

Edward Johnson (2002)

Edward Johnson was lead tenor and later General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York. He was born on Verney Street in Guelph, August 22, 1878.

His success in Europe and North America involved a long hard struggle, which he attributed to the lack of an early formal musical education. He was determined to help young musicians avoid similar hardships, and so while at the peak of his career, he used his considerable influence to persuade the Board of Education to include music in the curriculum. To ensure its success, he donated \$25 000 in seed money. It was his hope that every child in Guelph, regardless of background, would have the opportunity to study music at



school, and that one day this would be true across Canada. He wrote, “And who knows, in a generation or two we may become a nation of young singers, who will be ambassadors of peace carrying on wings of song Canada’s message of love and goodwill to all the world.”

Edward Johnson’s wish to encourage the development of musical activity in Guelph was achieved in 1929 with the first Guelph Music Festival at the Guelph Collegiate auditorium. The festival included a range of musical activities; choirs, soloists, orchestras and a rhythm band.

In 1956, Edward Johnson launched his “Crusade for Strings”, a program to educate young musicians so that they could take their places in the orchestras of the future. He supported this successful program until his death in 1959.

His dedication to music and to the support of young musical talent was again demonstrated with the establishment of the Edward Johnson Music Foundation. He agreed to the use of his name and was in the process of establishing an endowment at the time of his death.

Throughout his life, Edward Johnson lent his energy and financial support to the furtherance of opportunities for young musicians and to the establishment of a musical community in this city. The vision of this remarkable man has formed the foundation for the successful youth music education that exists in Guelph today.