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OTTAWA
Illinois

Where Lincoln's Voice was
FIRST Heard!

A Brush with History

Ottawa Visitors Center, Inc.
100 W. Lafayette St.
Ottawa, IL 61350

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*A Brush
With
History*



Ottawa's Outdoor Murals

A Brush With History

Public art program was developed to help revitalize Ottawa's downtown and create a cultural attraction for tourists and residents. The program is sponsored by the Ottawa Visitors Center and overseen by a committee of citizens devoted to public arts. The mural program began in 2002. As of 2009, eight murals have been completed!

The murals have focused on figures or events that have been important to our history, including local industry, prominent citizens, or the creation of a major internal improvements project.

We have been fortunate to receive the generosity of art and history lovers in the form of funding, research, historical guidance, artistic expertise and an appreciation of our efforts to create a unique cultural experience in our community. We are pleased to bring this outdoor mural program to you.

A Brush with History

Ottawa Visitors Center, Inc.
100 W. Lafayette St.
Ottawa, IL 61350

Cell Phone Tour: 866-M U R A L S-1
(6 8 7 2 5 7)

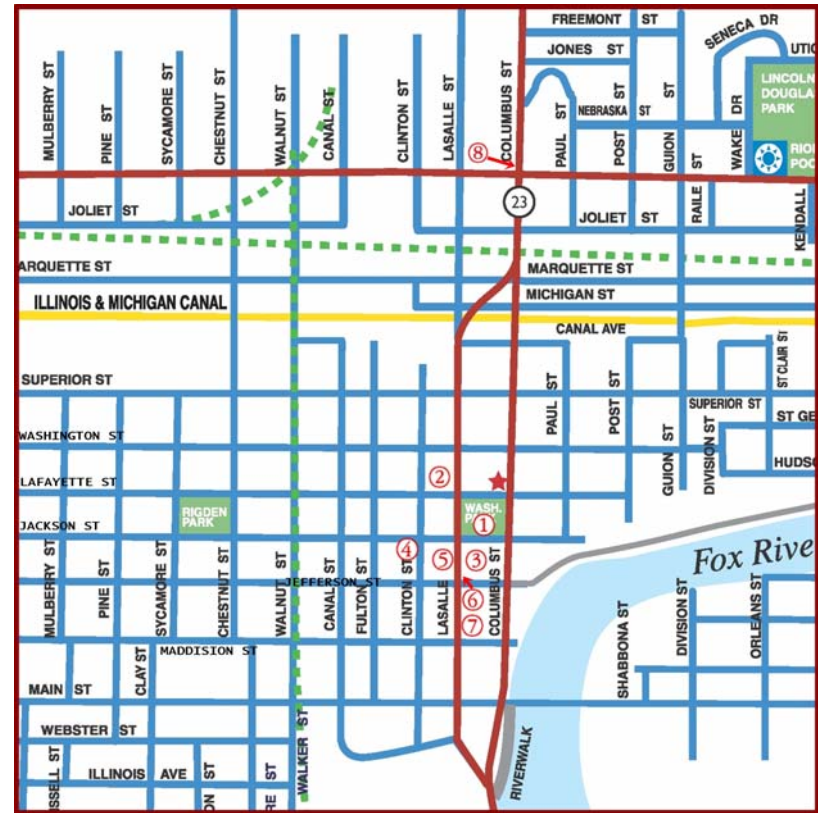
Visitors Center Phone: 888-O T T A W A-4
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Discover & Experience Ottawa



- (1) The Day of the Great Debate—Corner of Jackson & LaSalle St. Immediately south of Washington Square Park
- (2) Progressions in communications technology— 216 W. Lafayette St
- (3) Ottawa's Earliest Residents—812 LaSalle Street
- (4) Ottawa as a Canal Town—909 Clinton Street
- (5) The Life of General W.H.L. Wallace — 815 LaSalle Street
- (6) Peltier Glass Factory— LaSalle & Jefferson Streets
- (7) Streetscape Reflections—LaSalle & Madison Streets
- (8) Imagine and Learn with Bob McGrath — 1709 Columbus Street

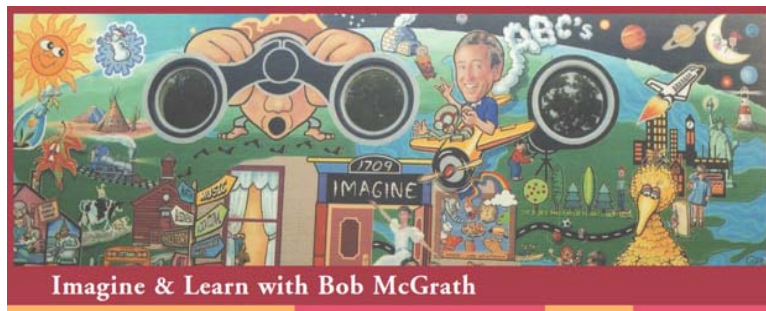
Imagine and Learn with Bob McGrath

Two familiar faces peer down at you from the Jefferson School wall. Yes, the guy with yellow feathers and beak, that's Big Bird! But look over his shoulder at the fellow flying high in an airplane as an alphabet trail sputters behind him.

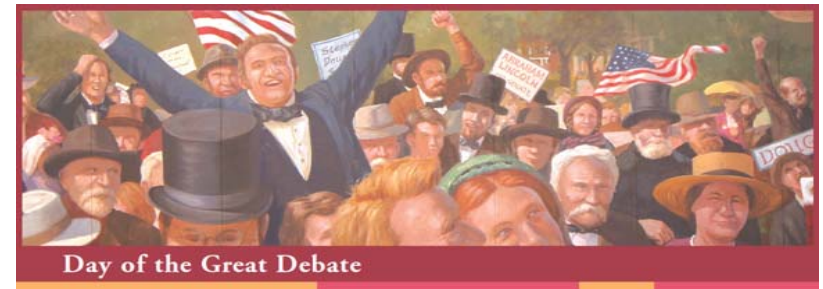
It's Bob McGrath, a star of the "Sesame Street" children's program, author, musician and Ottawa area native. In this mural, Bob is again the star, honored in vivid color for his contribution to children's education.

Objects in the mural swirl as fast and as far as a child's imagination! Here you can travel to the East Coast of the United States, or to the universe! Cartoon characters lend a touch of whimsy to the art as real Ottawa children take center-stage singing, dancing, painting, playing make-believe or offering comfort.

Artist Vicki Crone cleverly incorporates the Jefferson School windows into the binoculars and telescope aimed by the visionary characters at you, the passersby, and into the future!



The Day of the Great Debate



In artist Don Gray's rendition, Lincoln and Douglas dramatically address the crowd gathered to hear them. News that the great Senator Douglas would appear in Ottawa caused a great sensation. Politics was more than a spectator sport for men of the day, and political rallies were festive events filled with medicine hawkers, hog roasts, parades, and lively debate off the speakers' platform as well as on it. Audience members heckled and cheered "their man" on the platform, and the orators gave back as good as they got in repartee!

The unknown Lincoln would emerge from the seven debates a standard-bearer for the Republican Party, and the momentum would carry him to the White House (against his opponent Douglas) two years later. Also shown on the stand is Owen Lovejoy of Princeton, brother of Elijah Lovejoy, abolitionist, legislator and friend, of Lincoln.

The History of Communications



The History of Communications

The History of Communications Mural can be read as a historical time line starting from left to right, beginning with the arrival of French voyagers to the Illinois Valley in the 1700's marking the visit of Father Pierre Marquette and explorer Louis Joliet. Their success with local Indian tribes marked the first communication from the outside world to LaSalle County. The mural ends with a cell phone leading us towards modern communications, including the computer and internet.

Intertwined in the mural is a nod to the various people and landmarks that contributed to the growth of Communications in Ottawa. Pictured in the mural is Walkers Trading Post, Judge Caton and a telegraph operator from the Caton Telegraph Factory and Ottawa's Chautauqua. The Chautauqua, Native American for "Lecture Hall," was a place where many Ottawans enjoyed lectures, talks and speeches in the early 1900's.

The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy mail train can be seen chugging along. This train was on display for many years in Ottawa but recently has been moved to Mendota, Illinois. Next to the train you will see a depiction of the U.S. Mail plane that crashed just north of Ottawa, piloted by a young and unknown Charles Lindbergh.

Also featured are local radio legends Dan Parker and Bunny Morse broadcasting from WCMY 1430, which is still in operation today and is housed in this very building. Local artist Tim Trumbo also hid scenes from Ottawa's other murals. Can you find them all?

Streetscape Reflections

Ottawans regularly marched in parades, cheered for them or stood transfixed along the route as the city hosted this most universal of celebrations. Parades brought people together, and brought them to a vibrant and bustling downtown.

Artist Joshua Winer envisioned a parade as a means of populating Ottawa's unique architectural landscape. He wove prominent citizens and familiar faces in to the painting as marchers or bystanders. Mayor Phil Bailey doffs his top hat, and State's Attorney Harland Warren raises his hand in a wave.

Warren gained prominence during the area's most notorious murder case, the Starved Rock Murders.

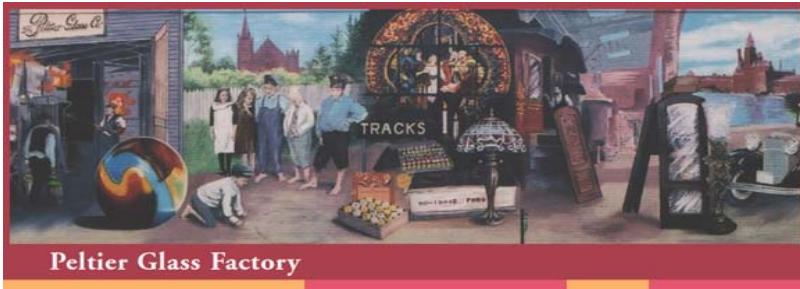
Along the route are Ottawa residents who, then and now, have enriched our community and given Ottawa its distinctive character.

The muralist captured a pivotal decade which was defined by a mixture of complacency and unrest. Ottawa, like America, emerged from the decade stronger, wiser and ready to sprint forward into the 21st century!



Streetscape Reflections

Peltier Glass Factory



In 1886, a young French glassblower named Victor Peltier opened his own company in Ottawa. Peltier Glass made opalescent glass, sheet glass, stained glass and glass marbles.

In this mural, you can spot not only the innovative machinery that occupied the factory, such as the marble-making machine, but see some of the products that were made.

St. Patrick's Church and Chicago's Cultural Center represent some of Peltier's clientele, as does the Ford Motor Co., which purchased Peltier glass for headlamps and shift knobs.

Louis Comfort Tiffany, whose lamps and products were much sought-after home decor, purchased colored glass from Peltier.

Populating the mural are some of Peltier's smallest customers (painters copied the faces of current Ottawa children) as they enjoy a 19th century pastime of shooting marbles. From Ottawa's oldest factory, Peltier's glass has traveled to all corners of the globe.

Painted by Murals by Jericho
Mural Completed 2002

Ottawa's Earliest Residents

Before French explorers entered the Illinois Valley or white settlers sowed crops and built homes here, the valley was populated by Native American Indian tribes. They recognized the conflux of the Illinois and Fox Rivers as an ideal trading center, and thousands settled in a grand village along what is now Dee Bennett Road between Ottawa and Utica.

These early residents relied on that great beast of the plains, the buffalo, as a source of food, clothing, medicine and other items necessary for their daily lives.

Armed with bows and arrows, the hunters rounded up buffalo herds in canyons to make the animals easy targets. The ritual "buffalo run" has given the state park, Buffalo Rock, its name.

In the mural, a quartet of wooly bison jostle each other in their rush to escape, seeming ready to stampede onto La Salle Street traffic! Two hunters kneel and take aim, their sinewy arms drawing back the bowstrings and their eyes narrowing intensely as they focus on their targets.

In the distance, the tawny grass of an Illinois Valley bluff stretches to the blue-gray horizon and the Illinois River.



Artist: Roger Cooke Mural Completed 2004

Ottawa as a Canal Town

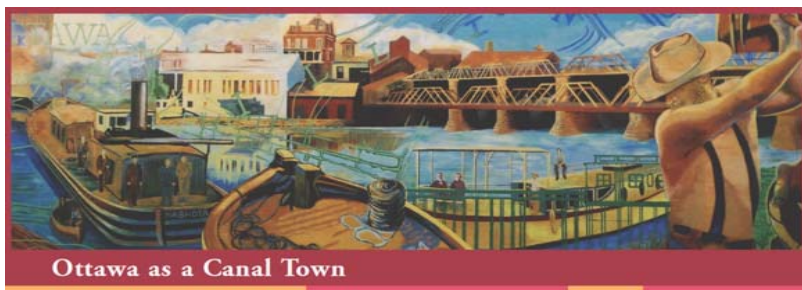
The Erie or the Panama may have been bigger or longer, but the Illinois and Michigan joins those ambitious public works projects in shaping the region in which it was built.

Designed as a vital link in the interstate transportation system, the I&M became the first and most ambitious of the Illinois' internal improvements.

The canal meant goods and grain could be shipped efficiently, and that lumber and other supplies vital to the settlement of Ottawa could be transported here. It attracted settlers and land speculators who became some of the area's most prominent citizens.

Also attracted by the promise of life in the west were thousands of laborers, mostly Irish immigrants, who built the canal and chose to stay in the area. Their life was a hard one.

Begun in 1836 and completed 12 years later just as railroads were expanding as passenger routes, the canal never reached its full potential. During 75 years of operation, however, it shaped Ottawa and other towns along its banks. Now a popular hiking and biking trail, it continues to be a vital part of the region.



Ottawa as a Canal Town

The Life of General W.H.L. Wallace



General W. H. L. Wallace

William Hervy Lamme Wallace could have begun the practice of law with a Springfield lawyer, Abraham Lincoln. Instead, while traveling to Springfield, he met Ottawan T. Lyle Dickey, and established a successful law practice here.

Dickey and Wallace were to enjoy a long and close relationship, first as law partners, then as soldiers in the Mexican War, then as father- and son-in-law after Wallace married Dickey's daughter Ann. On politics they did not see eye-to-eye, but when the Civil War came, they were again fighting on the same side, the Union.

Even as Wallace was lying wounded on the Shiloh battlefield, his wife was struggling to reach her husband in Tennessee. She was to spend the final moments of Wallace's life at his bedside.

Wallace, his wife Ann, and their daughter Isabelle are shown in the mural. The faces of several of the soldiers who surround the general are Ottawa soldiers. Wallace now lies in a family cemetery on Ottawa's north bluff. Honored by military historians for withstanding a Confederate onslaught at the Battle of Shiloh, he was nearly forgotten in his adopted home until the mural brought him and his heroism to life again.