

Waterloo Historical Society Newsletter



Fall 2025

Sophia Grande-Lawlor, Editor



Public Meeting

All are welcome. No admission charge.

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

Doors open at 6:30; 7:15 presentation

In the 1860s, a group of disguised men ambushed a Wellesley woman one night, leaving her with lasting injuries. Thirty years later, similarly disguised men lured a woman from her Wilmot Township home before enacting such violence that she almost died. In both cases, the perpetrators were neighbours seeking redress for moral failings the women had displayed.

How common were incidents like these? Find out at the Waterloo Historical Society meeting on September 9th when Elysia DeLaurentis presents "Tarred & Feathered: Rough Justice in 19th-Century Ontario" at the Maryhill Community Centre. Doors open 6:30; all welcome.

For more information contact rychmills@golden.net or 519.742.4990

whs.ca

Have news to share?

Send updates you would like to see
in the newsletter to:

whs1912newsletter@gmail.com

Deadline for Winter 2026 newsletter
Friday, January 9, 2026.



Mark your calendar

2025 Public Meetings

This year's remaining public meetings will be held on a Tuesday evening and a Saturday afternoon.

All WHS meetings are free; members and non-members are invited. The WHS Book Table will be open at all meetings. Keep an eye on www.whs.ca for further details. As well, reminder e-mails will be sent out.

Tuesday, September 9, 2025: Don't miss a "tri-historical society" meeting on September 9. Yes, it is a Waterloo Historical Society meeting, however we are being hosted by the Maryhill Historical Society. After WHS president John Glass opens the evening's activities, Frank Rider, president of MHS, will outline their work in and around Maryhill. The main speaker is Elysia Delaurentis, editor of the Wellington County Historical Society's annual publication. WHS has invited Kathy Bouma, the WCHS treasurer, to update us on some their activities.

All three groups will have books for sale and refreshments will be served, courtesy of Maryhill Historical Society. Mary Ann Banks will be accepting 2025-2026 WHS membership renewals.

Elysia's presentation promises to be intriguing and informative!

Saturday, November 15, 2025: Waterloo Historical Society's Annual General Meeting will be held at St. Matthews Lutheran Church at 54 Benton Street in Kitchener. The meeting will be held in the Community Room. Doors will open at 12:30 with the meeting beginning at 1:15.

For more information on these WHS meetings, check www.whs.ca or contact rychmills@golden.net

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet are the lands traditionally used by the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabeg, and Neutral peoples. We also acknowledge the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws, and philosophies of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land today. We are all treaty people with a responsibility to honour all our relations.

WHS Unveils 24th Plaque

Submitted by Sandra Parks

Along with innumerable mosquitos, more than a dozen members of the Waterloo Historical Society Board & Council attended the unveiling of the Idylwild Park Interpretive Plaque on the evening of July 8, a stone's throw from the Speed River along Cambridge's Mill Run Trail.

The 24th plaque produced by the WHS Plaques Committee in its 100 years, the Idylwild Park panel is the committee's first full-colour illustrated storyboard or interpretive plaque; previous plaques were bronze. It recalls the history of the former Idylwild Park on the route of the Galt, Preston & Hespeler (GP&H) electric railway.



The final reveal - with Plaques Committee chair Warren Stauch watching at left, WHS President John Glass (and Rudy), Plaques Committee members Ray Ruddy, Harold Russell and Sandra Parks, and Nick Borcescu, City of Cambridge Supervisor of Planning - Heritage and Housing, officially unveiled the plaque on the evening of July 8. (photo courtesy Lesley Webb)



Plaques Committee member Ray Ruddy gave a brief history of the Park and GP&H, and invited all to read the plaque.



*Plaques Committee chair Warren Stauch was master of ceremonies of the unveiling event, and read an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement from Paul Whitlow, Region of Waterloo Truth and Reconciliation Director; and greetings from Samantha Lawson, CAO of the Grand River Conservation Authority, on whose land the plaque is located.
(photo courtesy Lesley Webb)*

Plaques Committee chair Warren Stauch read an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement from Paula Whitlow, Region of Waterloo Truth and Reconciliation Director; and greetings from Samantha Lawson, CAO of the Grand River Conservation Authority, on whose land the plaque is located. WHS President John Glass welcomed those who made the 15-minute trek in from Beaverdale Rd, and thanked the Plaques Committee (Warren, Harold Russell, Debbie Kroetsch, Ray Ruddy and Sandra Parks) for all their hard work. Representing the City of Cambridge, Nick Borcescu, Supervisor of Planning - Heritage and Housing, brought greetings from the Mayor and Council, stating how important it is for us to tell the stories of the past, making them accessible to the public. The actual unveiling was shared by members of the committee, John and Nick. Ray gave a brief history of the Park and GP&H, and invited all to read the plaque.

The year isn't over yet - throughout the 100th anniversary, the Plaques Committee has plans for a reinstallation and maintenance; displays at WHS events; recruiting new members; discussing ways to counter vandalism and theft of plaques; and more.

And we are always looking for new plaque ideas, so please send them our way.

A Special Book, A Special Author

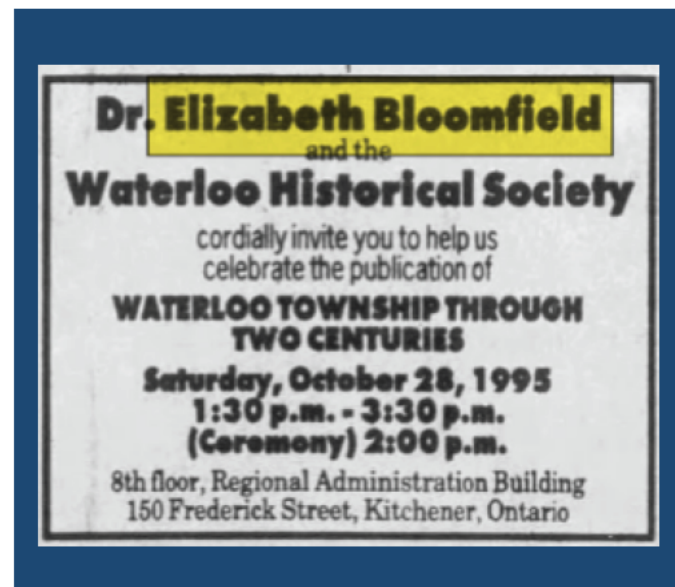
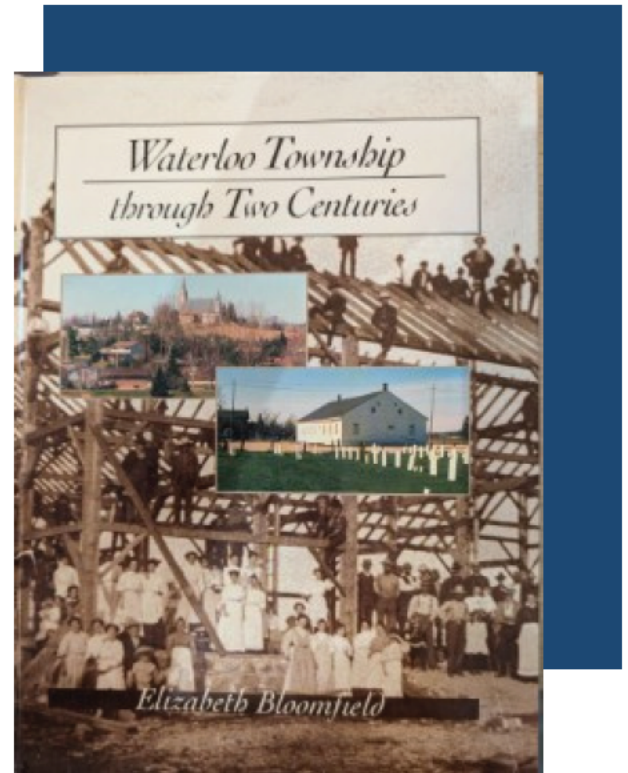
Submitted by Jon Fear

If you belong to the Waterloo Historical Society there's a good chance your personal library includes titles about our local past – books about people and events that have shaped and changed our lives in this part of southwestern Ontario.

Next month will mark the 30th anniversary of a WHS publication that is quite possibly our best local history book. And oddly enough, it tells the story of Waterloo Township, a municipality that ceased to exist just over 50 years ago.

Waterloo Township through Two Centuries, by Elizabeth Bloomfield, was launched Oct. 28, 1995 at the Region of Waterloo administration building on Frederick Street in Kitchener. Today the book remains a key information source for anyone wanting to study not just the history of the township, but of Waterloo Region. It's a 466-page, two-kilogram treasure chest of perceptive analysis, wonderful stories, photos, maps and lists. Now is a good time to salute the book and its remarkable author.

Not familiar with Waterloo Township? It was in the central part of the former Waterloo County, which also ceased to exist when the Regional Municipality of Waterloo was created on Jan. 1, 1973. Within the township boundaries were Kitchener and Waterloo, the towns of Preston and Hespeler and smaller communities including Breslau, Bridgeport, Blair, Doon, Freeport, Bloomingdale, Maryhill and Erbsville. Mostly a rural municipality, the township's population was 8,733 in 1971. Its municipal hall was in the geographic centre of the township at Centreville, once a hamlet, but now a busy part of Kitchener near King Street East and Fairway Road.



The WHS began looking in the late 1970s for someone to write a book about the former township, remembers Harold Russell of Kitchener, a longtime WHS board member. This proved to be a challenge.

And then it gradually became evident that the obvious choice was Bloomfield, a Guelph historian who in the early 1990s, along with researchers Linda Foster and Jane Forgay, was completing the Waterloo Regional Project, a digital



bibliography of books, articles and countless other printed records to assist people studying the region's past. In 1993 the database was reproduced in book form (734 pages) as *Waterloo County to 1972: an annotated bibliography of regional history*.

Born in Fiji, Bloomfield moved to Canada in 1969 from New Zealand and became familiar with Waterloo Region while completing her 1981 doctoral dissertation in urban history – City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener-Waterloo, 1870 - 1930 – at the University of Guelph. In the years that followed she used computer software in innovative ways to produce many historical studies relating to Waterloo Region, Wellington County and other communities across Ontario and Canada.

In a recent email exchange, Bloomfield, now 86, recalled that at one point in 1991 she made a presentation to a WHS gathering (see WHS Volume 80 – 1992) about the regional history bibliography that she was creating.

“Afterwards I was asked to meet with several WHS leaders who urged me to accept the commission to write the history of Waterloo Township. I later learned that several potential researcher-authors over the previous 10 years had been unable to take up the challenge.” For a time, Bloomfield said, she was working on the bibliography and the township book at the same time. She remembers with gratitude the efforts made by dozens of WHS members to connect her with former township councillors and residents who had information to share. Her husband, Gerald, a geography professor at the University of Guelph, took photos of historic township buildings for the book and helped produce many of the maps.

“I did all word processing and tabulations on my home computers and printers. Family members and I made the many trips to the St Jacobs Printery,” Bloomfield said.

The late Ernie Ritz of New Hamburg was WHS president when Bloomfield began working on the book. Bertha Thompson succeeded him and Russell was president in 1995 when it was published.

Did the WHS have any idea how large the book would turn out to be?

"I don't think so," Russell said. "Others may disagree, but I think most of us had no idea how big it would be and how thorough . . . I know everyone was very impressed, even thrilled with her work. The depth of research and the amount of detail is outstanding."

When the initial 500 copies sold out, a second printing was ordered in 1997 and a revised edition followed in 2007. In 2016 the University of Waterloo library's Special Collections and Archives division announced that 61 titles by Elizabeth and Gerald Bloomfield had been digitized and were available to read online at no charge through the Internet Archive (archive.org), including the Waterloo Township book.

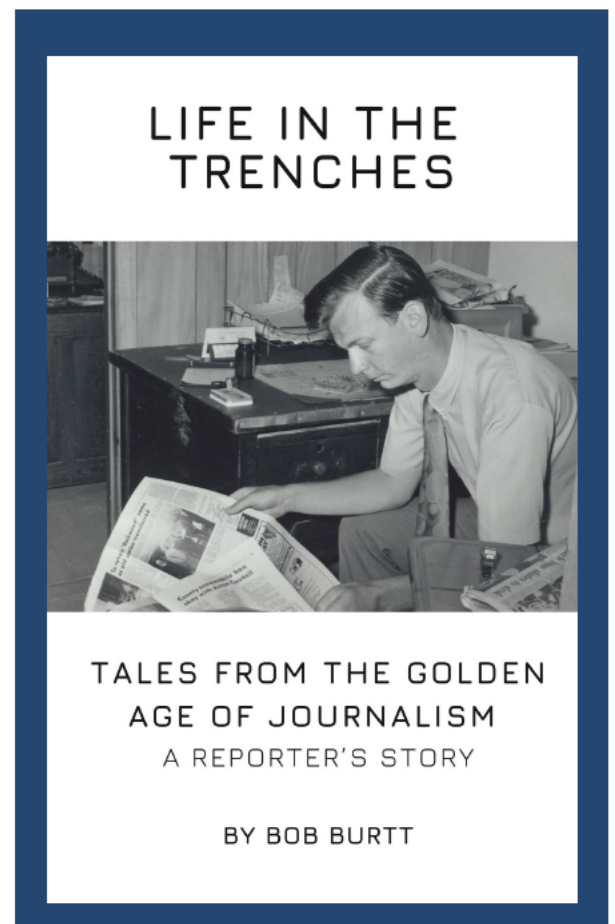
In addition to her work as a historian, Elizabeth Bloomfield has for decades been a tireless advocate for people with autism. In 2014, UW paid tribute to her work in that regard by presenting her with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

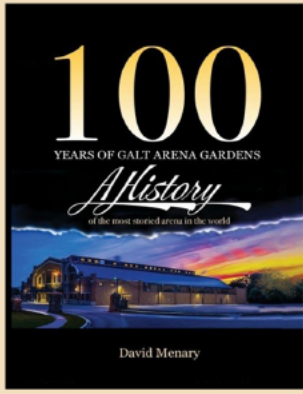
New Books by WHS Members

LIFE IN THE TRENCHES: TALES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF JOURNALISM by Bob Burt

Burt's most recent book, *Life In The Trenches/ Tales From The Golden Age of Journalism*, was released last December and is a story based on his 40-year-career that began in Milton, Ontario in the mid-1960s and ended with retirement from the Waterloo Region Record in 2006.

Life in the Trenches is available at Wordsworth Books in Waterloo, Indigo in Cambridge, and The Bookshelf in Guelph.









Please join us in celebrating the publication of

100 Years of Galt Arena Gardens:
The Most Storied Arena in the World
 by **DAVID MENARY**

Saturday, September 20, 2025 12:30-2:30 p.m.
 at the **Cambridge Centre for the Arts**
 60 Dickson Street

RSVP to Sarah 519-277-3341 or David 519-589-1279

Cash or  Square   

\$59.95

100 YEARS OF GALT ARENA GARDENS: THE MOST STORIED ARENA IN THE WORLD by David Menary

Author and former sportswriter David Menary has written and researched a 650-page coffee table book full of photographs and research on the Galt Arena Gardens. It covers the arena's history from its opening in 1922 to its role today as Canada's oldest continuously operating hockey rink.

STROLL in your own backyard this fall with Stroll Walking Tours

This fall, your WHS membership gets you a nice discount on all public, local history walking tours offered by Stroll Walking Tours. This local business is owned and operated by WHS member, Juanita Metzger.

Use promo code XXXXXXXXXX to get 10% off when purchasing your tickets. Please don't share this promo code with non-WHS members. Valid September 27 – November 8 on the following walking tours:

Historic Galt – Saturday September 27 | 2 – 3:30 pm
 Led by Michael Krupp

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/historic-galt-cambridge-walking-tour/>



What's in a Name? Berlin to Kitchener in 1916 – Saturday September 27 | 2 – 3:30 pm

Led by Todd Bowman

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/berlin-kitchener-name-change/>

Mount Hope Cemetery Tour – Saturday October 18 | 2 – 3:30 pm

Led by Wayne Miedema

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/mount-hope-cemetery-walking-tour-kitchener/>

Historic Waterloo – Sunday October 19 | 2 – 3:30 pm

Led by Kae Elgie & Phil Elsworthy

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/historic-waterloo-walking-tour/>

Cambridge Mural Tour – Saturday November 1 | 10:30 am – 12:00pm

Led by Juanita Metzger

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/mural-walking-tour-cambridge/>

From Busy Berlin to Tech Corridor – Saturday November 1 | 2 – 3:30 pm

Led by Mary Sehl

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/industry-tech-corridor-kitchener-walking-tour/>

Waterloo Architecture Tour – Saturday November 8 | 3:00 – 5:00 pm

Led by Karl Kessler

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/waterloo-architecture-walking-tour/>

Historic St. Jacobs - Every Thursday & Sunday until the end of October

Led by Juanita Metzger

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/st-jacobs-walking-tour/>

For more information, visit: <https://strollwalkingtours.com/public-walking-tours/> or contact Juanita Metzger with questions or to book over the phone 519-242-9255.

In October, we're adding THREE Women's 'herstory' walking tours featuring women who shaped Waterloo Region. October is Women's History month in Canada and we want to celebrate by introducing our community to women from Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo that everyone should know about! Your promo code is valid for these tours also and you can find them on the Public Walking Tours page:

<https://strollwalkingtours.com/public-walking-tours/>

We look forward to strolling with you this fall!

Who we are and how to reach us

Website www.whs.ca

Email whs@whs.ca

Mail to Waterloo Historical Society c/o Grace Schmidt Room, 85 Queen Street North, Kitchener ON N2H 2H1

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www.facebook.com/waterlooohs

Instagram

[@waterloohistoricalsociety](https://www.instagram.com/waterloohistoricalsociety)

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Archives gsr@kpl.org for questions about the WHS archives and if you have items to donate. Please note, donations are currently paused.

Book Table

To donate or to buy books, come to our meetings and / or see www.whs.ca/booktable/

Membership

Membership take place from October 1 to September 30. See membership forms and benefits at whs.ca/membership.

Thank you for supporting WHS with your memberships, patronages and donations.

Newsletter Comments, questions and submissions may be sent to the editor, Sophia Grande-Lawlor.

Thank you for help with and distribution of this issue to Sandra Parks, Jon Fear, rych mills, and Mary Anne Banks.