

Dare ya!

FORT FRIGHT – “FESTIVAL OF FEAR” DOUBLES IN SIZE, OPENS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25TH AT FORT HENRY

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KINGSTON, Ontario – Be afraid, Very afraid. Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada, part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has taken the success of last year’s inaugural Fort Fright scare event and doubled its size for the 2009 season, opening Friday, September 25th at 6:00 PM. Voted ‘Best New 2008 Ontario Event’ Festivals and Events Ontario and nominated for a Best New Event Award at this fall’s Ontario Ministry of Tourism Marketing Summit in Windsor, this year’s event promises more scare stations and live costumed ghouls guaranteed to raise goose bumps. Fort Fright represents one of the largest-scale, detailed event productions in eastern Ontario, employing the use of over 50 movie-style, quality animatronics, dynamic special effects, intense sound and lighting and an increased number of costumed animators. This event was funded again this year with the stellar support of visitkingston.ca (Kingston Accommodation Partners), the Ambassador Conference Resort, Four Points Sheraton, Celebrate Ontario and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.

St. Lawrence Parks Commission GM/CEO **Patricia Macdonald** is excited about entering year-two of this giant, engaging and exciting *scare-ttraction*. “The overwhelming success of last year’s event gave us all the green light build the momentum of Fort Fright this year,” **says Ms. Macdonald**. “We’ve championed extending the Fort’s operating season well into the fall which in turn, supports our local tourism partners and stimulates the local and regional economy. We have one of the best, natural movie sets in the world for this style of event – damp limestone,

creaky floors, tall shadows, wind off the lake, isolated on top of a hill – it’s perfect. Tourism Kingston, hotel, retail and food and beverage partners are extremely excited about having this large-scale event placed in a usual quiet time of the season. The Fort Henry team have been working intensely since May preparing props, layout redesigns, ghoul training and all the extras that will make year two surprising to all that return from last year. Part of Fort Henry’s success has always been this team’s ability to continue to re-invent the site, while being mindful and respectful of its important heritage and history. We’re all in this together and together we become stronger.”

Will Baird, Fort Henry Special events Coordinator, says working on this event is like playing in a giant sandbox. “There’s no denying the intense level of hard work that goes into building this style of event,” says **Baird**. “Lugging and hauling is part of it, but it’s the mediums we have to work with that make it so much fun. It’s buying an Animatronic or prop, getting it back to the site and building an experience around it. We’ve added some new pieces this year in new areas of the Fort – I can’t wait to see the public’s reactions. I attended a giant industry trade show this past spring and it is truly unbelievable what’s out there in terms of the scare business. We haven’t even scrapped the surface with what we’re doing here.”

New this year on opening night, Owen Sound escape artist **Steve Santini**, will attempt to remove himself from a solid limestone and barred Garrison Cell in front of the audience at 8:00 PM. Santini, officially named “The World’s Most Extreme Escape Artist” by the legendary Ripley’s Believe it or Not!, will put his skills to the ultimate test when he is manacled with over 60 lbs of shackles, chains, and historical restraints and is then locked into one of the Fort’s Garrison Cells. Santini will first be searched with a metal detector to ensure he has no hidden tools or other devices to help him escape and the cell will also be searched. The door to the cell, which normally locks with a single padlock will be triple locked with three padlocks and Santini will be given a 30 minute time limit in which to free himself from his restraints and the cell. This escape will be attempted in full view of the guests. Santini plans to use a combination of pain control, contortion, physics, self hypnosis and science to free himself from the manacles and cell. In July of 2009 Steve Santini garnered national media attention when he freed himself in

just 8 minutes from a “Death Row” condemned cell at the historic “En Prison” in Trois Rivieres, Quebec. In a career first, Santini did this escape in full view of the assembled media.

Fort Henry has again employed the expertise of **Paul Hopkins, owner of Boneyard Bargains in Scarborough** to assist with the production and installation of the new animatronics.. Hopkins is in charge of setting up and testing the 50 animatronics purchased for this attraction. “I’m totally impressed with the results of last year’s first-time effort”, said **Hopkins**. “This team is definitely on the right track and I know the expectation so high this year – they will not be disappointed. The ‘scare business’ is a huge business sector and right now, there is no major haunted attraction in Ontario. Fort Fright has gained a lot of public notoriety since last year with videos on You Tube and Facebook, plus the giant 40 by 60 foot billboard on the Gardiner’s Expressway in Toronto. I predict it will continue to grow substantially.” Hopkins has worked on similar projects at Toronto’s Casa Loma.

According to **Glen Shakleton, owner of Haunted Walks Inc.** who have conducted haunted tours of Fort Henry for several years and released a new last yearbook entitled ‘Ghosts of Kingston’, Fort Henry has several resident ghosts including a poltergeist in the bakery, a child who died accidentally at the Fort, a wandering Royal Artillery Gunner who died in an artillery accident in the 1830’s and our most famous character - Nils Von Schultz - a man hung for treason at Fort Henry after leading an 1830’s rebellion against Britain. Through a bevy of sophisticated special effects, the plan is to bring these characters back to life. Creepy Canada, a Canadian show dedicated to chasing ghosts, filmed a segment at Fort Henry in 2005 and numerous paranormal hunters have pull the blankets up and stayed overnight in the quest to connect with the trapped souls. People have e-mailed pictures they’ve taken with images that were not supposed to be there. Requests to visit keep streaming in. Guests may add a ‘Haunted Walk of the Fort’ to their Fort Fright ticket purchase during the event.

Paul Fortier, owner of Jessup Foods has transformed his licensed Officer's Mess into the Pirate's Den, Eatery and Alehouse featuring a value-added \$25 fixed price menu each evening. Casual dinner favourites with a few frightful alterations will be available for purchase each evening of Fort Fright in the canteen. Note: from October 10th to 12th, traditional Thanksgiving Meals will be served. For reservations, contact Jessup Foods direct at 613.530.2550.

The Garrison Stores have expanded the retail offerings this year to three stores, transformed into the "Shops of Horrors" by retail veteran **Sandra Cornwall**. "We saw 2what was popular last year and expanded upon some of these fun and novel items", remarks **Cornwall**. "It's been a fun challenge to look at retail from the dark side and see a whole new world of products including novelties, books, glow products, food and costumes to name a few. This year, guests will be able to get an individual or group photo taken with great costumes and a ghoulish backdrop. Ghost books were also very popular last year and we've stocked up with some great authors for this season. We had many guests requests shop our regular Fort Henry merchandise so this year, the regular stores items will be available to everyone. "

The event opens Friday, September 25th at 6:00 P.M. and runs until 10:00 P.M. (last tickets sold at 9:30 PM. For Thanksgiving Weekend, Fort Fright will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Beginning October 14th, the attraction will run Tuesday to Saturday, 6-10 P.M. until Saturday, November 7th. Tickets are available on line at www.ticketweb.ca, at the Fort Henry gates or at Haunted Walks on Ontario Street in Downtown Kingston. General Admissions is \$9.00; a Fort Fright/Haunted Walk tickets is \$18; Groups of a minimum of 15 or more \$7; a Military Discount with valid Identification is \$7. Rates do not include GST. Special hotel overnight packages have been placed on www.fortfright.com under 'Internments' Local hoteliers, inns and bed and breakfast owners have created value-added packages for overnight stays in Kingston.

Located at the junction of Highways 2 and 15 (Exit 623 off Highway 401 then south on Highway 15), Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada is managed by The St. Lawrence Parks Commission, an agency of the Government of Ontario and operates facilities in 16 municipalities stretching from Kingston to the Quebec border, including Upper Canada Village, Fort Henry National Historic Site of Canada, Chrysler Park Marina, Upper Canada Golf Course, Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary and 12 campgrounds and day-use areas including the Long Sault and 1000 Islands Parkways.