

Victoria Lawn Cemetery guided spirit walks return with virtual format

Sept. 2, 2020 — One fall tradition, like the stories it tells, won't be lost to history.

While in-person programming and special events remain limited due to ongoing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, fans of the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre annual Guided Spirit Walks at Victoria Lawn Cemetery need not fret. The popular historical program will return in 2020, albeit in a virtual format.

On Sept. 12 and 19 the museum will present *Playing Favourites: Stories from the Past*, putting a virtual spin on the event. Traditionally the museum has welcomed guests to the cemetery itself for performances bringing to life some of the cemetery's famous, or infamous, residents. This year the performances will move online with two YouTube livestream dates instead of the traditional in-person format.

"We've presented the spirit walks through wind, rain and surprise September heatwaves, this year was a different challenge," said museum visitor services coordinator Adrian Petry, adding, "with the popularity of the walks, and the dedication of so many performers, we weren't prepared to leave fans without, we're bridging the gap this year by taking it online."

As the event's title may indicate, museum staff will indeed be playing favourites this year, selecting the best of past year's performances, and presenting them as a best-of collection.

Performances this year include:

- the 2015 scene for Lilian Phelps, a popular author and lecturer on the North American Temperance circuit in the early 1900s who wrote about pay equity for women;
- the 2015 scene for Samuel McArthur and his brother James McArthur Jr., both of whom survived the First World War, only to die in the gate collapse at Lock 6 as they both worked on the construction of the Welland Ship Canal;
- the 2012 scene for John C. Ball, who was in command of the cannons at Vroomans Farms at the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812;
- the 2014 scene of a Suffragette march and the stories of Farmerettes who came to Niagara to help stem the farm labour shortage in 1914;
- and more.

This year will include a special aspect, with pre-show chats with the cast and crew online beginning at 6:30 p.m. on both dates. Shows on Sept. 12 and 19 kick off at 7 p.m.

The event will be available online after the performance dates, the museum is asking those planning on attending virtually register ahead of time by emailing museum@stcatharines.ca with the subject line 'Virtual Guided Spirit Walks.' Registration can also be completed via phone by calling 905.984.8880. The event is available by donation. Donations can be made by calling the number above or in-person at the museum during operation hours.

For more on St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre events, programming and exhibits visit stcatharines.ca/Museum.

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