



BACKGROUND – THE QUEENS’ LANTERN



The Victoria Memorial Museum Building’s new glass “lantern” is sure to catch your eye. This luminous structure above the main entrance was unveiled in 2010 and presents a strikingly visible addition to the 100-year-old museum. It fills a decades-old void left by the removal of the museum’s original four-storey stone tower in 1915–16.

A Royal Visit: On June 30, 2010, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II toured the newly renovated museum and unveiled a plaque officially naming the new Queens’ Lantern. The title honours both Queen Elizabeth and her great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, after whom the Victoria Memorial Museum Building is named.

Improving Visitor Flow: The Queens’ Lantern is more than an aesthetic addition: it serves an important function. It houses a much-needed staircase, allowing visitors to move easily from the second to the fourth floor. This resolves a long-standing limitation for the historic building. The original design of David Ewart, Dominion Chief Architect, only provided easy public access to the second floor, via the grand staircase in the Atrium.



Reflecting the Past: The original tower was intended to be the focal point of the building. Regrettably, the tower had to be removed by 1916 because unstable soil conditions would not support its massive weight. Nearly 100 years later, the architects created the new lantern that not only evokes the spirit of Ewart’s early tower, but also encloses a new butterfly staircase and heralds the 21st century transformation of the museum. Image from Library and Archives Canada.

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A Spectacular View: From the outside, the Queens' Lantern is a modern yet elegant feature that heralds the transformation of the museum following a six-year renovation. From inside, visitors can gaze up Metcalfe Street towards Parliament Hill. Turning around, they can appreciate up close the stone carvings of animals and ornamentation that adorn the museum's exterior walls.



Innovative Engineering Solution: Unlike David Ewart's original heavy tower, the new structure does not impose any weight on the existing masonry walls. The Queens' Lantern actually hangs from a specially constructed roof that is cantilevered from concrete walls for the new elevator shafts inside the building. Four large steel columns provide the structural support for the roof, from which hang the panes of glass that form a transparent box.

Queens' Lantern facts

- Constructed in 2008 and 2009
- Officially opened to the public on May 22, 2010
- Glass manufactured at Pilkington Glassworks in England.
- Steel (columns and roof truss) manufactured in Quebec, Montreal and Ottawa.
- 160 panes of face glass
- 120 pieces of glass "fins"
- 136,000 kg (300,000 lb.) of steel
- 90,700 kg (200,000 lb.) of exterior glass
- 929 m² of exterior glass
- 334 m² of interior glass

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