



1999: Gmelin's devastated by fire

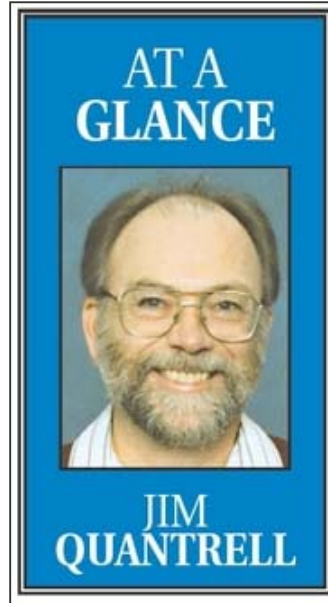
JIM QUANTRELL, AT A GLANCE

August 25, 2009

Cambridge archivist Jim Quantrell takes our readers back for a glance at events which occurred 10, 15 and 20 years ago.

20 YEARS AGO Fourth week of August 1989

With local skateboarders banned from many of the public areas where they had pursued their sport, a local businessman had stepped in to create an indoor skateboarding facility upstairs at 34 Main St. The facility, designed to accommodate up to 40 skaters at a time, would be the first spot in the city actually designed with skateboarders in mind. One of the main reasons that the city had hesitated to develop a similar facility was the fear of liability should a skater get hurt while using a city-owned facility. Users of the new private facility would have to sign a waiver and have all the necessary safety equipment before they would be allowed to use the facility's ramps, curves and pipes.



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More than 75 young athletes from across the city had registered for Cambridge's first annual Kids of Steel competition, a triathlon designed for young people. The competitors, aged seven to 14, were divided into four categories and were to swim varying numbers of lengths in the John Dolson pool before hitting the streets to bike from Elgin Street to Myers Road. They would continue along Myers Road to Branchton Road before turning around and returning to the start line where they would begin a two-kilometre jog along Elgin Street and back.

15 YEARS AGO Fourth week of August 1994

The good news for the residents of east Cambridge was that the Region of Waterloo's engineering committee had given the go ahead to the Cambridge East Water Supply Project designed to help eliminate dirty water problems that had been plaguing area residents. The bad news was that the project would not begin until at least March 1995 and would likely not be finished before the fall of 1996. Regional authorities were to build three iron and manganese removal water treatment plants, a well pumping station, two replacement wells and two new wells along with two transmission mains in the area of the city east of Franklin Boulevard.

The city landed its second major land sale in as many months. In July the city had sold 5.5 acres of land on Turnbull Court to Work Wear Corporation for \$438,000. In the latest deal a little over seven acres of land in the Cambridge Industrial Park was to become home to Canada Fineblanking Corporation. That deal was worth \$550,000 to the city. The company specialized in high precision stampings that produced finely finished parts for the auto and other industries. It was expected that the company would invest up to \$5-million in the new factory that was to be built on the site.

10 YEARS AGO Fourth week of August 1999

After four years as executive director of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce Kimberley Thompson announced that she would be resigning her position at the Chamber to move on to the study of law at the University of Western Ontario. During her tenure the Cambridge Chamber became much more a project driven organization with a strategic plan for itself in place and was in the midst of establishing a new home for itself with the creation of the Gateway Centre on Hespeler Road at Highway 401.

The summer of 1999 was described as one of the "hottest" yet for city tourism. According to figures released by Tourism Cambridge there had been a 25 per cent increase in inquiries in May, June and July compared to the same three month period the previous year. About 22,000 visitors had been assisted by the city's tourism staff during the first seven months of 1999. A "hot economy", a lower Canadian and good weather were all factors contributing to the improved performance.

Members of the Gmelin family remained at their burned out flower shop while they waited for investigators to determine the cause of the fire that destroyed the family business. While they waited they discussed the need to move to a temporary location until Gmelin's Flowers and Gifts could be rebuilt at its Fountain Street location. The fire apparently originated in the greenhouse at the rear of the property and quickly spread to the flower shop destroying the building and all its contents. Damage was estimated at between \$500,000 and \$750,000. This was the second fire in the 51 year history of the business.

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