

July 26, 2004

Sarah Campbell Blaffer's "Castle" Laid Foundation for Canada's Largest Destination Spa

GRAFTON, Ontario – Only 75 minutes east of Toronto near the tiny village of Grafton, stands an eclectic fieldstone castle with a breathtaking view of Lake Ontario. Known as Ste. Anne's, this vast castle is home to one of the most popular destination spas in Canada, hosting more than 15,000 guests every year. Much of the spa's success, however, is largely due to the property's early development by one of Texas's most elite citizens and patroness of the arts, Sarah Campbell Blaffer (1885 – 1975).

What began as a farmhouse built in the 1850s by the Massey family (of Massey Ferguson farm equipment fame) was transformed into a rambling country estate during the 1940s by the Blaffer family of Houston, Texas. After striking oil on their ranch, the Robert Lee and Sarah Campbell Blaffer purchased the property as their summer home in 1939, expanding it over many years to accommodate their four children, live-in staff and other visitors. Mrs. Blaffer's intention was to create a place that resembled the old stone cottages of the Cotswold district of England, one of her favourite areas. Drawn by her faith in divine healing, it was Mrs. Blaffer who named it Ste. Anne's after the patron saint of Canada, Ste. Anne de Beaupré.

The special healing qualities of this place continued to reveal themselves under the Blaffers' auspices. Since they had access to the best well-drilling equipment of the day, the Blaffers were able to bore very deeply when a new well was needed, and discovered a vast underground aquifer of pure spring water. This water still flows throughout Ste. Anne's, is used throughout the spa in treatments and remains the only source of drinking water.

The north shore of Lake Ontario east of Toronto has been popular among Americans seeking a healthy refuge since the nineteenth century. The daughter of Ulysses S. Grant, Nellie Grant, had a summer home in the Cobourg area, returning over many years because she believed the northern air was more pure and beneficial to her health. Many of the spectacular Victorian homes in Cobourg and neighbouring Port Hope were built by vacationing Americans, a trend that continued into the 20th century when the world wars prevented them from holidaying in Europe. Today, Port Hope is renowned as the best preserved historical downtown in Ontario.

Owned and managed by Jim Corcoran, Haldimand Hills Spas is home to Ste. Anne's Spa in Grafton and The Hillcrest Spa in Port Hope, making it the largest destination spa operation in Canada. For rates and reservations call 1-888-346-6772.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Brittany Cadence, Marketing Manager
Spas
1-905-349-3704, ext. 271 or bcadence@steannes.com
2G0

Haldimand Hills
R.R.1, Grafton, ON K0K
2G0

“To bring to the world the power of healing through human touch.”