



President Lincoln comes to theatre

"I am happy to be back in British North America," said President Abraham Lincoln in his opening remarks last Monday at the Markham Theatre.

Standing before an audience made up of mostly Grade 11 and 12 senior history students, the 16th U.S. President explained that his only previous visit to the Toronto area had been in 1848 but that as only a congressman, he was fairly unknown to Canadians at the time.

This presentation, entitled "President Lincoln Comes to Canada" was sponsored by the Travelways Tours Company.

In celebration of their 20 years of bringing York Region students on Washington-Gettysburg field trips, they brought Lincoln look-alike James A. Getty to Unionville for three performances.

Getty, who owns and operates a Gettysburg theatre called "A. Lincoln's Place", has been doing the "presidential" monologue for 10 years now.

His 40 minute presentation and ensuing question period was done completely in character. He stood before his audience dressed exactly as Lincoln did — black trousers, vest and frock coat, white shirt and black bow tie. He

also wore or carried an authentic beaver skin top hat and to compliment his already strong resemblance to the historic statesman, Getty even donned a small mole on right cheek.

His monologue was geared to the Canadian high school student. As President Lincoln, he discussed Canadian-U.S. relations during his term in office and noted the support which was received from individual Canadians on a 50-one ratio in favor of the North in the U.S. civil war.

He went on to discuss his political career, family life and joked about his reputed bad looks.

This was Getty's first visit to Canada and he said that he was pleased with the question period. "The students asked serious, high-level questions" he said.

One student wanted to know if, as President, he had followed the current free-trade debate and what his opinion was. Lincoln replied that he "believed in the right of the common man to rise up" and that free-trade would probably be better for individuals, eventually promoting increased employment.

The girls were concerned with his stand on women's rights issues and the role that his wife played in his political career.

Explaining that he was perhaps "before his time", the "humanitarian politician" said that he had once distributed a handbill which stated "that any person who bore the burden of taxes should have the right to vote, even if it happened to be a woman".

Wife "Molly" was never consulted though on matters of state. I was the President, asserted Lincoln.

There was one decision, however, which Mrs. Lincoln was integral to, and that regarded Abe's possible appointment to the governorship of the Oregon Territory.

By outright refusing to move out west, the future first lady ensured the possibility for Lincoln's debate with Stephen Douglas on slavery — the event which launched his Presidential career.

Don Bogle, Head of the Unionville High School History Dept. and instigator of the 20 year liason with Travelways Tours was favorably impressed with the audience's interest level.

He has been bringing groups of students to the Lincoln's Place Theatre for six years now. He noted that the performance varies on every visit and that what is important is that the 55 year old Getty's "enthusiasm is always there". "After all," he said, "that's what good teaching is all about."

Abe Lincoln wasn't shot during this appearance at a theatre. He addressed history students at Markham Theatre. The look-alike appears here with students Jackie Gauvreau and Heather Armstrong. Teacher Don Bogle (at left) looks on. Sjoerd Witteveen

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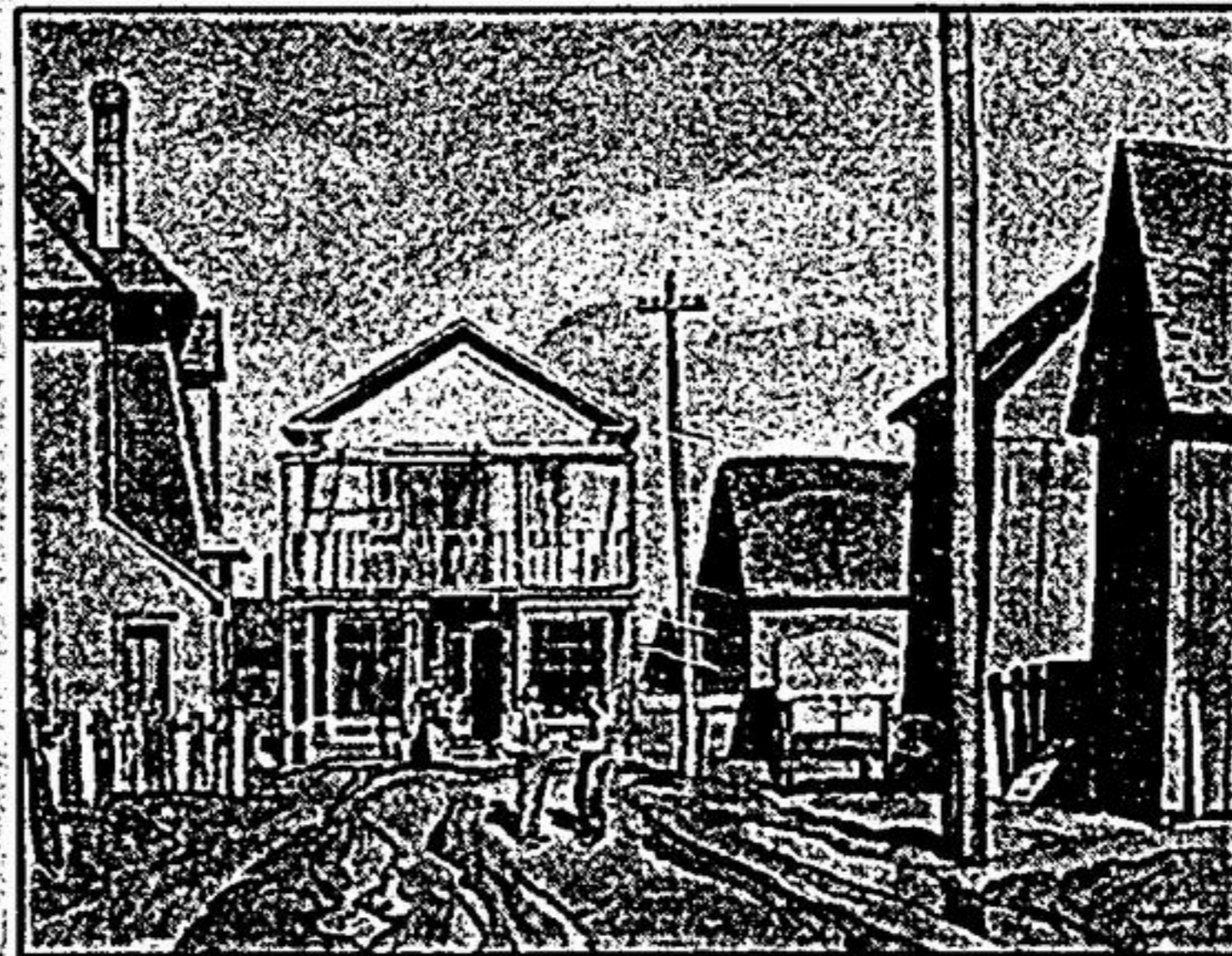
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