

## CITY

# Vanier's history in pictures

A unique program helps artists create an outdoor record of the community's most important moments, **MARIA COOK** writes.

**S**itting at a red light at Vanier Parkway and McArthur Road, you glance up and think, "That face looks familiar."

It is Gisèle Lalonde, leader of SOS Montfort, larger than life in a bright red jacket, smiling. She is surrounded in Crayola colours by a happy-looking crowd, some with fists raised in triumph.

The Montfort Hospital, Ontario's only francophone hospital which was saved from closing in 2001, stands in the background.

This moment of local history, identity and resistance is depicted in a mural unveiled this month, enlivening a grey concrete parking garage. It is the 37th mural painted in Vanier since 1998.



**Eastview Hotel on fire in 1990**  
**Location: 211 Montreal Rd.**  
**Artist: David Yeatman**

In 1948, Mr. Chenier purchased a small hotel at the corner of Montreal Road and Cyrville Avenue. A year later he renovated and enlarged it, forcing the removal of two houses in the process. St. Margaret's Church was strongly opposed to the hotel being only a few metres from its entrance. A beautifully crafted wooden bar was located on the first floor. The building was completely destroyed by a fire in 1990. Damage was estimated at \$800,000 and arson suspected. A funeral home replaced the hotel.



**The past in living colour**

37 murals have been painted since 1998. There are currently 35 — one was destroyed in a storm, one was replaced. For guided tours, e-mail Yvon Dubé at y.m.dube@rogers.com

guard rail on the Cummings bridge. This is the trademark of David Yeatman, a 69-year-old Aylmer artist who has painted 10 of Vanier's murals and whose nickname is Bear. "It's sort of like the Find Waldo thing, so people know there are some subtle things to look for," he says.

See more photos of Vanier's murals online at ottawacitizen.com



**Sugar Shack**  
**Location: 300 des Pères Blancs**  
**Artist: John Ellenberger**

This mural depicts the original sugar shack built in the 1950s with the White Fathers of Africa hosting children for sleigh rides in the woods and taffy on snow. The shack was replaced in 1999 by Action Vanier Inc. The sugar bush is on the grounds of Richelieu Park, purchased by the White Fathers in 1938. The 17.5 acres of land with four acres of forest in a densely populated area has 1,000 taps and produces 400 litres of maple syrup.

ernment, \$20,000, and the Business Improvement Area about \$100,000. The Montfort mural, which measures about 2.4 metres by 12 metres, was a first for 34-year-old Gatineau artist Marie-Hélène Lajoie.

"I was kind of nervous at first. I contacted other mural artists and they were very friendly and open and told me all the technical details. "I feel honoured to have the op-

portunity to depict that scene. I'm very touched by what they did. It's important to show we appreciate what they did to save the hospital."

Most of the works are painted on vinyl-impregnated canvas, produced by Gatineau firm Bungee Banner.

Unfortunately, those on brick do not last. One of the loveliest murals, on the side of El Meson restaurant,

**Hockey**  
**Location: 270 Marier Ave, corner of Montreal Rd.**  
**Artist: David Yeatman**

Former New York Islanders hockey players Denis and Jean Potvin were born in Vanier and like most boys that age started their hockey career on the local outdoor rinks. As juniors they played for the Ottawa 67's.

is deteriorating. It is a portrait of Vanier's last council seated at tables on the restaurant terrace. A young woman airs a sheet on a balcony above.

A mural of Georges Vanier, Canada's first French-Canadian governor general, was inaugurated in 2002 by then-governor general Adrienne Clarkson. Look carefully, and you will see a teddy bear sitting on the

The goal was to create an outdoor art gallery that would tell the story of Vanier and show our rich heritage," says Yvon Dubé, 77, president of PubliArt, a group that oversees the program.

This outdoor biography of Vanier, writ large on brick and concrete, documents the Eastview Hotel fire of 1990, Canada's only urban sugar bush, the evolution of bingo, and locomotive 3426, the train that crossed Montreal Road in the 1940s and '50s. "They're beautiful," says Ottawa-Vanier MPP Madeleine Meilleur. "It adds to the community."

Former New York Islanders hockey players Denis and Jean Potvin skate across the Vanier Francophone Centre; Second World War veterans gaze out from the Vanier Legion Hall; retired postman Hector Hotte does his rounds on the wall of the Beechwood Metro store.

"It adds a bit of pride," says Dubé. "If you say Vanier is the mural community of Ottawa, that's very positive."

Outside the Il Vagabondo restaurant on Barrette Street, a 1910 streetcar carries members of the first city council of Eastview.

"I had only the archival photos of faces of these founders," explains Ottawa artist Karole Marois, 51. "I used my husband's body for almost all of them."

Dubé, a former Vanier councillor, got the idea during a visit to Lake Placid, Florida, which bills itself as "the outdoor mural capital of Florida."

Over the years, about \$400,000 has been spent to pay for artists, materials and installation. In 2001, when Vanier amalgamated with the City of Ottawa, the project received \$200,000 from Vanier's budget surplus. In addition, the federal government's millennium fund gave \$60,000, the former regional gov-