

MEDIA RELEASE

A Guelph Story: Celebrating Canada 150 with local history

The Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA), with a funding partnership from the City of Guelph, is happy to announce its contribution to Canada's sesquicentennial with our street light banner project, "A Guelph Story". 151 images, one for each year from 1867 to 2017, have been installed on street lights on Norfolk, Wyndham and Quebec Streets. Each image highlights events, personalities, tragedies, achievements, and milestones that have come to make Guelph the city we all know and love.

From now until October, pedestrians can walk through the core and, looking up, gain a history lesson about our fascinating city. As they browse the banners, they can find a more detailed description for each story at www.Guelph150.ca. This website hosts an interactive timeline for all ages to browse the history easily. It also serves as a great resource for those who are unable to visit the banners in person.

Where possible, banners have been placed in the specific location where their featured event occurred. For example, a banner on Quebec Street depicts an image of Guelph's first Chinese laundry, now the site of the Royal Bank in St George's Square. Or the image of the demolition of the Carnegie Library, now the site of the Guelph Public Library.

Local historian Tony Berto took on the task of choosing one interesting event in Guelph from each year since Confederation. With considerable support from Guelph Museums, the Guelph Public Library and the Wellington County Museum, photos and illustrations were sourced and printed on banners along with a short description. By framing each image in one of the 10 colours in the official Canada 150 logo, local graphic designer and artist Cai Sepulis has created a strikingly colourful and eye catching open-air gallery.

Curating the project was no simple task. Berto says the project had its challenges: "History does not happen at an even pace. For some years, there were numerous, tumultuous, events that helped shape who we were and were to become. We had to decide which events to include from a great variety of episodes in our past. We wanted to cover all the bases about how our city came to be and who made it happen. These included our history of politics, immigration, industry, transportation, education, civil and human rights, arts and performance, architecture, sports, and civic development. We also weren't shy and selected some of our less fortunate times, including some disasters, scandals, riots, and crimes. Conversely, there were also relatively sleepy years where we had to comb over numerous records to find just the right thing. And to history buffs, please be gentle on us. History is messy – various records contradicted each other – and sometimes we had to make hard decisions. For example, do we commemorate the year the Queen gave a medal to a soldier, or the year that his brave actions earned him that medal?"

From school kids who might be hearing about these things for the first time, to those who have lived through many of these milestones, we invite you to come downtown and enjoy this colourful look at Guelph's story.

For more information on this project, please contact:

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