

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GALT LITTLE THEATRE**

The primary credit for the organization of the Galt Little Theatre must be given to the principal of Galt Collegiate Institute (CGI), Dr. T.H. Wholton. It was Dr. Wholton's interest in the theatre that led him to organize a group of staff and students into the Galt Collegiate Players. From this group came the Galt Little Theatre company which was organized by a small group, which included Dr. Wholton, that met at the local YMCA in August 1933. In a way it was not a good time to start any new ventures. The effects of the Great Depression had not diminished and money was extremely difficult to find. However, the material needs of the group were few and costs were relatively low so the dedicated little group managed to scrape together enough to get started. They began by organizing three one act plays for the 1933/1934 season, *The Lost Silk Hat*, *The Locked Chest* and *The Grand Cham's Diamond*.

Because of Dr. Wholton's connection with the Galt Little Theatre, the company was given the use of Tassie Hall at GCI for a minimal charge and enjoyed considerable early success. By the early 1950's the group boasted a membership of over 1,000 supporters and began the move from the one act plays with which they had started to more complex three act plays including *Kind Lady*, *Light Up the Sky* and *The Little Foxes*.

The coming of television, in the 1950's, had a dramatic impact on the company's membership. At the same time financial difficulties and restrictions imposed on the group on the use of sets at GCI put further strains on the Galt Little Theatre. It was at about this time that the company began what was to become its all too familiar nomadic existence. Plays continued to be presented at Tassie Hall, on the stage of the Galt Public Library and in the Delta Playhouse but a long-term rehearsal stage and space in which to store sets and costumes could not be found. As a result the troupe found itself housed in a variety of sites including the old Post Office, Kirkham's Appliance store, the old Gore Building on Main St., the Savage Shoe building in Preston and the Preston Hydro building, to name a few.

Despite the adversity, the company managed not only to survive but to thrive. The troupe attracted new support and, in 1978, appointed a building committee to find a permanent home for the Galt Little Theatre. The task was not easy, but after years of work and after many false starts, the City of Cambridge, in November 1982, purchased and began renovation of the former Water St. Baptist Church to create the *Cambridge Arts Theatre*, the new and permanent home of the Galt Little Theatre. The facility opened with great fanfare in October 1983. From that time there has been no looking back and now, with the 1992/1993 season, the Galt Little Theatre can celebrate 60 years of continuous operation, the longest running Little Theatre company in Western Ontario.

**The above brief history was written on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Galt Little Theatre in 1993. Since then, GLT has continued to produce an average of 4 full length plays a year and as this is written, in June of 2008, is planning its 75<sup>th</sup> season, which will open in October of 2008.**