

HALTON HILLS ARTS COUNCIL

Play gets acid test by critic

I have no credentials as a drama critic. For this reason I waited until the production, that I intend to discuss had left our area before commenting upon it.

The production was "Sweeney Todd" which was the last of the seasons subscription series at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto.

During the run of the play there was an article in one of the Toronto papers, which expressed surprise at the reactions of the Alex audiences to the production. The attitude seemed to be that Toronto audiences were not sophisticated enough to appreciate this work of art.

At the time I had not yet seen it, my subscription tickets are for the last week of every run.

When I did go, I brought all the sophistication I could dredge up with me, but I too failed the test. Actually, what was needed for unalloyed enjoyment of the piece was not sophistication but a strong stomach.

For those who may have neither read about or seen "Sweeney Todd" let me outline the plot. Sweeney Todd returns to the London of the 19th-century from Australia, where he has spent the last 15 years as a convict unjustly deported so that an evil judge could steal his virtuous wife.

He returns to find his wife dead and his daughter the ward of this same judge, who had driven his wife to suicide. He returns to his former profession as a barber and sets up shop above the pie shop of his former landlady.

Todd's entire being is consumed with the desire for revenge. He plans to slit the throat of the judge and the henchman. Until he can lure them to his shop, he whittles away the time slitting the throats of any stranger to the neighbourhood, who wanders into his shop.

He sends the bodies down through a trap door to the pie lady below, who uses the carcasses for her meat pies.

Imagine not being sophisticated enough to appreciate such delicate nuances. Given such a grotesque plot, you may wonder what sort of music Steven Sondheim, the composer, used to make it palatable. The answer is, that the music did not make it more acceptable. It added to the general unpleasantness.

The score was like the subject matter, unpleasant. This is in no way a criticism of the Royal Alex subscription series. I have been a subscriber for five years and have renewed for next year. It's the best deal around, if you like the theatre.

CONTINUING:

In the lower library foyer - until July 31 - Fossils: Myths, Legends and Folklore - An exhibit from the Royal Ontario Museum.

COMING EVENTS:

Georgetown and Acton Libraries today (Wednesday), Dinosaur Day for children 6 years and up.

Cultural Centre Gallery - starting July 23 and running until August 28 "Tell Me What It Is", an exhibition for the gallery by John Sommer of Gallery House Sol.

Throw yourself in Ottawa 'jail'

By LEILA LECORPS Herald Special

If you, young travellers, have never spent the night in prison and if you are tempted to try it so as to include it among the souvenirs of your exciting life, this is your chance. Above all, though, don't let your parents and friends be alarmed if you tell them you spent the night in prison in Ottawa as the youth hostel is the former Nicholas Street Jail located right beside the police station.

When you think that in Europe youth hostels are often located in castles and manor houses, you could perhaps say that the Ottawa hostel, while not in a castle, is in the now converted keep of what might elsewhere and in other circumstances have been a castle. And yet, the keep and prison are images just as imbued with romanticism.

As a matter of fact, the Ottawa Youth Hostel, at 75 Nicholas Street, is in an old prison built in 1863, not far from the Parliament Buildings, the famous Sparks Street Mall and the future Rideau Street convention centre complex.

The Carleton County prison, declared a historical monument by the federal government, was where the murderer of D'Arcy McGee, one of the Fathers of Confederation, was hanged, among other memorable events. The aura of horror from times not so far removed when the death penalty was not yet abolished still pervades the premises.

The strange thing is, it is not distasteful to the hostel patrons who, on the contrary, delight in the sinister details. For the guidance of future guests of the old prison, it would perhaps be as well to note, even so, that the premises are not haunted and that there is no cause for apprehension. Much of the building is still intact, including the room where the hangings took place, last used in 1945.

In 1972, the national capital's Hostelling Association took over the prison and rented the building from the city, or more specifically from the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, for a nominal rent of \$1 a year but handles payment of the electricity and heating itself.

In August 1973, Prince Philip opened the building as a youth hostel and, since then, the old prison has become a full-scale hostelry which accommodates approximately 15,000 visitors a year.

Through a two-year subscription campaign which made it possible to collect roughly \$215,000, a start was made on renovation. The work involved knocking down some walls to enlarge the tiny cells so as to make rooms out of them. The project included the installation of a new lighting and ventilation system and modernization of the electrical and fire protection equipment.

Another purpose of the renovations was to show off the arches and old-style red brick to advantage so as to give the hostel a more pleasant atmosphere.

The hostel is open all year long. The winter months, of course, are the off-season. There are then only twenty people or so a night; except when the old prison becomes a place of refuge for groups of 8 to 14-year old schoolchildren

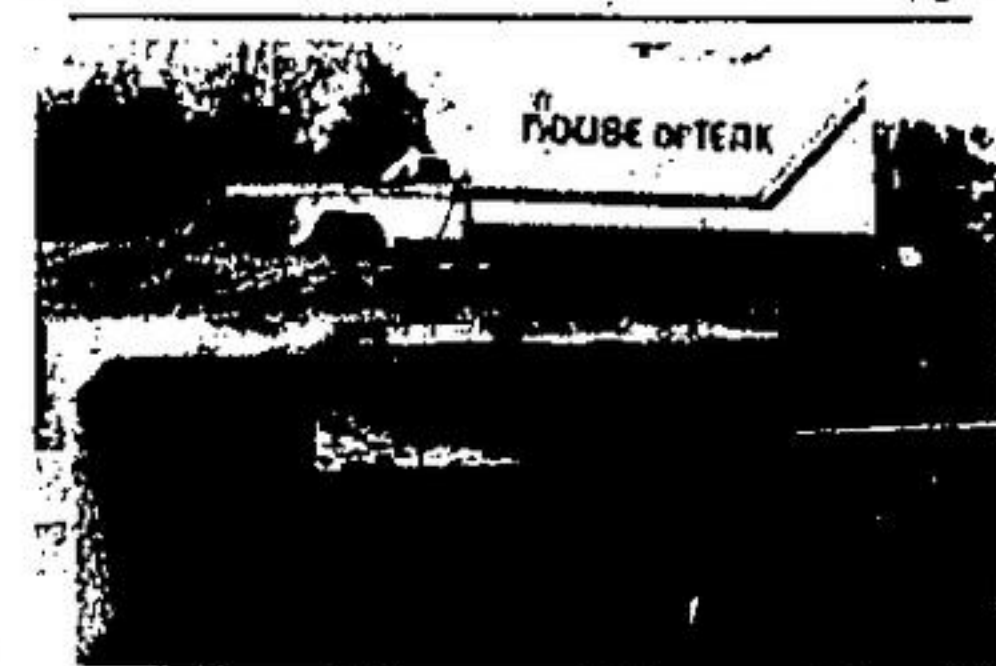
(Cubs, Guides, Brownies and 4-H members) during the school year. The hostel is perfect for housing groups of school children visiting the capital city because it is inexpensive and clean and has a yard for supervised outdoor games.

In spring and summer, the hostel operates at full capacity. There are 130 beds in the corridors running the length of the cells, forming lengthwise dormitories in long corridors, not counting the renovated cells which have been converted into rooms for six persons each. There are three floors of dormitories: first the men's, then the women's and one for both men and women.

The hostel supplies blankets and pillows. A sheet can be rented for the modest sum of 50

cents, that is, a sheet for a sleeping bag, stitched up both sides.

Continued on Page 3



RE-OPENED

Traffic resumed along Maple Avenue last Friday as Halton region completed construction of a new culvert. Recent rains washed out the old one. (Herald photo)

LEGION LINES

British visitors

By GREG BALL
Comrades on our sick list Jim Moran in Oakville, Theresa Harrison, Len Hayner, Roy Harley, Sam Gibby in Georgetown and Ladies Auxiliary Antie Collins.

Congratulations to Bill Collier, runner up in District B Horse Shoes. Entertainment for July 24 will be "Sonic." There will be a BBQ at \$10.00 a couple Aug. 13.

Car club winners for July 15, 1982: Joyce Enge, Murray Ezard, Rodney Norton, Vern Kirby, Grant Emmerson and Lloyd Reid.

Visitors to Branch 120: Nat and Nellie Waring from Blackburn, Lancashire, Archie and Bernice Leavitt, Gordon and Donna Olsen from Alberta, Roy McGuinness from Br. 272 in Hespeler, and Les Maddigan from Belle Isle, Newfoundland.

HISTORY OF BR. 120
It seems to have received an impetus from a funeral which was conducted by a neighbouring Legion. Local servicemen attending began talking of holding a meeting for the purpose of organizing. This idea was furthered by two late members, George Alcott and Tom Grieve who contacted mutual friends in Guelph Legion inviting them to attend this organization meeting. This event took place in the Town Hall on March 14, 1928 with three Guelph Legion members present.

Officers were elected, a charter was applied for and the battle was on! The first president was Gordon Cousens MC, with an executive including Ed Barker, Allan Roney, Nelson Tuck, MM, Dr. C.V. Williams, MC, George Alcott and G.O. Brown. First Sgt. at Arms was Tom Grieve.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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In navigation across an ocean the aim is to sail by the shortest possible route—the "Great Circle" route. A great circle is any circle whose center is the center of the earth, and which has its diameter equal to the diameter of the earth. Meridians are halves of great circles passing through the North and South poles.

Travelling?

Every available OPP unit will be on patrol for the Civic Holiday weekend, July 31 - Aug. 2, according to OPP Commissioner James Erskine.

The poor weather at the start of the summer discouraged travellers, but the Civic Holiday is expected to be one of the most heavily travelled weekends of the year.

"We constantly find that excessive speed is a major contributing factor in serious traffic accidents," Comm. Erskine said, who is also chairman of the Ontario Traffic Safety Council. "A holiday weekend is a time to relax and take things easy. Your driving should be the same - when you're not pushing yourself, you find you don't tailgate and can negotiate curves easily."

OPP patrols, many using radar units, will be watching for the speeding motorist. Much of the enforcement effort will be concentrated on stretches of highway with a bad accident record.

Continued on Page 4

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Acton

Continued from Page 1 with the time spent, the inconvenience and the cost of gas. Shopping in a small town can be a friendly easy-going sort of thing."

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