

AUGUST 2024



# The COMMUNITY CHRONICLE



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SOHO VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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WHERE TO FIND US!

## WELCOME

Welcome to the new SoHo Community Association.

Our mission is to connect our friends and neighbours in creating a sense of community and belonging.

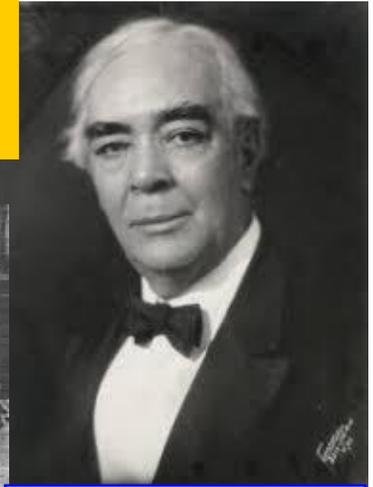
SoHo is an incredibly diverse neighbourhood rich in history of London.

Come along on our journey of renewal and revitalization!

The SoHo Community Association is non-profit organization. We aspire to gain volunteers and committee members, to plan and administer organizing social events, monitoring development proposals, community clean ups, bringing awareness to natural and built heritage, increasing safety awareness and raising funds to support the sense of community for people living in our neighbourhood.



# SoHo History Corner



[Click here to read more](#)



## RICHARD BERRY HARRISON

Richard Berry Harrison is not a name many can easily place.

But it's a name and a face that once graced the cover of Time magazine, the marquee of a Broadway theatre and to this day remains the namesake of a library and auditorium in Raleigh, N.C., a high school in Blytheville, Ark., and a gymnasium in Selma, N.C.

There's even a park on South Street in London named after Harrison, which shouldn't be a surprise given he was born and raised here, the son of escaped slaves.

"People just don't know about him," said Jeff Culbert, a London playwright and actor who has written a one-man audio play about Harrison, *Elocution: The Life of Richard Berry Harrison*.

Actor Walter Borden, a veteran of the Stratford Festival and a member of the Order of Canada, plays Harrison and the recording is expected to be released March 14, the anniversary of Harrison's death in 1935 of heart failure. Details are not yet available.

"Even theatre people don't know about him," said Culbert. "So, part of my dream is to let people know who he is and to celebrate him, especially during Black History Month and recognize his impact on Black culture, but also as a Londoner and a Canadian."

Richard B. Harrison was an actor, teacher, dramatic reader and lecturer who was featured on the cover of Time on March 4, 1935 – five years after introducing the character "De Lawd" during more than 1,650 performances of Marc Connelly's play, *The Green Pastures*, which opened on Broadway on February 26, 1930 and won a Pulitzer Prize.

The same show also toured to more than 200 cities, including the Grand Theatre in his hometown for three performances during two days in October 1934.

Harrison died 10 days after the Time cover was published.

In 2002, Harrison’s story inspired the late Chris Doty, a London journalist, historian, documentary filmmaker, author and playwright to lobby the City of London to name the park after him and erect a plaque.

Culbert’s play has been several years in the making. He spent a couple of days in 2018 researching Harrison at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City.

“I found some amazing stuff there,” said Culbert.

“I even found a note that Mary Pickford (the Canadian born star of the silent film era who helped build the film industry) wrote to Richard about The Green Pastures.”

In the two boxes of material Culbert was given at the Schomburg Center he also found a manuscript, an unpublished autobiography by Harrison. The autobiography included many stories, including one about Harrison mixing it up with a local bully and newspaper delivery boy, also known as a “newsie,” at the height of the Donnelly trial in 1880.

Harrison was born in London in 1864, the oldest of five children born to escaped U.S. slaves and named by his mother who had seen a performance of Shakespeare’s Richard III. He studied at Detroit Training School of Dramatic Art, and with a private drama coach. For most of his career he performed as a dramatic reader of poetry and adaptations of plays, including Shakespeare, while occasionally working as a train porter.

Culbert said Harrison was a victim of the widespread racism in the U.S. that discouraged producers and directors from hiring Blacks for their shows. Harrison was a light-skinned Black but rejected suggestions he assume the identity of a Mexican or other more acceptable heritage, said Culbert.

“That’s when he decided he was going to be a one-man show and go on the road,” said Culbert. “And he did. He went on the road and made a living performing off and on. There were slow times and then he’d work as a train porter.”

Culbert said it’s not surprising Harrison is not well known.

“It doesn’t take that long for the next generation to forget,” said Culbert.

“There are so many greats who come and go, people like (French actor) Sarah Bernhardt. Not many young actors would know about her. People can just fall off the radar.”

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**SOHO CANADA DAY 2024**



The Government of Canada, Government of Ontario and the City of London announced today an exciting investment of more than \$24 million in active transportation infrastructure improvements for London.

The funding will help extend the Thames Valley Parkway into the SoHo neighbourhood, as well as support several future improvements to accessibility, mobility, and active transportation across the city, including:

- Accessibility improvements at intersections
- New pedestrian crossings
- New bicycle parking
- New cycling improvements along London streets

The Thames Valley Parkway (TVP) extension will fill a gap along the multi-use pathway between Wellington Street and Maitland Street on the north side of the Thames River. The new path will connect the TVP to the SoHo neighbourhood and the residential developments currently being constructed at the Old Victoria Hospital Lands. This new multi-use pathway along the Thames River supports the important work being done to redevelop the hospital lands into more homes for Londoners.

The new pathway will also connect Londoners to other transportation infrastructure, such as the Rapid Transit corridor being constructed nearby along the Wellington Gateway. This TVP project will provide Londoners more access, connectivity, and transportation choices whether you are walking, rolling, or taking transit.

Construction of the TVP extension is anticipated to begin in 2025.

The investment announced today helps us continue to implement London's Climate Emergency Action Plan and supports the vision of London's Mobility Master Plan.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3WfA3zU>

#LdnOnt | #LdnOntBike



Here are a few of your local SoHo businesses:

[York Property Management](#)

[Family Circle](#)

[Canadian Tire](#)

[Soho's Tacos and Tequila](#)

[Affinity Food Group](#)

London Cash and Carry

[Enterprise Car Rental](#)

[Salliss Plumbing & Heating Inc.](#)

[Spirit River Cannabis](#)

California Convenience

[Shelby's Shawarma](#)

M Rik Automotive Werks

[Goodwill](#)

Big Bee Convenience

[Labatt Brewery](#)

Strano's Supermarket & Bakery



## VISION SOHO ALLIANCE

Our community is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. With over 7,000 Londoners on the affordable housing waitlist, declining vacancy rates, and rapidly rising home costs, finding a safe and affordable home has become increasingly difficult for many.

The Vision SoHo Alliance plans to address this pressing issue by building a housing mix that will enhance the existing SoHo neighbourhood through beautifully designed, environmentally friendly and well-managed buildings. These mixed-income developments aim to foster a strong, safe and accessible community, create a sense of belonging, and celebrate the rich heritage of the Old Victoria Hospital Lands and SoHo neighbourhood.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



## MISSION STATEMENT

The SoHo Community Organization is an action-oriented resident-based volunteer association, focused on supporting our communities' future. We cherish our past and look forward to our future while celebrating our diversity.

Our mission is to connect all residents of SoHo to create a strong, healthy and safe community where residents are proud to be SOHO.

### What we are not:

The SoHo Community Organization is not a political group

We are not affiliated with the City of London or city services

We are not bylaw or law enforcement and are not a gossip source

# Builders Choice

## AIR SYSTEMS LTD.

Builders Choice Air Systems is located in London, Ontario servicing the London area and surrounding community. We pride ourselves in providing outstanding quality service from start to finish. Builders Choice has been providing heating, ventilation and air conditioning services to London and area home builders and home owners since 1992.

With over 25 years experience, our team is able to provide competitive, quality workmanship including industry leading customer service. We are proud members of Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA), the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI), Better Business Bureau (BBB), Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI) and The London Home Builders Association (LHBA).



### CONTACT US

**Address:**

492 Hill St, London, ON N6B 1E7

**Hours:**

8:00am – 4:30pm Monday to Friday

**Email:**

info@builderschoiceair.com

**Phone:**

519-642-7000



### WHERE TO FIND US!



Next Issue: City of London Garbage and Recycling  
– What to do when the city won't pick up large items... who do you call?

Have a suggestion? Want to volunteer?

Have a great story?

Let us know at [soho.london.ca@gmail.com](mailto:soho.london.ca@gmail.com)



Get to know  
**SOHO**  
Market

Sunday, October 6, 11-4pm

**APPLICATION DEADLINE, FRIDAY,  
AUGUST 16**

**MEREDITH PARK  
(NELSON ST AND MAITLAND ST)**

**ORGANIZED BY THE SOHO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

**SoHo!** We are excited to announce Get to know Soho Market is coming to Meredith Park, and we want YOU to be a part of it!

We're looking for:

- **Artisans and Crafters** - to showcase unique handmade goods
- **Musicians** - to provide live entertainment
- **Local Restaurants** - to offer delicious food

Why Apply?

- **Beautiful** outdoor setting
- **Engage** with the community
- **Connect** with local shoppers and fellow vendors

Event Date:

Sunday, October 6,  
11-4pm

Location:

Meredith Park (Nelson St and Maitland St)

Deadline to apply:

Friday, August 16, 11:59pm

Interested? Tap the link to apply and help make this event truly special. Let's create an unforgettable day together!

<https://form.jotform.com/242068311547252>