



# FULFORD PLACE

## Mansion & Family Home

By Russ Disotell

The mention of Fulford Place elicits visions of a stunning mansion on the St. Lawrence River in Brockville. Built between 1899-1901, George T. Fulford's 20,000 square foot Edwardian mansion is imposing and impressive on the outside and equally magnificent inside with original tapestries, paintings, statuary and period furniture. Visitors from near and far are familiar with the quintessential mansion on the river with all its luxurious trappings. Pamela Peacock wants to show visitors another side to the story.

Fulford Place is owned and operated by the Ontario Heritage Trust, an agency of the Government of Ontario. Peacock is the Coordinator, Eastern Ontario Museum Sites for the Trust, which encompasses Fulford Place and Homewood Museums. Like many from outside Brockville she knew about the beauty and architectural splendour of the building, but once arriving to take over the reins of the operation she was struck by a different side of the mansion.

"I knew the building itself, and the architecture. What I didn't realize, and what isn't as well known outside Brockville is the family story" she points out. "The Fulford empire was global with factories around the world, as far flung as China, Japan and Australia, as well as across Europe. There is also a political aspect to the family's story." George Taylor Fulford was a Liberal Senator and Canada's political elite were regular visitors to the mansion. "Prime Minister's such as Sir Wilfrid Laurier and MacKenzie King came to supper." Politicians, industrialists and

businessmen from both sides of the river were friends and confidantes.

She has also been surprised by the number of visitors who relate personal stories about the family. "The history here isn't that far removed" she explains. There are stories of playing in the halls and on the grounds, sledding on the hills and attending school with the Fulford children. "As a visitor, there are so many ways to relate to the family and the home. We try to use these stories to make the mansion more accessible to everyone."

This tailoring of tours extends to local school groups. "We're always looking for new ways to bring the history to life for the students. A new curriculum has been developed to appeal to a younger audience and help make the history more relevant and exciting for them." She points out that any interested teachers or schools need only get in touch and they can work together to make a wonderful and engaging outing for the students.

The (we) refers to the hard working, enthusiastic volunteers at Fulford Place who, Peacock points out are always thinking of new ways to bring the mansion and its story to the public's attention. This year there are a series of noontime concerts, every Wednesday, on the verandah with an array of talented local musicians. They continue until August 25<sup>th</sup>. A listing is available on the Heritage Trust website under Fulford Place. For the younger set, eight to twelve, there is an Egypt and Archaeology day on August 12 with activities throughout the day. Volunteers are already hard at work making

plans for the popular Victorian Christmas fundraiser that takes place in November.

Homewood Museum in Maitland is Peacock's other ward. "It's one of the oldest homes in Ontario, having been built in 1801 by a Montreal architectural firm for Dr. Solomon Jones, a prominent local United Empire Loyalist. Seven generations of the family lived here. You can see the story of the development of the family in the bones of the house. "Ms. Peacock points out that while the two sites are dramatically different, they both chronicle the history of a family. She's also quick to point out that Homewood is "a great place for a summer picnic". On August 13, Homewood will be holding their annual "Family Day", with games and educational programs from 10am until 4pm.

Two homes, one thirty rooms of opulence and grandeur, the other distinctly more utilitarian. One from the turn of the Nineteenth Century, the other, the Twentieth Century. Both encompassing the history of the area. Two homes, and of course, two family stories. LH

### FULFORD PLACE

Hours Until Labour Day  
287 King St E., Brockville On  
7 Days a week 10 am to 5 pm

### HOMEWOOD MUSEUM

Hours Until Labour Day  
#1372 Highway # 2 Maitland, On  
Wednesday to Sunday 10 am - 5 pm