

# Be there at the birth of Christ

Moving re-enactment of Nativity at Country Heritage Park

BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

For four nights in early December, Country Heritage Park will be transformed into a stage as local actors re-enact the story of the birth of Jesus.

The *On the Way to Bethlehem* nativity pageant, which takes place beginning at 6:30 pm on December 3, 4, 5, and 6, will feature approximately 150 cast members, including 30 children, many of whom are members of local churches. All of them will play various roles in the story at different locations in the park. Four small babies will portray the baby Jesus at different times, with their respective mothers playing Mary. There will be an eighty strong mass choir, more than two dozen animals (including a camel) and fifteen different scenes.

## SOME PEOPLE ARE MOVED TO TEARS

On arrival, visitors will enter the reception area in the Gambrel Barn where they can have refreshments and listen to the mass choir. Then small groups will be taken on a journey around Bethlehem with a guide. People will get to see King Herod's court, and meet up with Roman soldiers, shepherds, magi, innkeepers and fellow travellers as they learn about the Christmas story. What makes this pageant so popular is that visitors are able to wander amongst the actors and interact with them at will. "It's this interactive quality that visitors love," adds publicity director Carolyn McDonnell. "They go home feeling they have really turned back the hands of time and experienced the true meaning of Christmas." At the end of the journey, visitors will take a wagon ride back to the exit.

The park's general manager, Reg Cressman, says Country Heritage Park and over 21 local churches organize the event jointly. "It says something about the spirit of the church community in the Region of Halton."

Andrea Rowbottom, who acts as church co-ordinator for the event, says that this year more sets have been added and there will also be a display of banners decorated by local churches at the Gambrel Barn. The banners are four feet by six feet, and will feature the name of a specific church as well as a nativity scene.

Andrea says the event is

open to "absolutely everybody" and the evening is one in which many denominations take part.

Both Andrea and Reg agree that the event is a moving experience that provides a unique way for people to prepare spiritually for Christmas. Andrea says some people are moved to tears as they travel around the site where they will see the sets and handmade costumes worn by the actors and hear the dialogue as actors tell the Christmas story.

In its fourth year, the event also includes a church supper on each of the four nights at one of four churches in the Milton area. Visitors can attend one of the church suppers prior to taking part in the walk to

Bethlehem. On the first night, the church supper is at Knox Presbyterian Church in Milton; on the second night, at St. Paul's United Church in Milton; on the third night, at Milton's Grace Anglican Church; and on the final night, at Boston Presbyterian Church in Milton.

Andrea says families, carloads or busloads, can reserve places at the church suppers in advance by calling 905-864-7127 or by sending a request to nativity2004@canada.com. All requests need to be pre-booked. Admission for the supper is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. There's no admission fee for the nativity pageant, but freewill offerings will be accepted.

Money raised from the event will support the work of local churches as well as Country Heritage Park. To contact the park, call 905-878-8151 or 1-888-307-3276 or visit the website at [www.countryheritagepark.com](http://www.countryheritagepark.com).



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Country Heritage Park, along with local churches, is holding its annual *On the Way to Bethlehem* Christmas Nativity Pageant in early December. As part of the event, buildings at the park are used as backdrops for various scenes in the Christmas story.

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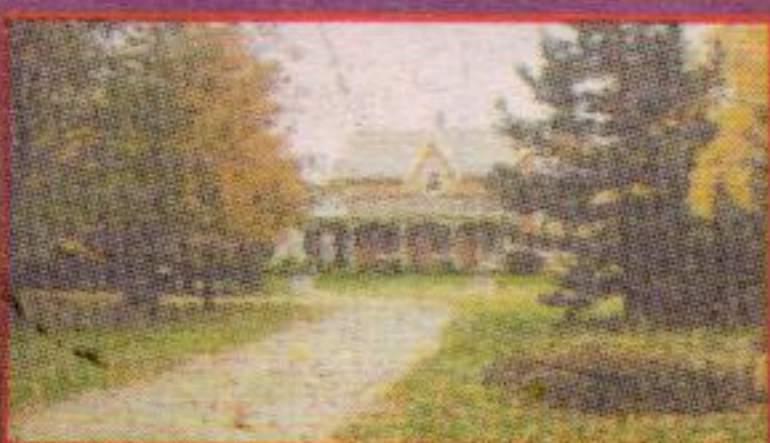
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