Personal stories from our industrial past

Walking Tour Guide
s an interactive documentary about the lives of working people in Kitchener during the last half of the 20th century, a time when the city was an industrial powerhouse. Mass manufacturing has since declined giving way to knowledge-based industries and beginning a fresh economic cycle. This documentary combines selected interviews from an archive of oral histories collected as part of the City of Kitchener's Industrial Artifacts project with other archival material and contemporary photos and video. Through the lens of personal stories, everyday people describe their working lives. Lives that were inextricably tied to a kind of work that has faded as a driving force in the local economy. The interactive format of the work encourages participants to contribute their insights through the project website.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

At each of the 10 stops on this walking tour you will find a location marker on the sidewalk with the project logo, a QR code and a website address. Use your mobile device to read the QR code and connect directly to the video story for each stop. You can also enter the website address into your browser to connect and navigate to the story for each stop. The tour is also available at http://madeinkitchener.ca/ On the website, you will find complementary material such as extended versions of the interviews, links, maps and photos.

1- ARRIVALS, VICTORIA PARK
2 - WORKING CLASS NEIGHBOURHOOD
3 - MAIN STREET KITCHENER
4 - SPIRIT OF LABOUR
5 - GOLDEN MOMENT
6 - CIVIC SQUARE
7 - A NEW ERA
8 - INDUSTRIAL ROW
9 - INNOVATION DISTRICT
10 - FRANCIS GREEN
Future Site of the Regional Transit Hub

Walking Tour Path
natural place to begin the tour is here at the entrance to Victoria Park, on Joseph Street across from the bus terminal. Since its opening in 1896, the park has been a centrepiece in Kitchener's cultural life. It sits in the shadow of the former McBrine Luggage factory. The entrance is now home to artist Ernest Daetwyler's The Luggage Project, a tribute to all those who have arrived in Kitchener and made it their home. At this stop, you will meet the everyday people whose stories provide a personal window on this tour of the city's past industrial life.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

Standing at the location marker facing the clock tower, Kitchener City Hall will be at your back. Choose either the left or right pathway into the park and walk toward the clock tower. Along the way, watch for the eight sculptured pieces of luggage that make up The Luggage Project, part of the city's public art collection. Look more closely and you'll find small bronze plaques with quotations from immigrants who have made Kitchener their home. At the tower, follow the path that circles the green to where it meets Jubilee Dr. Cross Jubilee Dr. and bear left. Follow the path along the shore of the lake until you reach its southern-most tip. Here, instead of continuing on the path around the lake, cross David St. where the path continues to Queen St. At Queen St., you will see the Joseph Schneider Haus Museum and Gallery on your right, the city's oldest dwelling, built in 1816. Cross Queen St., turn left and walk about 25 metres to Mitchell St. then turn right and follow Mitchell St. to Benton St. Turn left and make your way to Courtland Ave. where you will find the second stop on the tour. The marker is on the south sidewalk, about five metres from the intersection.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 26.715, W 080° 29.495
In neighbourhoods such as this, many immigrants started their lives in Kitchener. On a cold March day in 1938, 17-year-old Marion Nuxoll (nee Laulo Laub) arrived at 86 Courtland Ave. – just nine doors to your right. At this stop, Marion tells the story of her journey from a tiny German-speaking village in Romania to a new life in Kitchener and a reunion with her parents after a 10-year separation. You will also hear from others who began new chapters in their lives in these neighbourhoods.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

From the location marker with Benton St. on your left, walk to the intersection and turn left on Courtland Ave. As you walk west, on your right you will see the Nelson Terrace rowhouses; built in 1889 for women working at a nearby shirt factory. Proceed along Courtland Ave. to Queen St. and turn right, where you will find another historically designated building, the former Vogelsang Button Factory. The factory, currently part of the Bread and Roses Housing Cooperative, was built in 1879. Continue along Queen St., taking note of the seven-storey York apartments, Kitchener’s first apartment block built in 1928. Cross Charles St. and continue on Queen St.. The former Kitchener auditorium was located in this block. In 1938, the Auditorium Gardens was converted from a hockey arena to a dancehall, sadly the gardens burned to the ground on Jan. 10, 1948. Continue walking on Queen St. S. towards King St. and turn right on King St. E. until you find the third marker midway along the block. Look across King St. E. and you will see the former F.W. Woolworth Store.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 26.965, W 080° 29.288
King St. was the barometer of the vitality of the city core during the golden days of manufacturing. It was a place where goods were bought, deals were struck, spouses met and jobs were found. Robert (Bob) Cruikshank emigrated from Scotland in 1966 to make televisions at Kitchener’s Electrohome plant on Wellington St., but he found himself between jobs in 1968. While shopping with his wife in the F.W. Woolworth store here on King St., Bob bumped into a friend who suggested he apply at Budd Automotive, a then thriving auto parts manufacturer. At this stop, he tells the story of his 30-year career making auto parts.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

Standing at the location marker with the street on your right, continue walking southeast along King St. E. Cross Frederick St. and walk to mid-block where you will find the marker across the street from 141 King St., the former KW Labour Association Hall. Imagine standing here on September 3, 1946, with 35,000 other people who lined the street to watch the annual Labour Day Parade. Behind you would have been Kitchener City Hall. The last city hall on the site was built in 1924, two years after the Labour Hall across the street. The city hall was demolished in 1973 to make way for Market Square, a shopping mall, a home for the farmers’ market and a parking garage. Over the years, it was converted to commercial office space. It now houses among, other things, the Waterloo Region Record. The Record traces its beginnings to the Berlin Daily News, first published on February 9, 1878.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 26.924, W 080° 29.210
Some say the former KW Labour Association Hall is haunted by a spirit that moves around a third floor office when no one is around. However, at this stop you will hear voices of real people who animated the building from its early years, beginning in 1955, to its sale at a bargain basement price in 2010. At this stop, Richard La’Haie, a working man who loves to sing country music, talks about how his life changed when his foot was crushed in an industrial accident. You will also hear from Orville Thacker who led the KW Labour Council in the 1970s when membership topped more than 23,000.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

With the former Labour Hall on your right, walk along King St. E. to Scott St. and turn left. This is the longest leg of the tour, about half a kilometre. However, on this walk you will be retracing the steps of Marion Nuxoll on her wedding day. Shortly after arriving in Kitchener, Marion moved with her parents to 99 Scott St. From here, on May 29, 1943, she walked to St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church to be married. Continue walking along Scott St. to Duke St. E. Turn left and walk northwest. Continue to Queen St. N. On your left, at the southeast corner is the Vogelsang Green, named after the city’s first button maker, Emil Vogelsang. Across Queen St. N, on the southwest corner, is the former home for the Waterloo Region Record. The newspaper moved to this location from King St. in 1929 where it remained until the 1970s, when it moved to Fairway Rd. S. The newspaper returned to the city core in 2005, locating in the Market Square building. Continue walking northwest to the corner of Duke St. W. and Young St., where you will find the marker for the next stop on the southwest corner.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.121, W 080° 29.484
Here, with St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church just across the street, we pick up Marion Nuxoll's story. It was a cool day in 1943 when Marion stepped out of her family home on Scott St., took her father's arm and walked down Duke St. to St. Mary's church. At that time, the John Forsyth Shirt Factory, where Marion worked in the laundry department ironing and folding pyjamas, stood across Duke St. W. On the steps of St. Mary's, as she was about to enter the church, she looked across to the Forsyth factory. There, standing in the factory’s roof garden, were the people she worked with, waving their best wishes. At this stop, Marion will tell you why she “loved working at Forsyth” and would live no other place than Kitchener. Also at this stop, we will hear from Gerard Dietrich who started his working life as a computer programmer at this spot in the 1960s.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:
From the location marker, turn left on Young St., and with St. Mary's church at your back, walk toward King St. Take time to admire Kitchener City Hall, built in 1993. At King St. W., turn right and make your way to the next stop, on the sidewalk in front of the Civic Square reflecting pool.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.089, W 080° 29.553
Orville Thacker, longtime president of the KW Labour Council, made tires for the BF Goodrich Company for all his working life. His scrapbook of newspaper articles is a window on a time when unionized workers were a vital force in the civic life of Kitchener. From securing city support for a boycott of California grapes in the mid-1960s, to lobbying council to offer free swimming to children in municipal pools in the 1970s, to occupying the offices of a member of parliament to protest changes in Old Age Security benefits in February 2012, Orville has been at the forefront of civic activism for decades. At this stop, he tells about his involvement in the community’s political life.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

With Civic Square on your right, walk northwest on King St. W. to Water St., turn right and walk north until you find the next marker across the street from number 20, currently the Bell building.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.147, W 080° 29.654
Shortly after Diane Hinschberger (nee Whetstone) finished Grade 11 at Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School (KCI) in 1958, she started working as a telephone operator at Bell Canada at 20 Water St. It was considered one of the best jobs a young woman could have, but a little over 40 years later, she was doing the same work for half the pay after the work was outsourced. Along the way, Diane got married and, with her husband, raised four children. At this stop, Diane tells the story of her life as a mother and as “a Bell girl.”

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

From the location marker, and with 20 Water St. on your left, walk northeast to Duke St. W. Turn left and continue northwest on Duke St. W. to Victoria St. N. At Victoria St. N., cross the street and and walk about 25 metres to the next marker, halfway between Victoria St. N. and the railway tracks. At the marker, turn and look back toward the intersection.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.147, W 080° 29.654
THE
BELL TELEPHONE
COMPANY
OF CANADA
KITCHENER–WATERLOO
1940

Photo: Timm Vera
Standing here, you are at the centre of a quiet but fundamental shift in the workings of Kitchener’s economy. Let your imagination wander back to a time when Kitchener was an industrial powerhouse, shipping goods around the world: leather products, furniture, buttons, luggage, felt, rubber boots, hockey skates, tires, televisions sets ... Perhaps you can hear the sound of the plants clustered along this strip, cranking out their daily quotas. At this stop, you will hear from people who worked in some of these factories making famous Bauer hockey skates and selling Kitchener Button Company buttons.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

From here retrace your steps to Victoria St. N. and turn right. On your right is the site of the former Rumpel Felt factory, established in 1875 and closed in 2008. It is one of three parcels of land between here and King St.W. that will be home to a new transit hub, designed to bring together regional transit services, inter-city buses and commuter and passenger trains in one location. Across the street on your left, the Kaufman Lofts rise above the surrounding parking lot. The building was home to the Kaufman Rubber Company (founded in 1907 and later called Kaufman Footwear) until the company declared bankruptcy in 2000, leaving the building vacant. As you approach King St. W. you will see the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy building. Glass panels decorated with images of plants soar above the street in sharp contrast to the BF Goodrich plant that once stood on this spot. You will find the next marker on the southwest corner of King St. W. and Victoria St. S. opposite the pharmacy school.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.266, W 080° 29.759
The University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy symbolizes the completion of a cycle, one in which mass manufacturing has withered and new knowledge-based industries have emerged. If you look to the left, you will see signs of the digital age – Google, Desire2Learn – that are now emblazoned on a former tannery complex. These new industries rely on workers' minds to bring value to ideas rather than workers' brawn to bring value to raw materials. Orville Thacker began his working life at this very spot. While we have already heard the story of his community activism, at this stop we will hear the stories of his life as an ordinary working man, a tire builder at BF Goodrich.

WALKING DIRECTIONS TO THE NEXT STOP:

From the location marker with the school of pharmacy at your back, walk southeast on King St. W. one block to Francis St. S. At the corner, you will find Francis Green and a collection of artifacts salvaged from the ruins of Kitchener’s manufacturing plants.

Next stop co-ordinates N 043° 27.135, W 080° 29.793
They are lined up like aged sentinels, castoffs from an earlier time. It took an artist’s eye to see the beauty in these outdated industrial machines and a creative mind to propose installing them in locations around the city. Nicholas Rees is the artist who conceived and founded the city’s Industrial Artifacts project. At this last stop on the tour, Nicholas tells his story of the decline of the manufacturing sector and the rise of his art.

While the five industrial artifacts within the boundaries of this walking tour are identified on the map, there are more that make up this unique collection. Information about the Industrial Artifacts project can be found at www.kitchener.ca/industrialartifacts

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Made in Kitchener is a joint project between the City of Kitchener, Latitudes Storytelling Festival and digital media artist Dwight Storring.
The Made in Kitchener project team would like to thank the men and women who contributed their stories to the Industrial Artifacts oral history collection. A special thank you goes to those whose interviews have been used to create the audio portions of this walking tour. Original interviews were conducted for the Industrial Artifacts project by Betty Reinders and Veronica Ross, with the exception of the interview with Albert Fauchere, conducted by Nicholas Rees and Erina Harris.

Bonnie Bunnett  Jean Dietrich  Diane Hinschberger  Nicholas Rees
Robert Cruikshank  Albert Fauchere  Richard La’Haie  Orville Thacker
Gerard Dietrich  Norma Hauss  Marion Nuxoll
One of the many ways Kitchener continues to celebrate its long, prosperous history in manufacturing is by preserving industrial machinery that's no longer used - and incorporating these artifacts into many local trails, buildings - including city hall, the Registry Theatre and other public spaces. The following industrial artifacts can be found downtown:

1 - Hot Stampers
2 - Calender Rollers
3 - Band Saw
4 - Alligator Shear
5 - Hot Stamper
6 - Punch Press
7 - Westinghouse Transformer (inside city hall)
8 - Steam Engine (inside city hall)
9 - Huether Brewery Vat Doors (inside city hall)
10 - Governor (inside city hall)
11 - Puritan Sewing Machine (inside city hall)
For more than a decade, the City of Kitchener has celebrated special places by installing public art at or near them. Each work of public art is one-of-a-kind and made just for the location where it rests. Each tells a story about living in Kitchener. The best forms of public art explore our diversity, tell our stories, and use creativity and imagination. It is one way to create public spaces that are landmarks and gathering places that contribute to the city’s unique identity and positive development, through: better quality of life, increased social cohesion, good urban design, broad community involvement, increased potential for economic development, and public access to the arts. Visit www.kitchener.ca/publicart to learn more.

The city’s collection of art represents a range of media and styles. The works are installed in community centres, Libraries, sports facilities, parks, the Kitchener Market, city hall, and other civic properties. The following artworks can be found downtown:

2 - Banner (inside city hall)
4 - Footprints (outside Downtown Community Centre)
5 - Horsepower (outside Duke Street entrance of city hall)
6 - Pedestrian (Benton Street parking garage)
8 - Queen Victoria (Victoria Park)
9 - Relocation and Transformation of Memory (Speakers Corner)
13 - The Luggage Project (Victoria Park)
14 - The Millennium Thumbprints (outside front entrance of city hall)
15 - Urban Series Progress (inside city hall)