the rain and snowfall that fell on the streets. This created a large volume of water that was directed to one system. The new stormwater management facility, constructed in 2018, involves diversion sewers that separate the two systems and brings stormwater from Rothsay Avenue and Kensington Avenue South into Gage Park in the stream location identified in the Dunington-Grubb master plan. This temporary storage swale reduces flooding by allowing a significant amount of stormwater to be brought into the swale in Gage Park, while native plant material and sediment-filtering stone help to absorb it.

The combination of these features over time has developed Gage Park into the lively public space it is today, but the community has also had a significant role in shaping the place. People have been finding and creating ways of play in the park that were not even planned. As a child in the late 1950s, my father remembers playing with his brothers and cousins in the historic wet channel on the east side of the park in his Sunday clothes, much to the disapproval of my grandmother. In that same location is the new stormwater management swale for the Rothsay neighbourhood. In 2014, the Crown Point Youth Council proposed to city council the addition of a recreational cyclist pump track to allow them a free, nearby, accessible amenity for play, which has since been a huge success. Dedicated City of Hamilton staff continue to steer the growth of the park, ensuring that it provides a public place to play and serves the evolving needs of the community, while upholding the character of the original Dunington-Grubb design.

About the author

Yvonne Battista is an Associate and landscape architect at DTAH. She is passionate about delivering quality public realm designs that seamlessly integrate stormwater management and promote environmental stewardship. Her affinity for Gage Park started at a young age, with her father immigrating to Hamilton, and has continued through her involvement as Project Manager for DTAH's Gage Park work.

LANDMARKS OF ORILLIA'S COUCHICHING BEACH PARK

by Heather Bertram,
Orillia Municipal Heritage Committee

Left: The Bandstand in Couchiching Beach Park, 140 Canice Street, Orillia. **Photo** Unknown, circa 1925

Right: French's Refreshment Stand which still stands today, depicted in a postcard circa 1925. **Courtesy** Orillia Municipal Heritage Committee.

The Bandstand at Couchiching Beach Park

There was a need for a stage or platform for musical performances and presentations at the park on the shores of Lake Couchiching over a century ago. The Orillia Citizen's Band, later known as the Kiltie Band, performed on summer evenings and, without a bandstand, it was difficult to hear the music over the noise of the crowds that were in attendance.

The Bandstand, octagonal in shape, was designed by W. H. Croker and built by W. I. Bennett in 1909 for the sum of $495.00. Modifications were made by 1928 for the sum of $400. The alterations enlarged the original area to accommodate band members, instruments, music stands and their chairs. Originally, the stage was the diameter of the posts, with the turned railings being post to post. The stage was extended out over the base approximately one metre.

The height of the bandstand allows the audience, both at the park and on anchored boats, to have a clear view of the attraction. The ceiling has a curious inverted conical shape to project sound out to the audience.

The windows mimic portholes of a ship for a nautical feel. The window glass has been replaced with wood. One of the portholes opens, providing space for a counter for selling souvenirs and steamboat cruise tickets.

The bandstand has been the focus of social and cultural events for more than a century, enjoyed by many generations. It was designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 1979 for architectural and historic reasons.

Restoration began in 2014 and was completed in 2017, in time for Orillia to mark the sesquicentennial of its incorporation as a village and Canada's 150 years since Confederation. Music has once again returned to the bandstand.

French's Refreshment Stand at Couchiching Beach Park

French's Refreshment Stand (usually referred to simply as French's Stand) has been owned and operated by the same Orillia family for more than 90 years. The simple frame structure, slab on grade, still sports a mustard yellow and ketchup red colour scheme.

Established in 1920 by George French on Canadian Pacific Railway property adjacent

to Couchiching Beach Park, George operated the enterprise until he passed away. Then his widow, Irene French, took over until circa 1963 when their son, Wib, took charge. It is still run by family members.

Interestingly, the modest but enduring business has survived both the competitive challenges offered by the introduction in the 1960s of drive-through, fast-food franchises and the profound physical changes that have occurred in the surrounding landscape. Indeed, when the booth was built, the Lake Couchiching shoreline came within thirty feet of the stand's verandah. Since the subsequent development of Centennial Park, the shoreline has been moved back from the stand.

In the early decades, picnic excursions would arrive from afar by train for a day in Couchiching Park. Dozens, sometimes hundreds, of tourists of all ages would disembark and, during the course of the day, redeem 25¢ tickets that had been issued by excursion officials for use at French's Stand. Among the many Orillia residents known to have frequented the stand over the years was summer resident Stephen Leacock.

There is a table with a plaque indicating that Leacock, the internationally acclaimed humorist and economist, was a regular visitor in those early days. In fact, Wib French remembered the author's Panama hat and seersucker suit that he wore when he came to have tea.

French recalled when the railway picnics would come to Couchiching Beach Park. The trains would stop at the crossing on the north side of the stand, letting hundreds of people off at 10 a.m. and then at about 5 o'clock, they would load them on the train and take them back to Toronto, 100 kilometres to the south. "They were railway employees and their families and they'd come every year in the 1920s and 1930s — prior to the war."

Very little has changed at the French's Stand. In the days before refrigeration, ice cream was packed in brine in a leather bag. Stover's, and later The Orillia Creamery, supplied the stand's ice cream. Apple cider was a big seller and was kept on the counter in a glass globe with ice packed around the base. Hot dogs, pop and chocolate bars all sold for 5¢. French's was a popular place for young soldiers from the Orillia army camp, Camp Couchiching, during the Second World War.

To this day, people know for certain that when French's opens for business, summer has arrived.

The Orillia Municipal Heritage Committee has filed a Notice of Intention to Designate French's Refreshment Stand with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

About the author

Heather Bertram has served several terms on the Orillia Municipal Heritage Committee over the past 15 years, the past two years as Chair. She has also been involved with Doors Open. Heather has a passion for history and heritage.

THE ORILLIA OPERA HOUSE

by Elaine Splett

The Orillia Opera House is a historic building set downtown at 20 Mississauga Street West on a corner lot known as the Market Block. There was a farmers' market on the grounds as early as 1872. The building was originally built in 1895 as a four-storey stone and brick masonry structure that was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1915. The structure was re-built over the following two years.

The building has a castle-like appearance with twin turrets with slate roofs. It also stands out because of its brickwork, detailed cornices, and detailed ornamental work. It is a very impressive structure and now is a landmark in a neighborhood of modern commercial buildings.

There has been a series of additions to the main building. The balcony in the main hall was a wrap-around balcony that was later replaced with a deeper balcony after the fire of 1915. At one time, the building contained the town hall and council chambers, an auditorium, city hall offices, market stalls and a police lock-up. The lowest level, below ground, housed the prison cells.

The theatre was used as a cinema to generate revenue from the 1920s to the late 1950s. During the Second World War a platoon of soldiers was billeted in the basement.

The Orillia Opera House was designated in 1978 under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The main concert hall is famous for its acoustics and has been quite popular with many of Canada's well known artists, most notably Orillia native Gordon Lightfoot.

At the entrance of the building, the box office is to the left. The grand staircase takes visitors up to the 700-seat auditorium which was renamed the Gordon Lightfoot Theatre in 1997. Straight through the lobby there is a meeting space with a coffee lounge that is used for community-based activities such as the summer Jazz Festival. Past the lounge is a smaller 104-seat auditorium called the Studio Theatre that is used for community productions such as dance recitals and plays. The green room with its 18-foot ceiling is a multi-purpose room.

It is also used for arts exhibitions. In the basement, on the south side of the building are public washrooms. There is a Farmers' Market in the parking lot on Saturdays.

The building has played many roles over its 123-year history with the arts having come to prominence during the twentieth century. The future appears bright.

The Orillia Opera House was built in 1895 according to plans by Toronto architectural firm Gordon & Helliwell. Reconstruction and additions were designed by Toronto firm Burke, Horwood and White in 1915.
Photo Elaine Splett, 2018

About the author

While working as an Interior Designer and an Architectural Technician, Elaine Splett developed an interest in heritage buildings. She joined ACO Toronto in 2016. Elaine has written about heritage properties in Cookstown, Innisfil and Oro-Medonte in previous issues of ACORN.

PALACES OF LIGHT: TORONTO'S ART DECO MOVIE THEATRES

by Richard Longley

I remember well the art deco cinemas of my childhood. Between statues of flambeaux-bearing goddesses the screen lit up in a swirling fog of cigarette smoke, hypnotizing the audience as it filled with giants and took us to other places, other times and other worlds.

The style of the cinemas that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s earned its name at the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Moderne* in Paris. As well as the pioneering genius of architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), art deco's more exotic inspirations included Mayan, Egyptian (following the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922); Romanesque and Byzantine. In later years, scientific and industrial motifs that inspired hope for a brighter future appeared.

Art deco's brief golden years ended with the Wall Street crash that almost strangled architecture for a decade — but where there was building, the style lived on. For the vast majority, escape from the grimness of reality was enjoyed only briefly in the art deco cinemas that continued to be built because they were money-makers. Between the world wars, 95 million North Americans were spending their nickels and dimes at the movies every week: the combined population of the United States and Canada was barely 140 million. By the late 1930s, there was hardly a town in Canada without a cinema.

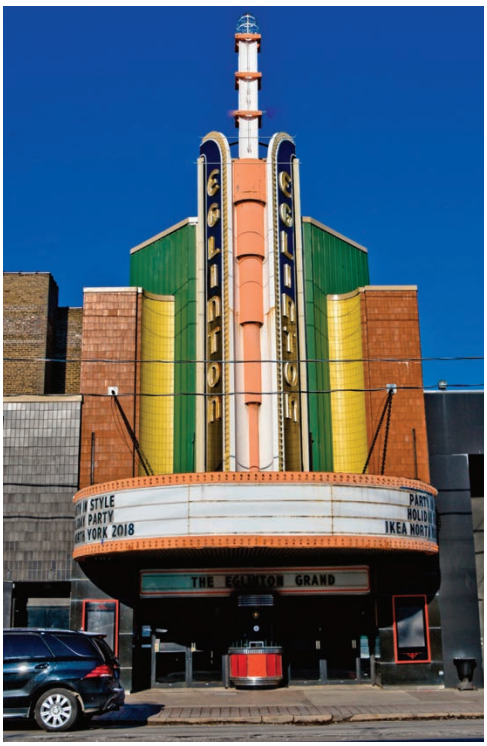
Tim Morawetz tells us in *Art Deco Architecture in Toronto* that this was a city packed with movie houses, 35 of them along the Bloor-Danforth corridor alone. Three quarters of them were designed by the firm of Kaplan & Sprachman who built 300 cinemas across Canada and introduced style moderne to Toronto. Those that follow are just some of the survivors. If there is a survivor in your town, enjoy it as often as you can. It will be an experience you'll never match with Netflix.

The Runnymede, 2225 Bloor Street West, Alfred Chapman, architect, Chapman & Oxley, 1927. **Photo** Shannon Kyles, 2015

The Runnymede when it was a Chapters bookstore. **Photo** Richard Longley, 2013

The 1400-seat Runnymede was built by Capitol as an "atmospheric" vaudeville theatre. A mural on the walls of its auditorium made it feel like a courtyard. The ceiling, a blue sky with clouds, provided a backdrop for projections of stars and airplanes.

"Canada's Theatre Beautiful" became a movie theatre in the late 1930s and, in the early 1970s, a bingo hall. In 1980, it reopened as a two-screen movie theatre which closed in 1999 when the Runnymede became a Chapters bookstore. In 2014, it became a Shoppers Drug Mart. In spite of many career changes, much of the Runnymede that was designated in 1990 remains intact, including its scallop-shaped sconce lighting, stage, balcony and one of the lighting projectors. With some effort, a sufficient audience and a generous investor, might the Runnymede become a theatre again?



The Eglinton, 400 Eglinton Avenue West, Kaplan & Sprachman architects, 1936 **Photo** Richard Longley, 2018

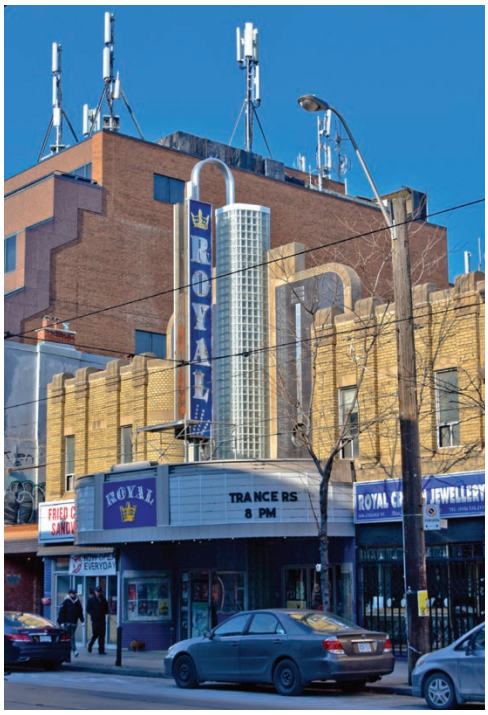
Inspired by the developer of the emerging surrounding neighbourhood — Agostino Arrigo, Sr. — the magnificent Eglinton opened in 1936 when art deco was becoming streamlined moderne. It operated as a single screen cinema until 2003, ten years after wheelchair accessibility became a requirement for theatres in Ontario. Since then it has been the Eglinton Grand event space, described on its website: "This historic landmark has been restored to its original 1936 grandeur…. Holding true to its art deco décor, the Eglinton Grand is adorned with mahogany and ebony, elegant marble, beautiful wainscoting and period furniture." The venue can accommodate sit-down dinners for up to 450 people and cocktail receptions for up to 700.

The Allenby, 1129 Danforth Avenue, Kaplan & Sprachman architects, 1936. (The Apollo, 1970-71; The Roxy, 1972-76) **Photo** Richard Longley, 2018

As was the Eglinton, The Allenby was a stimulus building in the economic development of the neighbourhood. It was also a social boon, a palace of cheap entertainment where children who joined its Popeye Club paid ten cents for a double bill and Popeye cartoons.

From 1972 to 1976, Gary Topp and Jeff Silverman turned the Allenby into the Roxy. They introduced midnight screenings and a repertoire that included a Japanese film festival, Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, John Water's *Pink Flamingoes*, Andy Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys*, Frank Zappa's *200 Motels*, and — most popular of all — *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which drew audiences in numbers not seen since pre-television days.

By 2006, the Roxy's cinema days were over. Its battered art deco facade was listed as heritage, but everything behind it was demolished and rebuilt to become a Tim Horton's and a convenience store. Restoration of the Allenby's façade, its marquee and kiosk — in glorious maroon and cream vitrolite — was by ERA Architects. The look of the Allenby as it was when it was built is back.



The Royal (originally The Pylon), 608 College Street, Benjamin Swartz, architect, 1939. **Photo** Richard Longley, 2018

Originally The Pylon, The Royal was a 380-seat theatre built with a roller-skating rink at the rear and a dance hall upstairs. It was opened in 1939 by British actress Anna Neagle when she starred as the martyred *Nurse Edith Cavell*. She left her footprints in cement in the lobby that day, and 80 years later, they are still there. When the Festival Chain of theatres collapsed in 2006, Theatre D Digital became the Royal's saviour, repeating the rescue of the Regent on Mount Pleasant by offering services needed to complete sound and picture. Canadian directors Atom Egoyan, Deepa Mehta, Bruce McDonald and others have finished their films at the Royal. In the evening it's movie time with fare that is hard to find anywhere else in the city.

The Paradise, 1006 Bloor Street West, Benjamin Brown, architect, 1937. The building will reopen after restoration in 2019. **Photo** Richard Longley, 2018

The Paradise's architect, Benjamin Brown, was famous for his Primrose Club, now the University of Toronto Faculty Club, the Tower Building and Balfour Building both on Spadina Avenue at Adelaide.

In the 1980s, the Paradise became Eve's Paradise, showing pornography before that branch of the industry was killed by the Internet. In 2012, it was purchased by "movie-loving mortgage mogul and winemaker" Moray Tawse, who set about its restoration. In 2019, the Paradise will re-open to offer cinema, a restaurant and cocktail bar. If that's what a cinema must do to survive, who can complain?

About the author

Richard Longley has been a member of ACO for 14 years and was president from 2013 to 2015. Richard has continued to update annually the ACO's summary of conservation efforts in "Interventions to Protect." Since 2015, when he photographed the demolition of Stollery's art deco men's clothing store, he has written about city architecture and history for NOW magazine.

WESTDALE THEATRE: COMMUNITY MAGIC

by Shannon Kyles

By the time my best friend Suzanne and I went to see *To Sir With Love* in 1967, the Westdale Theatre at 1014 King Street West in Hamilton was already 30 years old. The original marquee, vitrolite paneling, and lobby were still intact. Best of all, they had not yet invented "buttery topping" for popcorn.

The Westdale Theatre was part of one of the first planned suburban communities in Ontario. Beginning in 1918, and then more concretely 1935, federal and provincial initiatives were made available to provide both housing and employment opportunities for those who had fought in the World War.[1] Inaugurated in 1923, the Westdale Neighborhood was designed around a small grassy village square containing shops and restaurants. Small and mid-sized bungalows with furnaces and running water radiated around the square. Larger, individually designed homes skirted the ravines and nearby McMaster University. A farm market brought people together every Saturday.

The Westdale Theatre façade, circa1947. **Photo** Archives of Ontario RG 56-11-0-102, courtesy Graham Crawford, Westdale Cinema Group

The restored Westdale Theatre reopened in February. **Photo** Shannon Kyles, 2019

On the south side of the square, glittering with chrome and vitrolite (opaque glass), all fashionably co-ordinated in art deco embellishments, stood the Westdale Theatre. Over the sign, in limestone and brick, was an iconic ziggurated parapet with an erupting fountain of curling floral motifs as a center piece. On either side, Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, and her tragic counterpart Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy, gazed over the square. They watched Westdale grow, welcoming those who flocked to the theatre in search of the magic of film.

As the neighborhood of Westdale blossomed, the Westdale Theatre was sold to new owners who, as can be expected, wanted to update the design. The 1969 renovation destroyed most of the art deco features. Grey angel stone bricks covered most of the jade, ivory, black and 'tango' vitrolite. A bigger sign with five times as many lights obliterated the facade. The central kiosk was removed. Each new owner chiseled away at the design, but as television made way for VHS tapes, video shops, DVDs and the Internet, the Westdale Theatre continued to offer the big screen experience. It still had a single screen and 450 seats.

By 2016, the Westdale Theatre was showing signs of age. When the Toronto-based owners put the building up for sale, Hamiltonians feared its extinction. But fate intervened.

The tale of the Westdale resurrection resembles the kind of feel-good 1930s' fare that starred Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. A genuine Hollywood producer, Fred Fuchs, just happened to have moved into nearby Dundas. He was interested in having an art house theatre in Hamilton.

Seeing the Westdale Theatre listed for sale, he contacted just the right people in arts and restoration circles. Within 72 hours, the Westdale Cinema Group was registered as a non-profit organization, they approached the owner, and settled on a purchase price for the theatre.

By April of 2017, Westdale Theatre was owned by a non-profit organization with a wide range of volunteers and an informed and passionate Board of Directors. As with any good story, there are multiple plot threads and great moments of suspense and mystery. Both federal and provincial coffers were approached for support, but, after a few empty promises and messages, not one cent was forthcoming. It was up to the community to save the day.

In total $4.5 million was raised for the restoration. The Westdale Cinema Group worked tirelessly to enlist local foundations and philanthropists. A handful of benefactors loaned $2 million to complete the project. Everyone was interested in saving the last remaining large theatre of its kind in Hamilton area. The Hamilton Future Fund gave $250,000

Salvaged Vitrolite. **Photo** Shannon Kyles, 2018

for a new stage for live performances.[2] In typical Hamilton style, one anonymous Westdale resident offered to pay the $58,000 for the new projector. Smaller, but no less significant, offers came from all levels of the community; architects, designers, managers, crafts people and labourers all volunteered their time and their expertise. The many proposed changes — from larger bathroom areas to pot lights — were carefully considered. The integrity of the original design was thoughtfully maintained by Graham Crawford and other heritage enthusiasts. A group of volunteers painstakingly removed the Angelstone and salvaged the vitrolite from underneath. This has been re-purposed on the lobby. The Facebook page, www.facebook.com/WestdaleCinema/, lists the many fine craftspeople.

Fundraisers were massively successful. Naming rights for the 350 seats in the new auditorium were sold to individuals at $250, $500 and $1,000 each. Parts of the old vitrolite were remade into jewelry and sold. Inventive fundraising has been, and will continue to be, a large part of the future of the newly named theatre — The Westdale.

The vision of the Westdale Cinema Group has been realized through community efforts. "We were taken by the incredible number of people who reached out to us." It is the magic of a community that can bring back the enchantment of film.

[1] The Dominion Housing Act, Canada Mortgage and Housing Report: Two Decades of Innovation in Housing Technology 1946 – 1965

[2] $45 million was given by the Hamilton Future Fund for a new stadium.

About the author

Shannon Kyles taught History of Architecture at Mohawk College for 25 years. She conceived and created the www.ontarioarchitecture.com website, providing all photos and text. She writes on historic architecture for Arabella magazine and is the architecture correspondent for CBC Radio's *Fresh Air*. She is a member of the ACO Board and Executive.

THE GORGE CINEMA, ELORA

by Beverley Cairns

A colourful, designated building at 43 Mill Street West has been the home of The Gorge Cinema since 1974. Once a two-storey structure that was at times a ballroom and an ice storage room, The Gorge occupies an extension of the 1848 Commercial Hotel.

In earlier times, a grand hotel with 70 rooms, five parlours and stable for 75 horses, this hotel served as the centre of the Village of Elora's social, cultural, economic and political life in the middle of the nineteenth century, and Group of Seven artist A. J. Casson painted it in watercolours called *The Quiet Street*, and *Early Morning*.

Prohibition and declining patronage ended the old buildings' use as a hotel in 1920. For years the structures were vacant. In 1945, it was converted to apartments and a cold storage plant, but the interior continued to deteriorate. The total Commercial Hotel building received heritage designation in 2005, but the only active part today is The Gorge Cinema, which continues as a valued source of entertainment.

The present Gorge Cinema structure is attached immediately behind the main building, opening off a charming courtyard. Exposed stone walls of the interior of the cinema contribute to the special atmosphere treasured by theatregoers from near and far. The Gorge Cinema is one of the oldest repertory cinemas in Canada. It was initiated in 1974 by two film students from Ryerson, Rebecca Yates and Glen Saltzman. The cinema opened outdoors, in the small courtyard, with 16 mm films projected onto a nailed-up screen. After a summer of success, screenings moved indoors, where the audience sat (or sometimes were seen to lie down!) on wood benches, coffee in hand. In 1984, with 16mm film hard to obtain, owner Bill Little changed to 35mm film for better projection quality. Disaster struck in 1988 when a fire gutted the cinema, closing it for 10 weeks, but, like a phoenix, The Gorge Cinema rose again with a new interior, better sound system, wider screen and 136 new seats. John Chalmers, the enterprising owner of The Gorge Cinema for three decades, was instrumental in setting up the Canadian Independent Repertory Cinema Association, CIRCA. When many small theatres closed because of the huge cost of changing to digital format, The Gorge adamantly refused this option. Patrons value a local cinema, a distinctive place of entertainment in village life. A state-of-the-art digital Christie Class D projector with a Dolby surround sound processor was installed.

John and co-owner Dierdre Whittaker recently retired, having met a couple who could confidently carry on their vision. The new owners are two young film animators, Julianna Cox and Payton Curtis. Their enthusiasm in maintaining the traditions of a repertory cinema promise a long life to The Gorge Cinema. However, there are fears that as Mill Street is refurbished and the Elora Mill properties expand, the old Commercial Hotel building might find an unsympathetic buyer, seeking expansion that could exclude the irreplaceable Gorge Cinema, though its spirit may resurrect elsewhere.

The 350-seat interior with stone walls in 2017.
Photo Payton Curtis & Julianna Cox

The courtyard leading to entrance to The Gorge Cinema.
Photo Payton Curtis & Julianna Cox, 2017

About the author

Beverley Cairns represents the Wellington section on the board of the ACO Guelph/Wellington Branch. Living in a heritage designated house in Elora, Beverley works with a small team of local ACO members, recently producing five ACO educational and archival heritage programs with Wightman TV. She is also an active member of the Elora Arts Council.

GENERATIONS TO COME: THE MULOCK ESTATE, NEWMARKET

by Sean Blank

On February 7, 2018, after nearly 140 years as the private domain of six generations of the aristocratic Mulock family, the Town of Newmarket announced that it had entered into an agreement to purchase the estate's remaining 11.6 acres (4.7 hectares) at the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Mulock Drive for $24 million, with the intention to transform the landmark property into an urban park.

An aerial view of the Mulock Estate, 16780 Yonge Street. **Photo** The Town of Newmarket, 2018

Anticipating an influx of 30,000 workers and residents in the coming decades, the Town of Newmarket developed its Urban Centres Secondary Plan, which in part prioritizes preserving sizeable green space to complement urban intensification. Citing iconic parks in New York and Toronto as examples, Peter Noehammer, Commissioner, Development and Infrastructure Services for the Town of Newmarket, says that "the intent is really to spend part of the year (2019) developing a vision, a plan for how we're going use this property and the heritage home."

A small section of the current 10,000-square-foot Ontario Vernacular Georgian and Neo-classical Gothic building was constructed in 1870 by members of the Rogers family, founders of Newmarket, but it was significantly enlarged by Newmarket architect John Thomas Stokes (1824-1891) after the nearly 400-acre property was purchased by Sir William Mulock in 1880.

Historic view of the main house on the Mulock Estate at Yonge Street and Mulock Drive, Newmarket. **Courtesy** Toronto Star Archives, tspa_0069942f.

Born in Bond Head in 1843, Mulock grew up in Newmarket and, with establishment connections — his mother, Mary, was a member of the Cawthra family of Toronto — rose to tremendous prominence as a financier, lawyer, and politician.

Although initially Mulock's summer home and model farm (his town house was on Toronto's Jarvis Street), the property functioned simultaneously as a society centre and the primary residence of his descendants until October 2018, when the Town of Newmarket took possession. "It was quite emotional for them to be leaving the property," says Mr. Noehammer. "Our agreement with the family does recognize the building as the Mulock Estate and the easterly part of the property towards Yonge as Mulock Commons. The stories that we are learning after taking possession — it's quite remarkable. We're definitely trying to capture a lot of that, document it and archive it and present that as part of the redevelopment plan."

The Town is committed to sensitive and informed adaptive reuse of the property which was designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 2003. Consideration is being given to potential community and commercial uses for the structure, as well as passive recreation features and community programming for the property. No firms have been engaged as yet, but the Town is seeking to retain expertise in architectural and landscape design in order to develop a vision and concept for the property as a whole to present for consultation with the community throughout 2019.

About the author

Sean Michael Blank is an ACO NextGen member based in Toronto.

THE DANCE PAVILION ON BALA BAY

by Jack Hutton

If you live in Bala, Muskoka, you see the following scene several times a summer. A gray-haired couple walks hand-in-hand up the Bala Falls Road to read the historical marker in front of what is now known as the Kee to Bala. You know without asking that the couple is reliving summer evenings long ago when they danced to the world's finest dance bands at Dunn's Pavilion.

The historic white clapboard dance pavilion, which stretches 135 feet across the Bala Bay waterfront on Lake Muskoka, officially opened on July 1, 1942. Its hip roof has been replaced more than once and one owner had to build supporting concrete pillars to keep the pavilion from sinking into Bala Bay.

Older couples remember dancing cheek-to-cheek to Guy Lombardo, the Glenn Miller Band, Les Brown and other world-famous dance bands. Some recall hearing Louis Armstrong in 1962 when 2,100 packed the pavilion.

The dance pavilion Gerry Dunn built in 1942. The entrance and ticket office were added to the front in 1968.
Photo Jack Hutton, 2019

The Kee to Bala traces its history back to the late 1920s when it was Langdon's Ice Cream Parlour with a gift shop, native souvenirs, and a small open air dance platform at the rear. A waiter from the nearby Swastika Hotel played piano every Saturday evening for dancing, weather permitting.

In the spring of 1929 a recently graduated pharmacist from Bracebridge, Gerald Patrick Dunn, bought the ice cream parlour for $11,000. Months later that purchase seemed like a death wish. Stockbrokers in New York were jumping from skyscrapers as the stock market collapse triggered a world-wide depression. Gerry Dunn, 27, refused to give up on his Bala gamble. His drug counter, the only pharmacy outlet between Gravenhurst and Parry Sound, was just part of his visionary plans. Unbelievably, it was his tiny open air dance platform that changed Bala forever.

Dunn started to expand the outdoor dance floor in 1930 and eventually put a roof over it. He brought in house bands led by college buddies from the University of Toronto and kept expanding. Eventually, he had a small mall that included his drug counter, a busy soda fountain bar, a clothing apparel shop and the dance hall at the rear towards Bala Bay. Dunn's son, Patrick, now a retired judge, says the mall stretched from Bala Falls Road back to the waterfront.

Gerry Dunn paid for his expansions by playing semi-professional hockey in Detroit each winter. He had been a star centre on the U of T hockey team and was lured to the Detroit hockey team by a job offer as a pharmacist in the Henry Ford Hospital. The winter jobs (hospital and hockey) earned Dunn more than $4,000 each year, which he re-invested in Bala the following summer.

By 1941, many people thought Gerry Dunn was on top of the world. He bought a brand new Buick. In July, he married a beautiful young Toronto woman, Aurelie Way. But he still had another dream to fulfill. He hoped to build an expansive dance hall on his Bala Bay waterfront,

Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Duke Ellington were among the famous big-band era acts to perform at Gerry Dunn's dance hall. **Photo** Jack Hutton

featuring the world's best dance bands. Duke Ellington, Count Basie – perhaps even Louis Armstrong.

Dunn was his own architect, filling the backs of big brown envelopes night after night with design ideas for a structure that would extend back over the water to a tiny island, using it as one base. Experts warned him that a 75-foot span was impossible without using steel beams, unavailable in wartime. Dunn almost gave up before talking to Mack Cunningham, a colourful Bala boat builder and craftsman.

Cunningham solved Dunn's problem by designing cornices that would bear the load of a wooden 75-foot span, arguably the first such wooden span in Canada. Dunn's Pavilion opened in July, 1942, with a hotel orchestra from New York City playing in front of a façade that looked like the front of a Muskoka cottage. The dancers came in their finest attire, setting a dress code that lasted for two decades.

In 1963, Gerry Dunn, then 62, sold to a new owner who unfortunately was unable to continue Dunn's winning formula. The pavilion went into receivership and was sold in 1968 to Ray Cockburn who owned a similar venue in Orillia. He was able to attract Toronto rock'n'roll bands by hiring them for two nights, playing one night in Orillia and Bala a day later. Gerry Dunn's aging mall was torn down, and Cockburn built an extension across the front of the lakefront pavilion to house a ticket office. He renamed it the Kee to Bala.

In 1971 Cockburn sold the Kee to Bala to the Parry family who built a large new stage at one side of the dance floor in the late 1970s. A liquor license made possible a bar in front of the old cottage facade. The pavilion was sold in the early 1980s to Joe Kondyjowski who replaced the old pilings under the building with cement cribs, saving the pavilion from sinking into Bala Bay. He also built a new roof and a new outdoors deck.

Kondyjowski brought new life to the old pavilion during six years as owner, hiring Burton Cummings as the Kee's first big-time rock'n'roll band. Decades later, the Kee to Bala is still the town's biggest draw. Its current owners, Mike Strong and Mike Homewood, have announced a concert line-up for 2019 that opens with the Tom Hicks Band on May 18 and includes the Sheepdogs, Steve Earle and the Dukes, the James Barker Band and David Wilcox.

Meanwhile, Gerry Dunn is finally being remembered. The Township of Muskoka Lakes renamed the road in front of the pavilion Gerry Dunn Way in 2017.

Ninety years after he arrived in Bala with a head full of dreams and almost empty pockets, Gerry Dunn's legacy lives on. Who would have guessed in 1930 that once-a-week dancing behind an ice cream parlour would lead to today's pavilion? Who would have believed in Depression days that the street in front of the pavilion would become Gerry Dunn Way?

About the author

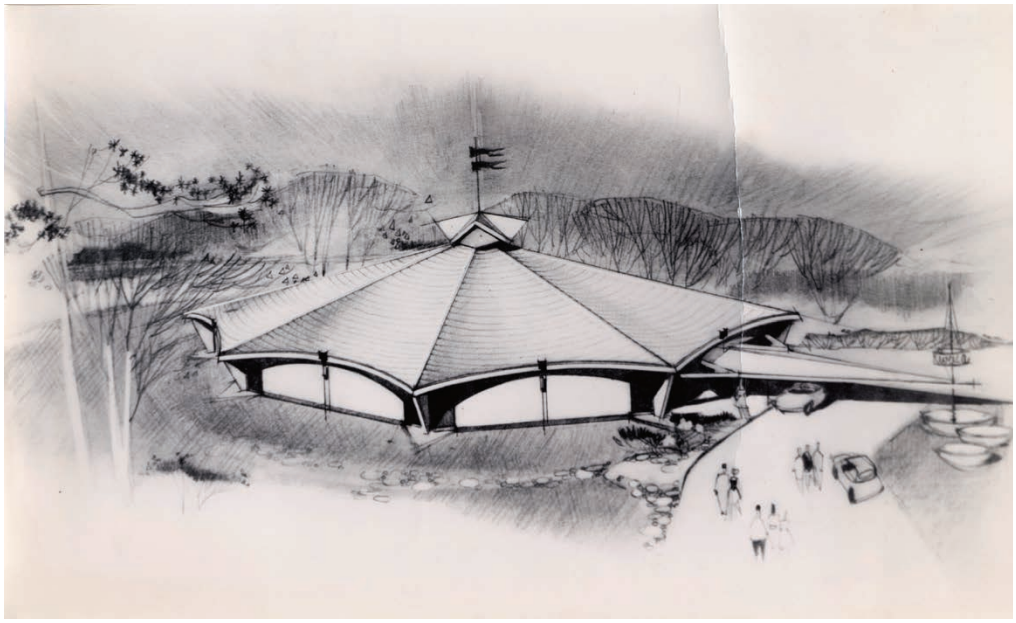
Jack Hutton is a member of ACO Muskoka. He is a retired reporter and communications director. A regular contributor to Muskoka publications, he is also a ragtime piano maestro.

NORVAL'S FAMOUS DANCE HALL

by John Mark Benbow Rowe

The quiet village of Norval, just west of Georgetown, became an overnight sensation in December 1961 when a modern nightclub opened beside the Credit River, south of Highway #7. The Riviera Corporation felt that the uniquely beautiful site between Brampton and Georgetown would keep the crowds coming back. Despite the odds, the venue, now named Nashville North, continues in business to this day.

A fabulous Japanese-styled modern dance hall was built on the four-acre site overlooking the Credit River. The building is an octagon of glass, with a modified pagoda type roof, and a huge dome in the centre. This large dome hangs over the sunken dance floor. Around the perimeter of the dance floor, the tables were placed to allow a view of the winding river arched by weeping willows through the 43-foot wall of glass.



Concept for The Riviera Nightclub,1961. **Image** Courtesy Esquesing Historical Society Archives

The design was created by John Ma with the original interior décor carried out by David Kobayashi. It was constructed by Zuber Homes.

A gala New Year's Eve opening was held in 1961 featuring Bob Smith and orchestra, singers, dancers and a troubadour! The hall advertised dancing every Friday and Saturday night with a floor show on Sunday evenings.

The Riviera was immediately popular, including the Sunday entertainment which became talent shows. It became the venue of choice primarily because it was the largest dance hall in the area. The size of the hall attracted many group rentals. It served as an entertainment venue for groups like the Georgetown Kinsmen and Kinettes, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Bramalea Lions Club, Georgetown Arts and Crafts Club, Church bingos, fashion shows and the Georgetown Little Theatre. Teen dance afternoons were hosted by Johnny Price of CHIC Radio in 1962. In 1965, alcohol-free young people dances were hosted Sunday evenings by servers dressed in bunny costumes!

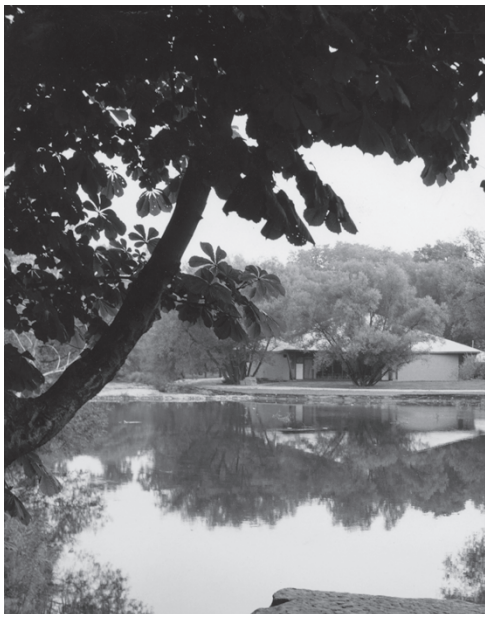
The Riviera was even rented in 1969 to hold a public meeting explaining regional government. Crown Ministers Bill Davis, George Kerr and Charles MacNaughton were dispatched by the Premier to assuage the public.

However, dances and balls were the big attraction for groups wanting an elegant hall. The Georgetown Police Association Ball with Bob Smith's orchestra was held in March 1962. Georgetown Hospital, the Order of Foresters, Men's Hockey, Credit Valley Masons and the Lorne Scots Regiment were some of the groups who held their events here. The Lorne Scots held their centennial Ball in 1966, while the Town of Georgetown held a centennial ball in 1967, featuring period costumes.

A stream of performers travelled to Norval to perform. Ronnie Hawkins, Dixie Chicks, Donna Campbell, Bruce Cockburn, David Wilcox, Buddy Rich and The Good Brothers were some of the well-known acts who crossed that stage.

By the early 1980s the place was worn out, but the magic of the setting continued to inspire managers to limp along. The site was a Christian rock centre, then a bingo palace and supper club. The drift stopped in 1989 when Albert Euteneier purchased the property and

Ronnie Hawkins entertains the crowd at the Riviera in November, 1963. **Photo** Courtesy Esquesing Historical Society Archives



The Riviera is reflected in the Credit River at Norval, August 1962. **Photo** Peter Jones, courtesy Esquesing Historical Society Archives

opened Le Club 2000 as a dance club, adding the Riverside Spa to increase the use of the facility.

Nashville North opened in December 1994 with a tribute to Garth Brooks, beginning a new era giving Norval a country and western flair. Line dancing lessons were offered on Wednesdays, Top 40 dancing on Thursdays and western dancing on Saturdays. This has become the regular program.

Between the dancing nights, Nashville North continued to serve the community as well with fundraisers for good causes like flood victims or the Hospital for Sick Children. They even hosted a birthday party for Halton Hills Mayor Kathy Gastle, a Norval resident. Al Pacino was in the building for a movie shoot in 2002.

The popularity of the bar grew into a problem for the residents of Norval. Fights became a reason to call Halton Regional Police, who were increasingly busy laying alcohol-related driving charges in the area. The rough character of Thursday nights prompted Georgetown taxi drivers to stop serving the place. Then drunken patrons took to wandering around the village and breaking into homes.

Complaints to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission prompted several investigations and recommendations to pull the liquor licence of Nashville North. For a few years, the owners were able to fight the orders but in late 2006 the Ontario Court of Appeals successfully shut down the bar at Nashville North.

The support of the country and western line dancers was huge, prompting the April 2007 re-opening as the West Seven Night Club. The owners had to sign agreements with the Town of Halton Hills ensuring their respect for local by-laws.

Finally, in March 2011 a new ownership team took over the property and returned the Nashville North sign. Since then, the Club has continued their usual pattern of regular entertainment. Alas, some people cannot handle themselves and brawls and alcohol charges are still given out, but overall the venue seems to have a much quieter reputation these days.

The Riviera opened in 1961 in an inspiring building which still stands on the banks of the Credit River in Norval. Entertainment choices and fads have come and gone over the years, but the building in Norval — Nashville North — continues to serve the community as a place to relax and play.

About the author

John Mark Benbow Rowe is a member of the Esquesing Historical Society. He is a member of the Halton Hills Heritage Committee and a local historian, archivist of the Esquesing Historical Society and author of several books.

RACKED UP: TORONTO'S BILLIARD HALLS

by Katherine Taylor

In 1884's *Toronto: Past and Present*, author Charles Pelham Mulvany declared that billiards had long been known as "the game of kings and the king of games." Now, though this has also been said of chess, backgammon and polo, one thing is certain: a great number of his fellow Torontonians would have whole-heartedly agreed. For a great many years — going all the way back to when Toronto was a town called York and infamous for the quality of its streets — its citizens had been enjoying the game.

In addition to the taverns where billiards were commonly played, every hotel seemed to boast its own parlour. Of these, one of the best was the Revere House at King and York.

That the Revere kept a superior billiards room is no surprise when you learn that the owners, Samuel May and John Riley, also manufactured tables themselves. Add that Samuel May was a billiards champion who had patented his own improvements to table design and you've got an argument for the best spot in the city.

But of course there would be other contenders — like Jacob Saunders's Elite Billiard Hall at Yonge and Gerrard. Described in the 1890 *Illustrated Toronto* as "the handsomest and best-equipped billiard parlour in Canada," it featured eight tables built by one of the biggest names in the business: Brunswick-Balke-Collender.

Brunswick-Balke-Collender was (and still is) an American company that began in 1845 with carriage making but eventually manufactured everything from phonographs, toilet seats and sporting equipment to, eventually, airplanes. And of course, along the way, they offered a line of billiard tables. By the time the company opened a Toronto branch in 1885 their tables were well-known to Canadian enthusiasts.

The former home of Brunswick-Balke-Collender and, later, the Academy of the Spherical Arts at 40 Hanna. **Photo** Katherine Taylor, 2019

Originally operating out of an office at the Rossin House Hotel close by Revere House, the company would eventually move into a large factory designed by architect Henry Simpson (1865-1926) on Pacific Avenue (now Hanna Avenue) in 1905. There they would stay until 1960, when the company closed the branch and sold the building. But as it would turn out, this would not be the end of the building's association with billiards.

In 1991, Rick Williams rented space in the old Brunswick-Balke-Collender building in order to refurbish antique billiard tables. From there, quite naturally, he decided to turn the space into a billiards club — naming it The Academy of Spherical Arts because the zoning allowed for a school. Before long, restaurant and liquor licenses followed and a marvellous Toronto hot spot was born. In addition to an enormous whiskey selection, the Academy featured Williams's antique tables, including an original Samuel May model. Alas, in 2012 — after nearly 20 years in business — the Academy closed its doors and is no more.

These days, stand-alone billiard halls in Toronto are few and far between. Far more common are the bars that feature a sole table that occasionally entices the casual player. But scattered here and there are a few that hold appeal for those more serious about the game. One such spot is the Rivoli at 334 Queen Street West.

While the Rivoli has been in business since 1982, this is not the building's first go-around as a pool hall; from 1942 through to the 1970s it was the Modern Billiard Parlour. And, quite charmingly, for a time also featured the Modern Billiard Barber Shop.

Another stalwart of the scene is Academy Billiards at 485 Danforth Avenue. Built in 1919, the ground floor was the long-time home of a Woolworth's, while the second floor — where the billiards now reside — was originally the Shaw Business School. In 1967, long after the school had decamped, it became George's Billiards. In 1971, the property was purchased by the Pitsadiotis family and the hall was renamed Billiards Academy.

Now in business for 52 years, it is arguably the longest-running pool hall in operation in Toronto. But time hasn't stood still here. Current owner Evangelos Pitsadiotis has made a number of improvements. Where once there was only a snack bar and vending machines, there is now a full bar and kitchen. Also moving with the times, all but one of the original snooker tables have been removed to make way for the smaller tables that are more popular today.

It is here at Billiards Academy that the members of the Queen City Charity Pool gather for their league nights. And let me tell you, they are a remarkable bunch. Among their number is the dynamic Chris Borgal, Principal of Goldsmith Borgal & Company Ltd. Architects (and a former President of ACO), who was kind enough to introduce me to the league and share its history.

The Rivoli at 334 Queen Street West. **Photo** Katherine Taylor, 2019

The delightful stairwell that leads to the Rivoli's pool hall. **Photo** Katherine Taylor, 2019

Formed in 1991 by Sharon Bower, who was then with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the league's aim is to raise money for a number of charitable causes. Once comprised mainly of Bower's ministry colleagues, the league is now represented by the Queen City Yacht Club, of which Borgal is Vice-Commodore.

With many members actively pursuing both yachting and billiards, the league adheres to a unique schedule: during the fall and winter they play across the green of the tables, while in spring and summer they sail across the blue.

Though a number of the league's members have been playing for years, the group extends a warm welcome to those who are new to the game. Like Merle Kisby, a life-time skier and curler, who's only just picked up a cue recently. When asked what brought her to the game she spoke of how important it is for a body to have a sport. "I love skiing and curling," she said, "but I won't be able to do them forever. But every nursing home has a pool table."

About the author

Katherine Taylor lives in Toronto and writes about the city's forgotten people and places for her blog One Gal's Toronto. Her work has appeared in NOW magazine and she has been nominated for a Heritage Toronto Award for Public History (2017) and the ACO's Media Award (2018).

A REVEALING HISTORY:
GUELPH'S ELEGANT GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

by Susan Ratcliffe

If walls could talk, what would they say?
"I think the Manor strip club doubling as church on Sundays qualifies as a weird story."
"Guelph is home to perhaps the most unusual place in the province: The Manor."
Or a Tweet: "We know it's cold outside, but we are ready for business as usual with all your HOTTEST girls! Get in here !"

On the edge of a highway interchange in a parking lot, flanked by Sue's Inn, sits a once-grand house, now known as The Manor: Guelph's Elegant Gentlemen's Club. Now featured in the Sleeman "Notoriously Good" advertising campaign, an old photograph shows as an elegant Queen Anne residence with fully-dressed ladies adorning the capacious verandah. If you pass the house now at night, you will see garish purple and pink lights and flickering neon dancing girls draped over the old mansion.

In 1847, the Sleeman family came to Guelph. John H. Sleeman, a brewer from Cornwall, established the brewery in 1851 and began a brewing dynasty that affected every aspect of Guelph's life until it was closed for unpaid taxes in 1933.

The most prominent of the Sleemans was George, a dynamic, innovative brewer and businessman who grew the business and spread Sleeman beer across Ontario. From the time he started as operations manager in 1859, his list of accomplishments ballooned beyond the brewery into the life of the city. His baseball team, the Guelph Maple Leafs, won the World Series in 1874. George spearheaded the move to make Guelph a city and became its first mayor. He sat on 22 boards and invested in the Opera House, the Wellington Hotel and the Puslinch Lake Hotel. In 1894, he built the Guelph Electric Railway Company to transport passengers, workers and supplies around the city and to his brewery.

The Sleeman residence circa 1895 when the address was 501 Waterloo Avenue. **Photo** Sleeman Collection, XR2 MS A054, Courtesy University of Guelph Library and Archives

At the western end of the railway line, opposite the Silver Creek Brewery, George built a home on what was then Waterloo Avenue that reflected his accomplishments and his exacting personality. To create his grand vision, he bought a quarry nearby and hired stone masons from England who spent two years carving and numbering the blocks of limestone to his exact measurements. Guelph architect John Day oversaw design.

In 1891, George invited the public to view the culmination of his dream. The largest stone house in Guelph, it had fifty rooms — including a library, conservatory and billiards room — with custom-made, red oak woodwork and stained glass windows featuring Ontario birds. There were nine fireplaces, each with its own distinctive tile pattern. The furniture was also custom made. The walnut dining table seated 22 people; his wife Sarah and their eleven children needed the space.

The Guelph Mercury of October 23, 1891, breathlessly recounted the unique details of the palatial residence: "All the halls and rooms are supplied with gas and electric light fixtures so that either light can be used. The electric light and gas is supplied by Mr. Sleeman's own machinery and a novel feature is that all the grates in the house burn gas." The 2006 Designation Report by Heritage Guelph describes the exterior features: "a Queen Anne revival mansion, with two storeys of Guelph Stone plus an attic. Its irregular plan includes a hip roof, with highly decorated vermiculated stone work, an octagonal corner tower complete with conical roof attic gables and . . . a slate roof."

Surrounding the commodious home were grounds with extensive gardens, an orchard, a fountain, lily pond and a bowling green, and later, a toboggan run and skating rink. Visitors also marveled at the sidewalk created from beer bottle bottoms set in cement. George Sleeman had a house that reflected his stature in the community and his accomplishments in the larger world of commerce and sports.

The only notorious aspect of the house was the tunnel under Waterloo Avenue to the Silver Creek Brewery, a tunnel that helped to destroy George Sleeman's carefully-created respectable house. After his death in 1926, his sons established a bootlegging scheme involving local farmers transporting beer disguised as vegetable shipments. The brothers thought they were protected by a local police chief who sat in the tunnel collecting $0.25 per case of beer being shipped to the waiting wagons. In 1933, they were caught and charged with tax evasion. The resulting penalties were so large that the brewing business had to be sold. The Sleeman family was forbidden to be involved in the beer industry for the next 50 years.

The house fell into disrepair, the family dispersed and the great respectable estate deteriorated. A small segment of the Sleeman family lived in the crumbling house until 1957 when an auction of the estate drew huge crowds. The fine furniture and elegant fittings were sold off and scattered around Ontario and beyond.

An original red oak pocket door contrasts with one of the bars. **Photo** Susan Ratcliffe, 2010

Al Watson and his wife bought the house and grounds for $21,000 and began alterations to create a wedding venue. Over the years, they removed the verandahs, added a hotel, banquet hall, restaurant and night club. Its elegance declined as the building's shape altered.

Notoriety began in 1980 when new owner, John Mason, applied to change the license to adult entertainment. The lovely lines of the original house were smudged by a concrete block motel addition. Interior walls were removed. The beer bottle bottom sidewalk was replaced by bare bottoms lit by purple lights and multiple mirror tiles. Mason called the altered structure "The Manor."

In the years since Roger Cohen bought the property in 1985, he has worked to restore much of the wood and stone work because he loves the house. The Manor became the Body Shop Adult Entertainment Club. Mrs. Sleeman's elegant sewing room in the top floor now holds a large hot tub. The lovely gardens were paved for parking lots. The brewery buildings were sold to the city in 1969 and demolished to make way for an interchange for the new Hanlon Expressway.

The Manor's present-day address is 211 Silvercreek Parkway South, Guelph. **Photo** Susan Ratcliffe, 2010

An odd note of notoriety of a different sort was added to the Manor in April, 2011, when the gentlemen's club hosted church services. On Sundays, The Church in the Manor uses the same stage outfitted with pole and cages where women stripped the night before.

The transformation of George Sleeman's vision is complete.

About the author

Susan Ratcliffe is a long-time historical walking tour guide and coordinator of Doors Open Guelph. She is a former President of ACO and currently serves as president of the Guelph and Wellington branch as well as chair of the ACORN Editorial Committee.

TENDING THE WINTER GARDEN'S BOTANICAL FANTASY

by Romas Bubelis and Ellen Flowers

Spanning more than a hundred years, the history of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre is one that illustrates Edwardian theatre design and decorative art trends and the work done to conserve them.

Built in 1913 as the Loews Yonge Street Theatre complex, the theatre was the Canadian flagship of American theatre impresario Marcus Loew's vaudeville chain. Designed by architect Thomas Lamb (1871-1942) as a "double-decker" theatre, it included the Elgin Theatre at street level and the whimsical Winter Garden Theatre seven storeys above.

The theatres had two distinctly different personalities. The Elgin Theatre was formal in design, its vast surfaces adorned in gold leaf, decorative plasterwork and rich damask fabrics. The Winter Garden, by contrast, was designed as a botanical fantasy. It was inspired by the open-air, roof-top-garden theatres of New York City. Thomas Lamb's original 1913 architectural drawings tellingly refer to the upper theatre only as the "roof garden."

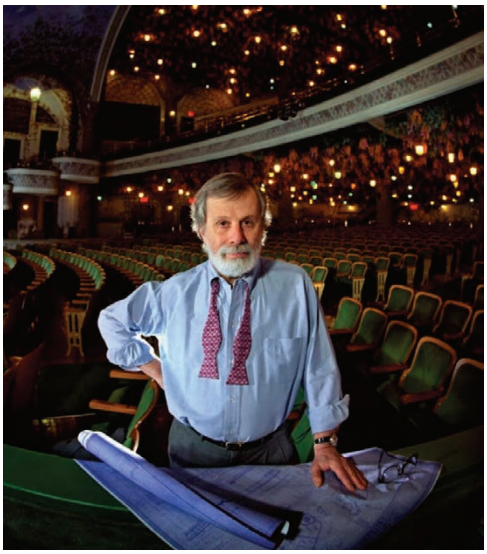
The theatre walls were hand-painted — a continuous mural of garden themes, with images of varied flowers, foliage and vines entangling trellis-work, and the occasional woodland creature. The proscenium arch is a trompe l'oeil masterpiece of blue sky, gauze-like clouds and a softly illuminated full moon — all framed by a painted canopy of gnarled branches. Structural columns are disguised as tree trunks and green carpeting was used to create an impression of mowed lawns. Perhaps the most distinctive feature was the ceiling: a suspended mass of natural and artificial beech boughs, cotton blossoms and hanging, stained glass, patio lanterns.

In keeping with its open-air inspiration, the fully-enclosed Winter Garden Theatre incorporated natural light and ventilation. A pair of arched windows at the balcony level of the east and west side walls provided direct sunlight in the morning and afternoon. Above the front-of-house, a large roof monitor with clerestory windows provided ventilation and daylight filtering down through the suspended beech leaf boughs. The fly tower was similarly topped by a "Goldman Patent Skylight," a fire safety device with glass roof and operable side panels, which allowed dappled light to filter down to stage level far below. One can imagine what the gentle rustling of leaves and cooling breeze would have been like as patrons settled into their seats for the day's vaudeville performances in this illusory pastoral setting.

With the decline of Vaudeville, the Winter Garden closed its doors in 1928. As time passed, the windows and other fittings were altered and eventually covered. The theatre remained virtually forgotten for more than half a century, becoming a time capsule of a bygone era. The Elgin continued as a movie house, was later subdivided, and gradually slipped into disrepair with the passing of each decade.

In 1981, the Ontario Heritage Trust commenced a project to restore the building and adapt it for modern theatrical productions. The restoration, the largest of its kind in Canada at the time, began in 1985 and included new lounges, lobbies and a backstage tower containing ancillary rehearsal and support facilities.

When the Trust began the restoration of the Winter Garden, remnants of the original beech leaves were still suspended from the ceilings, but were too brittle to withstand necessary cleaning. The decision was made to replace the leaves using an approach that approximated the original 1913 installation. New beech boughs were gathered from woodlots north of Toronto that were being felled as part of a forest management project undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The branches



Mandel Sprachman architect of the 1980s restoration project. **Photo** Ontario Heritage Trust

were preserved by dipping the stems in a solution of glycerine and water. They were then painted in three different colours, surface-treated with fire retardant and fastened to wire grids suspended from the ceiling.

The leaf canopy included 7,887 branches: 40 per cent natural and 60 per cent artificial. In place of the original features designed to bring in natural light, new electrical fixtures were installed above the leaf canopy. They were fitted with coloured incandescent lightbulbs to create the illusion of a starry night sky above the leaves. On a wintery December night in 1989, the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre reopened fully restored. Today it is one of Canada's unique theatrical complexes.

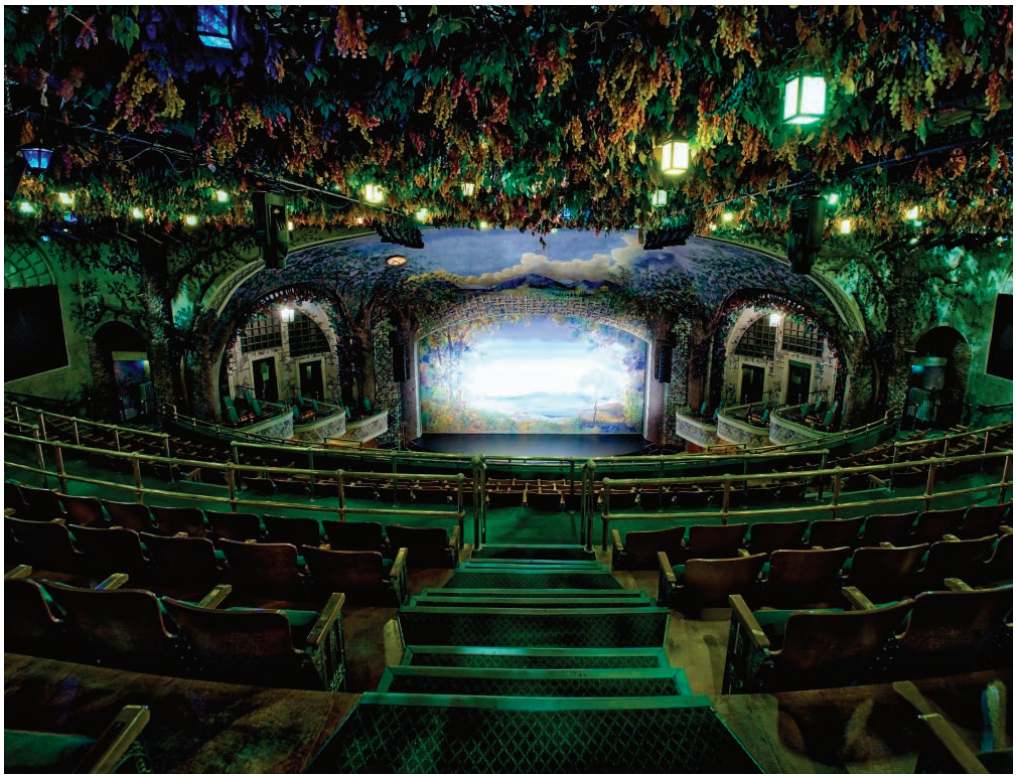
In 2018, after more than 30 years of service, the restored leaf canopy was again in need of restoration. The approach taken in 1985 was sound from a conservation perspective, but had practical limitations. The natural leaves dried and crumbled, creating a patchy and

thin appearance. The requirement for in situ reapplication of fire retardant on a five-to-ten-year cycle was unsustainable, and test methods were ad hoc. Combining public safety and aesthetic considerations, the decision was made to create a replacement canopy with artificial foliage with a laboratory-certified flame-spread rating. Funding was secured from the Parks Canada National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places and the Province of Ontario.

The search began for manufacturers able to fabricate artificial branches with the desired leaf shape, range of colours, flexibility, and inherent fire retardancy in the huge quantities required. Following research and testing, artificial foliage was sourced from two manufacturers in the United States and one British company based in Dubai. As leaves in colours of yellow, green, and deep purple made their way toward Toronto, scaffolding was installed to access a ceiling measuring 1338 square metres. Mock-up panels were created to get the balance of colours right before the 21,800 artificial branches were installed.

As an additional part of the restoration project, all the lamps and lanterns were converted to LED technology. While this reduced the "twinkle factor" of the original incandescent bulbs, it resulted in higher ambient light levels, closer to the natural light levels that were part of the original design intent of architect Thomas Lamb.

With its renewed leaf ceiling and lighting treatments, the atmosphere and mood of the Winter Garden Theatre is decidedly spring-like. The character of an elaborate stage set still permeates the entire room.



Above: The meticulously restored Winter Garden Theatre which was designed to give the impression of a rooftop garden. **Photo** Mark Wolfson

The Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres are owned and operated by the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT). The OHT is an agency of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport. The Trust identifies, protects, promotes and conserves Ontario's heritage in all of its forms. The OHT is empowered to conserve provincially significant cultural and natural heritage, to interpret Ontario's history, to educate Ontarians about its importance in our society, and to celebrate the province's diversity. The Trust envisions an Ontario where the places, landscapes, traditions and stories that embody our heritage are reflected, valued and conserved for future generations.

About the author

Romas Bubelis is an architect with the Ontario Heritage Trust. In his capacity as the Trust's Capital Team Lead he has initiated and directed architectural conservation projects at many historic sites across Ontario. His focus is adaptive reuse and the preservation of buildings as artifacts. Ellen Flowers is the Manager of Marketing and Communications at The Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre and she admits that the Winter Garden is her favourite of the two theatres.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

SMALL PLACES, BIG HERITAGE
ACORN FALL 2019

Photo Liz Lundell

Fewer than 20 percent of Ontarians now live outside large urban areas, yet many of the great successes in heritage conservation are in tiny towns and villages dotted across the province. In fact, when it comes to learning about Ontario's history, some of the best lessons are found in our smaller communities.

The Fall 2019 ACORN will look at stories of heritage preservation in small places. Articles should be a maximum of either 500 or 1000 words in length and "encourage the conservation and reuse of structures, districts and landscapes of architectural, historic and cultural significance, to inspire and benefit Ontarians."

Please send proposals to liz.lundell@rogers.com prior to starting work on an article to avoid duplication and ensure guidelines are received. Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2019. Submitters are encouraged to look at past issues available on the ACO website under Resources: www.acontario.ca.

30

Registration
Walking Tour
Opening Reception
6:00pm – 9:00pm
Hensall Heritage Hall

31

Registration
Tradeshow
Plenary – Heritage Economics with Kelley Hill
Concurrent sessions
Gala Dinner

01

Concurrent sessions – centered on Community Activism, Natural Heritage and Industry
PM–Bluewater Heritage Tour

2019 Ontario Heritage Conference

May 30 - June 1, 2019

Municipalities of Bluewater & Goderich

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Did you know?

The first issue of ACORN was published in 1976. The cover story was the destruction of John Howard's asylum building at 999 Queen Street West in Toronto. Editor Peter John Stokes wrote "the story of 999 indicates the need for constant watch, complete information and early intervention in the cause for preservation generally, especially where landmarks are concerned and also where communities are endangered. Old buildings need understanding, require respect, demand imagination."