



# HISTORY OF PHILANTHROPY AT ROM

**ROM**  
Governors

**LAYING THE FOUNDATION:  
OPENING THE MUSEUM, 1905-1914**

**1905**

**Prominent Canadian champions a major museum in Toronto**

Sir Edmund Walker, a leading Toronto banker and key member of the Royal Commission on the University of Toronto, advocates for the establishment of a first-class museum as part of a drive to position Toronto as a major international centre.



**1906**

**Early collecting gets underway**

Archaeologist and Egyptologist Charles T. Currelly is appointed official collector for the future museum by the University of Toronto. Through his travels, he begins to acquire artifacts that will form the basis of ROM's first collections.

Mr. C. T. Currelly, M.A.



**1907**

**Egyptian excavation sparks donor interest**

While excavating in Egypt, Currelly is visited by prominent Torontonians, Sir Edmund Osler and Mr. and Mrs. Harry D. Warren. This visit sparks not only additional support for his work, but a lifelong interest in Currelly's mission to establish a major museum.

**1910**

**Construction of ROM begins**

Construction of the Museum's first wing on Philosopher's Walk begins in 1910 and is completed in 1912. Work commences in earnest on the galleries. The Museum's cost, \$400,000, is shared by the University of Toronto and the Province of Ontario.



**1912**

**Province of Ontario officially establishes ROM**

The Province of Ontario passes the Royal Ontario Museum Act to formally establish the Museum. Five separate museums are created, including Archaeology, Geology, Mineralogy, Paleontology and Zoology, with a total of 20 museum staff. Sir Edmund Walker is appointed first Chairman of the Board.



**THE MUSEUM GROWS:  
ONTARIO BUILDS ROM'S FIRST EXPANSION, 1914-1933**

**1914**

**ROM opens its doors**

The Governor General of Canada the Duke of Connaught officially opens the Museum. The main entrance to the Museum is located on Bloor Street. The Museum welcomes nearly 2000 visitors a day in its first four days.



1917

**First official patrons group is established**

Sir Edmund Walker, Chairman of the ROM Board of Trustees, forms "The Twenty Friends of the Arts." He invites each patron to pledge \$500 per year for 10 years to help fund new acquisitions.

1918

**ROM begins collecting its world-famous Chinese collection**

Charles Currelly meets and befriends George Crofts, a businessman based in China with a passion for Chinese antiquities. Crofts donates and purchases an extraordinary number of artifacts for ROM's collections, including the Ming Tomb and the Chinese Lions.



1924

**ROM appoints first official collector of Chinese art**

ROM appoints Bishop William White, an Anglican missionary with a keen interest in Chinese art and history, as its official collector in China. Over the next decade he acquires superb artifacts of the Bronze Age and later, three magnificent 13th-14th century Buddhist temple murals, currently on display in the Bishop White Gallery of Chinese Temple Art.

1927

**Saturday Morning Club is formed**

The Saturday Morning Club for children is launched. Hugely popular, it inspires the growth of ROM's education program. Almost 100 years later, it still attracts hundreds of children a year, making it the longest-running public program at the Museum.



1929

**Province of Ontario approves expansion plans**

As the collections continue to grow, ROM's need for more space becomes acute. The Province of Ontario agrees to fund the construction of an additional wing.

1931

**Construction of a new wing begins during the Great Depression**

The expansion of ROM allows the Province to provide much-needed work for the countless unemployed in the early 1930s. All labour and building materials come from Ontario. The only exception is the unique mosaic ceiling in the Rotunda, imported from Italy.



**MATURITY AND INDEPENDENCE:  
REACHING FOR THE STARS, 1933-1968**

1933

**New Queen's Park wing officially opens**

The new Queen's Park wing opens, more than doubling ROM's size. The Province of Ontario has invested \$1.8 million to complete the building, designed in an Art Deco version of the Romanesque Revival style. It becomes one of Toronto's major architectural landmarks.

**New Chinese library opens**

While in China, Bishop White purchases the H.H. Mu Library with over 40,000 volumes on Chinese art, culture and history. Canada's largest Asian library at the time, this extraordinary resource is made possible through the generosity of donors.

**1940****ROM receives a transformational gift**

Toronto businessman J.H. Fleming bequeaths his ornithological collection of over 30,000 bird specimens. This single donation transforms ROM's zoology collection into one of international stature.

**1946****ROM's founding Director retires**

As the first Director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Charles Currelly was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Museum. In his honour, ROM renames the Armour Court the Currelly Gallery.

**1957****First volunteer group is founded**

Twelve dedicated women form the Museum's first Members Volunteer Committee to assist Museum visitors and curators. Today, the Department of Museum Volunteers has a membership of over 437 volunteers who annually provide over 33,000 person-hours, touching nearly every aspect of ROM's activities.

**1960****ROM establishes first fundraising group for a collection**

Louise Hawley Stone, founding member of the Museum's Volunteer Committee, establishes the Bishop White Committee to raise awareness and support for ROM's East Asian collections and library.

**1962****ROM reaches for the stars**

Colonel R.S. McLaughlin, Canadian automobile manufacturer and philanthropist, donates \$3.25 million to build and endow the first planetarium in Canada.

**ROM'S SECOND EXPANSION:  
WITH HELP FROM OUR DONORS, 1968-1982****1968****McLaughlin Planetarium opens**

Toronto celebrates the opening of the McLaughlin Planetarium—a state-of-the-art facility for its day—and pays tribute to Col. R.S. McLaughlin, who made it possible. It attracts record crowds, educating and entertaining visitors for the next three decades before closing in 1995, due to provincial budget constraints.



**ROM gains independence**

Royal Ontario Museum Act of 1968 grants the Museum independence from the University of Toronto. Now self-governed and self-managed, its buildings and collections are held in trust for the people of Ontario.

**Rotunda Magazine is launched**

A grant from the Laidlaw Foundation allows the Museum to publish Rotunda Magazine, which features articles on curatorial collections and research. In 2007, Rotunda Magazine is renamed ROM Magazine and currently reaches over 30,000 households.

**1974**

**ROM's first blockbuster exhibition opens**

The Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China opens and immediately draws record crowds—435,000 visitors—to the Museum, making it the first of many blockbuster exhibitions.

**1977**

**Renovation and expansion campaign begins**

Outgrowing its space once more, ROM launches a campaign to renovate its existing buildings and to build a new gallery wing and curatorial centre. The Board of Trustees votes to proceed with the \$42.5 million project with private and public support.

**1980**

**ROM closes its doors to begin renovation and construction**

**1981**

**New Curatorial Centre is completed**

ROM opens a new nine-storey Curatorial Centre housing more than five million artifacts and specimens. Superbly designed, it consolidates all curatorial staff, functions, facilities, labs, and libraries under one roof.

**A NEW ERA OF GALLERY DEVELOPMENT, 1982-2000**

**1982**

**The New Queen Elizabeth II Terrace Galleries Building is completed**

ROM re-opens after a closure of 20 months.

**1984**

**Her Majesty the Queen officially opens Terrace Galleries**

Although the Museum re-opened, most of the gallery spaces still lack exhibits.

**The Hon. A. Edwin Goodman chairs the Gallery Development Campaign**

The Campaign raises over \$40 million to rebuild ROM's galleries.

**ROM establishes the Royal Terrace Circle**

The Royal Terrace Circle is launched under the leadership of the Hon.



Edwin A. Goodman to recognize donors who make a minimum pledge of \$5,000 over five years to the Terrace Gallery Campaign. The Royal Terrace Circle and the Royal Corporate Circle merge in 1999 to become the Royal Patrons' Circle (RPC).

## 1986

### **The Greek and Etruscan galleries open**

ROM takes a major step toward rebuilding its galleries with the opening of The Greek World, Early Italy and the Etruscans, and Bronze and Iron Age Europe.

## 1989

### **H.H. Levy bequeaths an extraordinary gift to ROM**

After donating marvelous objects of East Asian art from his private collections, Herman Herzog Levy leaves a \$15 million bequest for the acquisition of Chinese bronzes, jades, ceramics, and sculptures.

## 1992

### **ROM Foundation is established**

ROM Foundation is created to raise funds for ROM's highest priorities and to guide donors to critical areas of need to support the Museum's collections, research, and programs.

## 1994

### **Louise Hawley Stone endows East Asian Art Curatorship**

Long-time volunteer and friend Louise Hawley Stone donates \$2 million to create ROM's first permanently endowed curatorial position, the Louise Hawley Stone Chair of Far Eastern Art. Other donors will follow suit; ROM now has 13 endowed curatorships and chairs.

## 1996

### **First ROM Foundation fundraiser is launched**

Fact or Fiction is launched and goes on to successfully raise funds and attract new audiences to ROM for over 20 years.

## 1997

### **The Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Gallery of Byzantine Art opens**

Thanks to a generous donation and gifts to the collections from Joey and Toby Tanenbaum, more than 300 treasures from the Byzantine Empire go on display. ROM now holds the largest and most significant collection of Byzantine art in Canada.

## 1998

### **ROM receives largest cash bequest in its history**

A passionate supporter and volunteer for over 50 years, Louise Hawley Stone makes ROM the beneficiary of a nearly \$50 million trust—the largest cash bequest ever made to benefit the Museum—to purchase new acquisitions, produce publications related to ROM's collections, and support curatorial positions.



**2000**

**The Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery opens**

Through the philanthropic leadership of Sir Christopher Ondaatje, ROM establishes a South Asian Gallery, along with key endowments for a curatorship and programs funded by members of Toronto's South Asian communities. An acquisitions fund is also established to help build the collections.

**RENAISSANCE ROM:  
INNOVATION AND RESTORATION, 2000–2010**

**2000**

**Renaissance ROM project begins**

**ROM receives an unprecedented donation of artifacts**

Joey and Toby Tanenbaum donate over 1800 pieces from their private collection of Chinese, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean antiquities. It is the highest-valued donation of artifacts in the Museum's history.



**2002**

**Provincial and federal governments support Renaissance ROM**

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announces \$30 million for Renaissance ROM, matching a previous commitment made by the Government of Ontario.

**Hilary M. Weston is announced as Chair of the Renaissance ROM Campaign**

**2003**

**The Crystal named in honour of Michael Lee-Chin**

Michael Lee-Chin donates \$30 million to Renaissance ROM. In appreciation, ROM names its forthcoming landmark addition the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, and its interior atrium the Hyacinth Gloria Chen Crystal Court in honour of his mother.



**Renaissance ROM breaks ground**

A colourful groundbreaking ceremony marks the beginning of construction activity for the project. The demolition of the 1984 Terrace Galleries begins.

**2004**

**ROM receives a wonderful surprise on its 90th birthday**

Hilary and Galen Weston, along with the Weston Family Foundation, donate \$20 million to Renaissance ROM. The gift coincides with ROM's 90th birthday.



**ROM Governors is created**

ROM Foundation Board re-constitutes itself as ROM Governors.

**Renaissance ROM marks completion of Phase I**

Renaissance ROM celebrates the completion of its first phase with the opening of 10 new galleries in the newly renovated Heritage Wings, including a new suite of Asian Galleries on display together for the first time in generations.

**2005**

**Steel structure of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal is complete**

**Young Patrons Circle launches**

With close to 100 members, it is the first philanthropic and social group of its kind in Canada, bringing together young professionals from diverse social and business circles who share an enthusiasm for ROM.

**2006**

**Young Patrons Circle launches PROM**

This marks the first cultural fundraising event hosted by a young patron group in Canada.

**2007**

**Michael Lee-Chin Crystal grand opening celebrations**

ROM's closest supporters dazzle on the red carpet at The Singular Event on June 1, 2007—the opening gala dinner party for the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal.

On June 2, 2007, over 40,000 visitors flock to see the Architectural Opening and Building Dedication.

**First two galleries in the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal open**

Thanks to unprecedented support from donors, ROM officially opens the James and Louise Temerty Galleries of the Age of Dinosaurs and the Reed Gallery of the Age of Mammals to the public.

**2008**

**Final four galleries open in the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal**

Thanks to the support of donors, the following galleries open: Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery, Wirth Gallery of the Middle East, Shreyas and Mina Ajmera Gallery of Africa, the Americas and Asia Pacific, and The Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume.

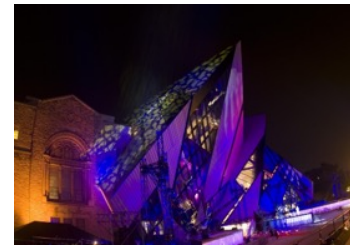
**Teck Suite of Galleries opens to the public**

Renaissance ROM celebrates the opening of the Teck Suite of Galleries: Earth's Treasures in December, including the Vale Inco Limited Gallery of Minerals, Gallery of Gems and Gold and the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame Gallery. The \$10 million gift from Teck is the largest corporate gift to ROM.

**2009**

**Schad Gallery of Biodiversity opens**

Renaissance ROM celebrates the opening of the Schad Gallery of Biodiversity. The \$12 million gift from the Schad Foundation is the largest gift from a private foundation to ROM.





## 2009

### **Renaissance ROM makes history**

In June 2009, ROM officially declares Renaissance ROM one of the most successful cultural fundraising campaigns in Canadian history.

## 2011

### **Opening of the Eaton Gallery of Rome, Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Gallery of Byzantium, Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Gallery of Rome and the Near East, and the Galleries of Africa: Nubia**

Thanks to the generous support of a contribution from the Government of Canada and the tremendous generosity of Thor and Nicole Eaton, Joey and Toby Tanenbaum, Rudolph P. Bratty and family, and many others, ROM opens a suite of new permanent galleries, reintroducing its visitors to the ancient civilizations of Rome, Byzantium and Nubia.

## 2014

### **ROM turns 100**

ROM celebrates its Centennial on March 19 with a day of special programs and events. The Love the ROM fundraising campaign is launched in support of the Museum's top priorities.

### **The Currelly Legacy Society celebrates 20th anniversary**

Named after the ROM's first Director of Archaeology and his wife, the Charles Trick and Ada Mary Currelly Society represents a special group of dedicated supporters who have made a future gift commitment to ROM.

### **The Royal Patrons Circle celebrates 30th anniversary**

Thirty years earlier, a small group of ROM supporters started an annual giving program to support the Museum. Today, RPC has over 300 members and raises more than \$1 million every year for ROM's highest priorities.

### **Love the ROM Campaign**

ROM friends and supporters contribute over \$23.8 million in celebration of ROM's Centennial.

### **ROM acquires the Kirwin Collection**

Thanks to the generosity of a dedicated group of donors, an extraordinary collection of over 21,000 ores and minerals, amassed over 40 years by exploratory geologist Douglas Kirwin, arrives at ROM. It is the largest single acquisition in the history of ROM Earth Sciences.

## 2017

### **Dan Mishra South Asia Initiative is launched**

A landmark gift of \$5 million from philanthropist Dan Mishra establishes a newly endowed curatorial position and funding for exhibitions, public engagement, research, and activities supporting ROM's commitment to South Asian art and culture.

### **Bishop White Committee Curatorship of Japanese Art & Culture is established**

The first endowed position of its kind in Canada is generously established



by the Bishop White Committee, a group of long-standing ROM volunteers, who actively enable the Museum to steward and display the largest collection of East Asian art in Canada.

**Weston Entrance reopens**

On December 12, community leaders and supporters gather at ROM to celebrate the reopening of the Weston Entrance. The fully refurbished and accessible new entrance opens up ROM—both literally and symbolically—to the community.



**THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MUSEUM, 2018 - 2028**

**2018**

**ROM launches strategic vision for the 21st century**

ROM announces a ten-year strategic plan and begins the early stages of a monumental, multi-year fundraising campaign in support of the Museum’s 10-year vision.

**Richard M. Ivey Curatorship of Invertebrate Palaeontology is established**

With a generous leadership gift from Richard M. Ivey and matching funds from the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust, a newly endowed curatorial position committed to Invertebrate Palaeontology is established at ROM.

**Revitalization of Bloor Street Plaza begins**

Thanks to generous leadership gifts from Helga Schmidt and Nita and Don Reed, construction begins on the Helga & Mike Schmidt Performance Terrace and the Reed Family Plaza. The project transforms the area into a new and vibrant public gathering space.

**Free access to the Daphne Cockwell Gallery dedicated to First Peoples art & culture**

The Daphne Cockwell Gallery dedicated to First Peoples art & culture opens free-of-charge to the public. The announcement is part of the Museum’s broader effort to foster greater appreciation of the Indigenous collections it stewards and to support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

**ROMCAN celebrates 10 years**

With the generosity of donors and in collaboration with 100 community partners across Ontario, ROM’s Community Access Network (ROMCAN) is committed to removing financial, social, and cultural barriers to access for our diverse communities. ROMCAN enables more than 100,000 free visits to the Museum every year.

**Willner Madge Gallery, Dawn of Life is Announced**

Toronto philanthropists Jeff Willner and Stacey Madge generously commit \$5 million for a permanent new 10,000 square foot gallery that will trace the story of life from its earliest beginnings four billion years ago to the emergence of dinosaurs and mammals.



**2019**

**ROM offers free nights at the Museum**

ROM announces 3rd Monday Nights Free, which invites visitors to experience the Museum free of charge, one evening per month. The program is made possible by TD Bank Group through its corporate citizenship platform The Ready Commitment, and with the generous support of The Bennett Family Foundation. This popular program continues today as Third Tuesday Nights Free.

**Opening of Bloor Street Terrace and Plaza**

ROM opens the Helga and Mike Schmidt Performance Terrace and the Reed Family Plaza to the public, offering a new way for visitors to enjoy the Museum. The additions feature a welcoming place to gather with garden-side seating and an open-air space for music, theatre, discussion, and performances. This revitalization project is generously made possible by lead donors Helga Schmidt and her late husband Mike Schmidt, and Nita and Don Reed, along with additional donations from Hatch, Nancy Lockhart and the late Murray Frum, Richard Wernham and Julia West, and Flavia Redelmeier.



**Allan and Helaine Shiff Curatorship of Climate Change is established**

ROM announces the establishment of the inaugural Allan and Helaine Shiff Curatorship of Climate Change. This critical and timely role, the first of its kind at a major Canadian museum, reflects ROM's commitment to ground-breaking research and innovative public engagement on one of the most relevant topics of our day.

The Allan and Helaine Shiff Curatorship of Climate Change is one of 35 curatorships at ROM and one of seven endowed curatorships to receive matching funds by the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust.



**2020**

**Isabel and Gino Vettoretto Curatorship of North American Archaeology is established**

ROM announces the establishment of the Isabel and Gino Vettoretto Curatorship of North American Archaeology. This curatorship reflects ROM's commitment to encouraging greater public engagement with, and appreciation of, North America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and broadening the institution's stewardship and expertise in this area.



**2021**

**ROM's new Willner Madge Gallery, Dawn of Life is unveiled**

Grand in scope and thrilling in experience, ROM's first new gallery in 10 years explores nearly 4 billion years of evolution, from the earliest microbes to the emergence of dinosaurs and mammals in the aftermath of the biggest mass extinction event in history. It is also a testament the power of philanthropy, fuelled by support from over 100 donors who contributed gifts ranging from \$10 to \$5 million.

**ROM announces a major gift in support of Korean Art and Culture**

The first ever Curatorship of Korean Art & Culture in Canada is part of a multi-year partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

of the Republic of Korea. The five-year agreement provides \$1 million in funding to support a Curator of Korean Art & Culture—a first at any museum in Canada—as well as funds for new research and public programming.

**2022**

**Nick Mirkopoulos Curatorship of Ancient Greece and Rome is established**

Thanks to a generous matched gift from the Mirkopoulos family and the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust, the new curatorship brings greater focus to ROM's Ancient Greek and Roman collections, and celebrates the rich art and cultural legacies of these civilizations in new and meaningful ways.

**Catalyzing ROM's vision for the 21st century**

ROM proudly announces a \$50 million donation from the Hennick Family Foundation, marking the largest cash gift of its kind in ROM's history. Jay and Barbara Hennick's contribution support a multi-year revitalization plan to transform ROM into an even more welcoming and accessible hub for art, culture, and nature.

**ROM Immortal brand launch**

In June, ROM debuts a dynamic new brand voice and powerful film that invites audiences to experience the Museum in a whole new way.

**Third Tuesday Nights Free returns to ROM**

After a two-year pause, ROM relaunches Third Tuesday Night Free, thanks to the generous support of The Bennett Family Foundation and the Temerty Foundation.

**L.R. Wilson Curatorship of Canadian Art & Culture is established**

Made possible with the generous support of the Wilson Foundation and the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust, the creation of this endowed position builds on ROM's deeply rooted commitment to Canadian art and culture and the evolving story of Canada.

**ROM's main floor is free all summer**

In celebration of Kore 670, a stunning sculpture on loan from Greece, ROM launches a new initiative that gives everyone free access to the main floor of the Museum for the duration of the summer. This experience includes a new pop-up coffee bar, plus free live performances and programming. The initiative is generously supported by the Temerty Foundation.

**2023**

**ROM renovates Catalyst Conference Room**

With generous support from ROM Board of Governors Chair Jeff Willner, the newly revitalized Catalyst Conference Room reflects the Museum's commitment to inclusivity. With enhanced accessibility features, state-of-the-art audio-visual technology, and stylish new furniture, the space serves as a welcoming hub for volunteers, staff, and visitors to gather, share ideas, and foster collaborative endeavours that advance ROM's strategic vision as a 21st century museum.



**ROM's Main Floor is Free All Summer**

Building on the overwhelming success of Free Main Floor, launched in the summer of 2022, ROM announced the return of this popular initiative for the summer of 2023. ROM's Free Main Floor initiative is generously supported by the Temerty Foundation.

**2024**

**ROM launches OpenROM**

Grounded in ROM's overarching vision to further enhance visitor access and engagement, OpenROM includes a sweeping architectural transformation of the Museum's main floor and a redesigned Bloor Street entrance that will deepen ROM's connection to the city. The Museum will remain open to visitors throughout the three-year construction period. Once complete, OpenROM will introduce ongoing free access to the Museum's main floor.

Funded by private philanthropy, this landmark revitalization project has been catalyzed by a \$50-million donation from the Hennick Family Foundation—the single largest cash gift in ROM's history.

**Global Sikh Art & Culture Gallery and Program**

This project is the first announced element of a planned refurbishment and expansion of ROM's renowned suite of South Asian galleries and part of the Museum's transformative OpenROM project. Ongoing community efforts have raised \$16.6 million for this exciting program, with Canadian Heritage pledging an additional \$6 million as part of the 2024 Federal Budget.

**Appointment of the Inaugural Hatch Curator of Indigenous Art & Culture**

This newly created position is evidence of ROM's commitment to the ongoing work of reconciliation, as well as the Museum's efforts to become an even more inclusive, open, and accessible hub for the community. As the first Hatch Curator of Indigenous Art & Culture, Rhéanne Chartrand is responsible for leading a collaborative approach to stewarding and showcasing Indigenous collections at ROM. This endowed position was made possible with the generous support of Hatch along with a matching gift from the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust.

**Canada Day Free Admission and Free Main Floor Access**

Generously supported by the Temerty Foundation, Canada Day, Monday, July 1, marked the official launch of ROM's summer Free Main Floor program. The summer experience is enhanced with daily interior performances in the Samuel Hall Currelly Gallery, complemented by outdoor weekend shows every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, made possible by the generous support of The Schmidt Family.

