

Rotary's Lamplighter Tour 'Goes to the Beach'

BY SCOTT ROSTS
STAFF

The year is 1874.

Led by a guide, lamp in hand, local residents stole into the past, as the Rotary Club of Lincoln's Lamplighter Tour went to the beach – Grimsby Beach that is – for a four-day run. Guests learned about local lore – some fictitious, some not – and took a stroll down memory lane to learn about the charm and character of Grimsby Beach from 1874 to 1924. Five 20-minute plays followed the story of Lottie (Charlotte) Phelps, who started as a 10-year-old and ended the vignettes as a 56-year-old.

"Ever since we've started we've had some type of connection each year," said artistic director Bev Haskins. "This year Lottie shows up each time."

The sixth annual production of Lamplighter Tour, which supports the Rotary Shell at Charles Daley Park, opened with Lottie as a 10-year-old in Methodists and Morals, by Marilyn Bellfontaine. The year is 1874 and Lottie is just 10. The young Phelps family, headed by father Noah and mother Adaline, are about to have their fifth child. Trouble ensues when Doc Fitch can't be found and the maid, Margaret, is an unwed, single woman who has no idea how to help when Adaline's water breaks. Armed with knowledge from Doc Fitch's books, and fresh off dissecting a squirrel to see how similar its insides were to a human's, Lottie, who wants to be a doctor in the future, steps up to the plate and lends a helping hand until Doc Fitch arrives and delivers the baby safely. The vignette, with witty lines and strong acting, drew lots of laughs from the crowd. Sharon Fecik

(Adaline), Samantha Cooke (Lottie), Nathan Kretz (Wesley Phelps), 10-year-old Jackson Rotz (Marius Phelps), Alison Everington (the maid Margaret), Steve de Boer (Noah) and Ted Han (Doc Fitch) all played strong roles.

Flash forward to 1888 and Grimsby Beach is abuzz on the eve of the dedication of the Methodist Temple in Guest of Honour. Playwright Liz Bennean provided a playful and fun take on why Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald never showed up for the dedication, when the night before he arrives "drunk as a skunk." The PM, played by Jens Hansen, is dragged in by Noah Phelps (Mark Miszturak) and his friend John McDowell (Mike Cipryk). When the PM ends up passed out on the chesterfield, "smelling like an old whiskey barrel", plenty of questions ensue from Lottie (played by Megan Van Weldon), Adaline (Janet Urquhart), the maid Molly (Betsy Tauro) and Maitland Phelps (Ben Cipryk). While Hansen offers some comedic expression, the vignette took a look at some serious sides of the Methodists, including a tough decision where McDowell tells the PM he isn't fit to preside over the dedication and should simply go home. The PM also offers some encouragement to Lottie to pursue her dreams of becoming a physician. Maid Molly has a serious heart-to-heart talk with the PM. The Irish widow remembers her late husband Bill, and notes "life is still full of surprises" even after all these years.

By 1910 the landscape is changing in Grimsby Beach in the play *Winds of Change*, by Bob Friesen. Lottie, who gave up her dream of becoming a physician after marriage, returns to the Beach with her

See LAMPLIGHTER, Page 21



Lorne Gretsing (playing Mr. H. W. Wylie) and his fellow Lamplighter guides led more than 400 guests through the cottages and homes of the Grimsby Beach area last week during the Rotary Club of Lincoln's annual Lamplighter Tour.

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