

A long tradition of homecomings at the University of Ottawa

Michel Prévost, University of Ottawa chief archivist

The University of Ottawa enjoys a long tradition of homecomings marking significant events throughout the University's history. Let's look back at some of the most memorable of these gatherings.

Major celebrations of the 19th century

In 1879, alumni organized a special celebration to honour Father Joseph-Henri Tabaret, one of the University's most influential forefathers of the 19th century. Highlights included the conferment of a doctorate of divinity on Father Tabaret by Pope Leo XIII. Students presented Father Tabaret with a portrait of himself by renowned artist Forbes. Today, the portrait—one of the few physical reminders of the University's history under Father Tabaret—hangs in the University Archives.

In 1889, the University celebrated the granting of its pontifical charter in great style. The Oblates considered this recognition by Pope Leo XIII to be quite an honour. The highlight of the festivities was the unveiling of the bronze statute of Father Tabaret, who had passed away three short years before. The statute, paid for by alumni, still stands in front of the building that today carries his name.

Celebrating 100 years

From October 15 to 18, 1948, the University celebrated its 100th anniversary with grand pomp. It held a historical theatre piece, an alumni convention, a banquet at Château Laurier, masses and a concert presided by the governor general of Canada, the Viscount Alexander of Tunis. A number of lectures and talks were also given, one in particular that might illicit chuckles today—*The Terrors of the Year 2000*. The celebrations ended with several honorary doctorates being conferred to influential figures of the time.

Le Droit, Gatineau's French-language newspaper, published several special editions that highlighted the important role of the University in the National Capital Region and in Canadian society.

The institution's 150th anniversary

The University would have to wait until 1998 before celebrating another milestone—its 150th anniversary. These festivities, which kicked off in February 1998 and continued throughout the year, began with the inauguration of a historical exhibit, an event that brought together all living rectors of the University. Father Henri Légaré, Father Guindon, Antoine D'Iorio and Marcel Hamelin were all in attendance. Festivities hit a high note in September with Homecoming '98. A grand ceremony was held at the National Arts Centre, attended by

descendants of A. O. Von Herbulis, the architect who designed the University's signature building—Tabaret Hall.

Unveiled at this same ceremony was a commemorative stamp with an initial print run of seven million. The University was also recognized as a site of national historic significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Homecoming '98 wrapped up with a 150th anniversary gala, packing the Ottawa Convention Centre.

Looking back on the University's signature events of the past, we can be sure those to come will also go down in history as some of the grandest!