

O'Connor Irish Heritage House

Imagine the Possibilities...



Volume 1, Issue 2 Fall 2005

Centre of Culture, Heritage and Learning



Inside this issue:

<i>Welcome</i>	1	<i>Historical Note</i>	4
<i>Thank You Founding Members</i>	2	<i>Community Classifieds</i>	4
<i>Daytime Toronto Rogers TV Interview</i>	3	<i>Contact Info</i>	4

Good people ! things are moving along at the Senator O'Connor College School and O'Connor Estate - future home of Culture, Heritage and Learning at O'Connor Irish Heritage House.

Immediate updates include: *Location* - no longer do we access the area by driving through the local neighbourhood via Cassandra and Avonwick roadways. A new entrance-way exists on Rowena Drive, which runs directly off Victoria Park Avenue. The new building can be seen from the main road. A bus stop is within yards of the building, at nearby traffic lights.

Senator O'Connor College School is a *state-of-the-art, centre of secondary education*, able to house and teach 1100 plus young students. Both teachers and students gasped with delight at first sight of the building on opening day, Tuesday, September 6th this year.

Within the school there are several facilities of which the O'Connor Irish Heritage House members may avail themselves - the cafeteria, the chapel and two-story auditorium; the gymnasium as well as the playing fields. Use of these facilities is subject to TCDSB permit arrangement.

Over the summer spacious new parking lots were created to accommodate 137 vehicles. There is adequate room to park for modest Irish gatherings held at O'Connor Irish Heritage House. A driveway runs in front of O'Connor Estate and several decade-old trees have been preserved within the parking lot design. Likewise, distinguished, aged trees are incorporated in the area beautifully landscaped to the south of the Estate.

We are delighted with the show of support from Founding Members. We encourage our Founders to introduce another member or two to this project. Together we can accomplish much.

In our Summer 2005 Newsletter we asked "What befits this glorious Estate?" We identified that "the Irish have a remarkable history in the growth and development of Toronto especially in the area of education." Since the summer, we have discovered that Frank Patrick O'Connor has done the Irish proud in Toronto. Echoing notable good works of another late Irish native Timothy Eaton during the latter 19th Century, Francis P. alone made his mark during the early 20th Century. See our website www.irishheritagehouse.com for a reprint of the full article "Frank O'Connor Philanthropist."

With a renewed invitation to *ye people of Irish birth and Irish descent*, engage your passion. Take a page from this ancestor's benevolent and humanitarian book which indeed befits the Irish spirit. Come on board and share the vision of this restoration project. Help us promote and preserve this heritage treasure. Imagine the child on your knee to whom you will say, 'I helped bring that place back to life - let me take you there.'

Be part of the plan - be part of the action - be part of the legacy.



Daytime Toronto - Rogers TV Interview

(In Picture— from Left to Right)

Michael Yarde, Rogers TV, Angela Kennedy, Toronto Catholic District School Board Trustee, Sean McCann, O'Connor Irish Heritage House Spokesperson, and Mary Fay, President—O'Connor Irish Heritage House Committee

O'Connor Irish Heritage House Founding Members - We Welcome

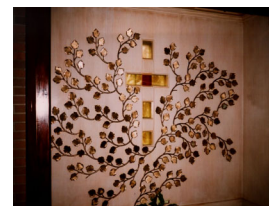


Mike & Valerie Antonides	Mary Fay	John & Ursula Matthews	Celine and Ralph Richardson
Joe C.W. Armstrong	James Flaherty	Ivan and Rosaleen Matich	John D. Rooney
Deirdre O'Connor Athaide	Norita Fleming	Sean McCann	Patricia Rose
Peter & Dympna Athaide & Family	Fiona Flynn	Farrell McCarthy	Joseph Ryan
John & Nancy Valerio Axford	John & Margaret Flynn	Finbarr McCarthy & Eleanor McGrath	Angelo & Miriam Sangiorgio
Liz Bastable	Declan & Christine French	James & Anne-Marie McGloin	Phil & Margaret Small
Ciara Behan	Tom & Lily Gallagher	John McGlynn	Ben & Patsy Smith
Cathal & Bridie Boyd	Pat & Dianne Gallagher	Trudy McGlynn	Jeff, Leanne & Jake Storey
Maura Canavan	Robert & Lauraine Gardiner	Mary McKenna	Susan Sweeney
Barbara Carroll	Ann Gravel	Mary Eileen McMahan	& Eugene Sweeney (in Memoriam)
Liam & Frances Carroll	Henry Grimes	Rosaleen McMahan	<i>TCDSB Trustees 2003-2006</i>
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Sarah Carroll	Brian & Marylou Halferty	Colman and Kathy McSweeney	Ann Andrachuk
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Eileen Costello	Cecil Houston	Dan Murphy	Christine Nunziata
Sean and Pat Costello	David and Maureen Hulbert	Mairin Nic Dhiarmada	Sal Piccininni
Karen D'Aoust	Alan & Bernadette Hunt	Thomas & Christine O'Brien	Barbara Poplawski
Viv D'Arcy (in Memoriam)	Jonathan Kearns	Fr. Pat O'Dea	Maria Rizzo
Marie Debenham	Jim Kelly	Leo & Moira O'Donnell	Julie Tobin
Mary Jo Deighan	Alistair & Angela Kennedy	Stephen & Frances O'Leary	Ken Tracey
Peggy Delaney	Brendan, Brian, Kevin, & Kieran Kennedy	Tom O'Leary	Fr. Charles VanItem
Sheila Devereux		Eamonn O'Loughlin	Maddelena Virgillio
Radica and Raymund Domian	Kevin & Susan Kobus	John O'Keefe	Ken and Maura Walsh
Mary Domjan	Most. Rev. M. Pearce Lacey	Sean & Kitty O'Neill	Mairead, Mark & Harmon Walsh
Martin Domitric	Pat & Anne Lavelle	Bridie O'Reilly	Honourable Hilary M. Weston
Kevin & Oonagh Dooley	Vincent Leahy	Noreen O'Shea	Kathleen Wilkinson
Brian & Teresa Dorgan	Carolyn Lofquist	Bridget O'Toole	
Eamonn Dorgan	John Lynskey	Maureen Padgett	
Christine Doyle	Peter & Katharine Mahon	Gina Pollock	
Fr. Michael Doyle CSSp	Honourable Senator Marian Maloney	Rosemary Potter	
Brian Farmer	Shawn & Sheila Maloney	Jack & Wanda Quigley	
Martin Farrell	Noel & Joan Martin	John Rafferty	
Patrick Farrell	John & Una Masterson	John & Anne Marie Raftery	

Support the O'Connor Irish Heritage House

Would you like to "**Share the Vision**", get involved and support the O'Connor Irish Heritage House? Your contributions and donations to this project are welcomed.

For more information please visit www.IrishHeritageHouse.com or email us at info@irishheritagehouse.com



Be part of the plan. Be part of the action. Be part of the legacy

Daytime Toronto - Rogers TV Cable

Michael Yarde interviewing Sean McCann - the O'Connor Irish Heritage House Spokesperson and Angela Kennedy, Trustee of Toronto Catholic District School Board. Friday, July 15, 2005
(with permission of Jonathan Lynn, Producer, "Daytime Toronto")
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**Michael Yarde (Introduction):** "I am here (at the corner of O'Connor House) feeling the spirit of the Irish. All sorts of Irish going on around me. I am standing with Angela Kennedy who is the Toronto Catholic District School Board Trustee for this area (Ward 11)."

**MY:** "What is the connection between the school and the O'Connor House?"

**AK:** "When the School Board allocated the money to build the new O'Connor College school we didn't have sufficient funds to keep the O'Connor House, refurbish it and save it or preserve it for the long term - so we brought a motion forward that would save it from demolition. That's when the Save the O'Connor House Committee came into play to find a group who would take a long term lease.

**MY:** "What are the students and teachers doing to Save the O'Connor House?"

**AK:** "The students and teachers were a very big part of that Save the O'Connor House Committee and they helped to raise funds, raise the awareness and to try to look for a group that would be appropriate.

**MY:** "Thank you very much Angela. And someone who is no stranger to this whole story: as a matter of fact Senator O'Connor was appointed by Mackenzie King and this gentleman here actually played Mackenzie King in a movie which I got to see. We are happy to have Sean McCann here with me this morning to talk a little bit about his impact on what is going on with this house."

**SMC:** "Thanks Michael. I'm not sure how much impact I have but I'm very involved number one, by my Irish heritage and I was approached by Mary Fay to be on the committee and I saw great potential here in terms of this house. As you know there is a great history of immigration to the Province of Ontario and to the country and the Irish, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been coming here.

We see this house a focal point for the Irish community as a kind of repository of history and culture and people can tell their individual immigrant stories and when they have a collective place to do it it is a great thing for the community. I am interested in promoting that as much as possible."

**MY:** "Wonderful. I would agree. What are some of the things you are doing or the ideas being discussed about the future of O'Connor House?"

**SMC:** "Well certainly for one thing there will be Irish dance here, Irish music. We can envision a small Irish Film Festival - there is going to be a small projection room in the House. We are talking about Irish cooking - culinary days. Annaghmakerrig is an Irish spiritual kind of retreat movement: we could see retreats here and almost anyone - and we are talking about the Irish community at

large - we are not talking about any sectarian idea - so if they bring their ideas for history, or for commerce to this House then this gives a great platform for that."

**MY:** "So actually there's not a lot of sadness here, there's some hope. Here's all these people around who want to help keep this House and do something different with it and basically you are open right now to the possibilities."

**SMC:** "Absolutely. It is un fait accompli. The Toronto Catholic District School Board is entered now into negotiations of lease with the O'Connor Irish Heritage House Committee. So now it is a question of fulfilling things.

And the whole community out there - the people out there with Irish heritage - this is your chance too, to bring forward your ideas and to help support it financially, to bring forward papers, and to bring forward family mementos: all of these things can hopefully find a home here."

**MY:** "Thank you very much Sean for taking some time out with us today to talk with us and I would also like to thank Angela Kennedy from the TCDSB for helping us out aswell.

It's hot out here today - the heat. But there's a lot of love around here now. I'm standing with Mary Fay, President of the O'Connor Irish Heritage House Committee and has been leading the effort to breathe new life back into this House. Mary, tell me what the public can do to help this House stay."

**MF:** "The public can check the website: [www.irishheritagehouse.com](http://www.irishheritagehouse.com). There is a lot of information in there and they will get a nice rounded picture of what it's all about."

**MY:** "Thank you Mary. Actually what happened the other day was I was checking out the site and I heard this lovely music coming from it but thought it was the person next door to me in another part of the office. It turns out it was music from Mary Fay's brother. He actually put music on the site?"

**MF:** "Yes, the Webmaster suggested we put music on the site so I knew my brother had done some music so asked him if I could use his CD."

**MY:** "Wonderful. I want to thank Mary Fay and I'd like to thank again all my guests: Sean and Angela for being with me today at the O'Connor Irish Heritage House."

<< This interview can be found on video on our website:  
[www.irishheritagehouse.com](http://www.irishheritagehouse.com) >>



*A look inside the O'Connor*



### **O'Connor Irish Heritage House**

60 Rowena Drive  
Toronto, Ontario  
M3A 3R2

**Mailing Address:**  
27 Crowland Drive  
Etobicoke, Ontario  
M9W 2S5

**Phone:** 416-745-2906

**E-mail:**  
info@irishheritagehouse.com

**Web:**  
www.irishheritagehouse.com

## *Historical Note: ~ Francis Patrick O'Connor ~*



Frank O'Connor was *a man of the people and friend* to those encompassing every profession and trade: accountants, carpenters, doctors and dentists, clergy, lawyers, as well as cabinet ministers and former-cabinet ministers. In his life, he was the first candy employer to allow employees to buy shares in his company—appreciating that his workers were a part of his success. At his farm, Maryvale, he hosted International Ploughing Competitions; as well held much touted popular parties here.

A man of faith, he organized the first layman's retreat in Toronto at St. Augustine's seminary. It was the Labour Day weekend 1925. Thirteen men joined in. Other retreats followed during holiday times subject to available space at St. Augustine's, at Martyr's Shrine, Midland and at the Jesuit Seminary, then on Wellington St. West. Retreats continue today at the Manresa centre in Pickering. As Senator, he was a voice for the Irish in Canada and he worked for fair taxes for the separate school system. His was a life that appeared to be packed with working hard and playing hard. But all was not hilarity. Those who have loved and lost well know such pain. Frank's beloved wife Mary Ellen Hayes died in 1931, when Frank was still a young man of 46 years. Casting our eye back to those sad days, we cannot help but admire the enduring good-natured spirit of this man.



*Senator O'Connor portrait in the Newman Centre at the University of Toronto — presented by Cardinal McGuigan in 1940. Photo compliments of the Newman*

*Center for the Study of Religion and Public Life*

## *Community Classifieds ...*

### **Toronto Catholic District School Board**

**Trustee Ward 11:** Angela Kennedy

**Phone:** 416-512-3411

**Email:** angela.kennedy@tcdsb.org

**Web:** www.tcdsb.org

### **Toronto Irish Players**

**President:** Peggy Delaney

**Phone:** 416-926-9563 /416-440-2888

**Email:** prfinbow@aol.com

**Web:** www.torontoirishplayers.org

### **Mega City Realty inc.**

**Associate Broker:** Radica R. Domian

**Phone:** 416-268-9327

**Email:** rdomian@trebnet.com

### **What'stheStorey.ca — Web design, Media and Software Solutions**

**Contact:** Jeff Storey

**Phone:** 416-994-0189

**Email:** info@whatsthestorey.ca

**Web:** www.WhatstheStorey.ca

### **Johnson Academy of Irish Dancing**

**Director:** Rosemarie Johnson

**Phone:** 416-763-4494

**Email:** johnsonacad@sympatico.ca

### **Helen Rose Gift & Home Accent**

**Contact:** Helen Mader

**Address:** 2493 Yonge Street

**Phone:** 416-932-0344

### **Transformation Education Institute**

**Director:** Ashleigh Molloy

**Phone:** 416-697-4067

**Email:** amolloy@transedinstitute.org

**Web:** www.transedinstitute.org

**You can have your business card added here — contact us at  
info@irishheritagehouse.com**

**"An idea is a powerful thing. But you never know when you are going to have one. When great minds come together who knows what we can accomplish."**

**Mike Lazaridis, creator of Blackberry (quoted from an AMEX TV ad).**