

Melita Opera Houses

A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

Yay, we're heading to the opera house tonight. Such a wonderful space. Full of music and laughter, suspense, magic and dance on the stage!

Pardon me! You wouldn't know me, but my husband, Robert Love, is a well-known businessman here in Melita. It was our dream to build a showcase for cultural activities! And now it's alive and well.

It's 1913 and we have all sorts of entertainment coming to town: traveling shows, local concerts, and the latest thing, moving pictures! Oh my! A film is transferred to a big white screen with a movie projector! We've never seen such a thing!

Up until now, our small town had several smaller venues. The Bell and Cosgrove Hall was opened in 1891. The large stone Sturgeon Block had a Hall in the second floor. And, Mr. Brundrit's Hall was over Cameron & Duncan's Warehouse. And, we had Stokes Hall. That was a busy place! Clearly, we've come through the hardship years of settlement. With all these venues for entertainment, the town of Melita has become a bustling, culturally rich community! Just the way I like it!

If you don't mind, I'll take you back to some old posters and newspaper advertisements to give you an idea of the kinds of shows we've had in Melita!

In 1892, a circus, of all things, came to town. The same year we had a lecture on astronomy. Considering the wonderful views we have of the sky, that was a great eye-opening event.

A year later, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, known world-wide, stopped here as they traveled throughout the province.

And in 1899, Professor Pull, a hypnotist and mind-reader, performed in Stokes' Hall to a full house. Interesting and so humorous.

Later that year, the Arian Swiss Bell Ringers performed with their bells, guitars, banjos, dancing and singing. A true spectacle!

In the year 1900, we had a concert, featuring Miss Edith Miller, Canada's greatest singer at the time. She was accompanied by the celebrated boy violinist, Master Fred Alderson of Winnipeg.



The next year, the Stutz New York Theater Company played for two nights, crowding the Hall. And then later they crowded our homes, as the performers stayed for both nights. My heart still flutters at the memory!

Oh, and in 1902, a large crowd came to listen to Miss Pauline Johnson. She's half Mohawk and half British. Performs stories through poetry, dressed in a ball gown and changes into buckskins and moccasins during the intermission. That would be one of my favourites. So charming. And unsettling as well.

Now in 1913, our new opera house surpasses them all! It has a large stage and a sloped floor. Robert has furnished it with opera chairs, enough for 400 people! It's amazing!

Oh! I see Robert has the sleigh and horses ready! We're off to the opera house to watch a delightful play about, ironically, living in the country! I wonder how a group of city slickers will pull that off. It seems, we're never disappointed though.

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