

HISTORIC GLOUCESTER

Quarterly Newsletter of
The GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
and The GLOUCESTER MUSEUM and ARCHIVES

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Gloucester Coat of Arms

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COVER PHOTO:

In October 1963, Gloucester applied to the Royal College of Arms in London, England for Armorial Bearings to identify municipal buildings, vehicles, printed documents and other township-owned items. It became one of twenty-six municipalities in Canada with approved Coats of Arms. Gold and green are the basic colours for the crest, derived from the arms of Ontario.

Gloucester's Coat of Arms was designed by the late Alan Beddoe who was the founder and first president of the Heraldry Society of Canada.

Source: Gloucester Roots

Historic Gloucester is published by The Gloucester Historical Society and The Gloucester Museum and Archives. It is intended as a Newsletter to members of the Society to provide interesting articles on Gloucester's past and to keep them informed of new acquisitions by the Museum, publications available, upcoming events and other items of general interest. Comments and suggestions regarding the Newsletter are always welcome.

Gloucester Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa.

President's Report

What follows is the message I sent to the Mayor and Councillors who are considering cuts required to produce the City's 2004. Please feel free to use all or some of this when attending public meetings and talking to your Councillor.

Heritage is identity. When someone from Cyrville or Carlsbad Springs requires historical information regarding their neighbourhood or about a name they are researching in their family history, who do they contact? Normally, they will be directed to the Gloucester Historical Society, the Gloucester Museum or the City Archives. There, they will benefit from the services of dedicated volunteers, backed up by some staff and their impressive collections of resources assembled over many years.

This is our heritage. Heritage is a non-renewable resource. Once gone, it's gone. Thus to close a museum involves not only the saving of one salary and some space in a building, it entails the destruction of tools required to maintain local identity. Community identity may cover a large area such as Cumberland Township, a village such as Vars, or families within a neighbourhood. Heritage is key to remembering who we are and where we come from. Closure of such facilities induces a long-term solution to deal with a short-term fiscal problem. Its like killing a neighbour over the diggings of a cat: a long-term solution to a short-term problem.

The City's Official Plan and its Arts and Heritage Plan state clearly that the City is a City of villages, and that community heritage is to be preserved. The City is the steward of heritage. Without adequate funding it will be impossible to preserve, interpret and celebrate local heritage. Heritage institutions require trained staff to guide, and help implement their programs which are of benefit to all. Loss of staff equals loss of sorely burned out volunteers. Loss of volunteer organizations leads to loss of the ability to apply for grants at large. There is a balance here, similar to a natural ecology.

Cuts to heritage which took place a few years before amalgamation have not been kind to local heritage. Further cuts will be fatal, at least to the institutions that are targeted. Therefore, a moratorium on cuts to heritage is necessary to ensure that these riches are preserved for the future generations. Loss of identity would be irreplaceable.

Concerning our recent most successful speaker event, thanks to Flo Ladds for her presentation, and for bringing so many people from her former neighbourhood. Also thanks to Aline Mageau for the delicious refreshments, and to our Board members for their help. Let's have some more events like this and the Gloucester Historical Society will live forever.

Guy H. Legault

Crossing Bridges of Times Past

On September 19, 2003, the Gloucester Historical Society presented a number of speakers who told their stories of growing up in Gloucester. The event was called "Crossing Bridges of Times Past" and presenters were from the areas of Billings Bridge, Cummings Bridge and Hurdman's Bridge, as well as surrounding communities. All the seats in the hall were filled as more than 80 residents or former residents of these neighbourhoods came to hear stories and reminiscences of earlier days.

The first speakers were Bernie and Gerry Pelot who talked about what life was like in the then Village of Billings Bridge. Their stories were not only from their own experience as youngsters, but also from stories of others which had been collected by their mother and subsequently compiled into a book by the two brothers entitled "Billings Bridge: My Village, My Life." Copies of this book are still available from the Gloucester Historical Society.

Ben Stafford spoke on the area around Hurdman's Bridge, adding to his recollections which he shared with those attending the GHS Annual Meeting last Spring. To facilitate the identification of place locations in the 1940s and 1950s, Mr. Stafford supplied a map which showed many of the well-remembered establishments of that era.

The third speaker was Carl Kropp who spoke about the area around the McArthur Road in what is now Vanier.

Beverley Murphy was unable to attend due to ill health, but sent an excellent article of remembrances of life in Eastview. In it she told of activities that took place in

each of the four seasons of the year and what children did to make their own fun. Beverley's article is reprinted in its entirety in this Newsletter.

Flo Ladds not only read Beverley Murphy's article, but added some reminiscences of her own about life in Overbrook where she grew up.

Ed Kirk added to the memories of the speakers when he told of some of the people and businesses that existed in the stretch along the Rideau River between Billings Bridge and Hurdman's Bridge.

A short question period followed the presentations. At the reception which followed many people met old friends and relatives from the past and for many it was a joyous reunion!

From time to time we like to present some guest speakers on topics of interest to our members. If you have any suggestions as to speakers or topics, please let us know!

Gloucester Historical Society wishes to thank Bob Kemp for his continued support in selling Nevada tickets for the Society at his service station on Bank Street at the corner of the Leitrim Road. Thank you, Bob!

(And don't forget to get your Nevadas from Bob - you just might get lucky!)

REMEMBERING EASTVIEW

By Beverley Murphy

There were seven black bears walking along the Montreal Road. The year was 1904. My grandmother was from England and had never seen anything larger than a rabbit at home. The sight burned in her memory and was recalled years later for me, her wide-eyed granddaughter.

Winter

The Rideau River was already frozen over by mid-November. We kids skated on the "Indian rubber ice," as we called it, which formed in the shallow spots. Soon the ice would harden and we would clear off the snow to make hockey rinks for the boys and an area for the girls to try to figure skate. Christmas was a special time in Eastview. We all looked forward to the Christmas concert at St. Margaret's Anglican Church. The Sunday school teachers and the parents worked hard to prepare for this yearly event. It was always a success and was lots of fun for everyone. In those days, horse-drawn sleighs delivered mounds of Christmas trees right to your door. Choosing the perfect tree was serious business and was done with great care. Branches of cedar were piled high and these were picked over, carefully, to make a beautiful wreath for the front door. Coloured lights and tarnished tinsel would soon be added to complete the decoration. A star topped the tree, and with a few Christmas balls we achieved the perfect effect.

During the years of the depression, nothing was ever wasted. After Christmas, the old tinsel would be carefully rolled into balls to be re-used the following year. The ribbons were carefully ironed and were saved in an old shoebox. Joyous greetings of "Merry Christmas" were called out whenever we saw our neighbors and friends.

The parishioners, French and English, held hands at Christ Eve mass and we felt that all was right with the world.

Winter sports were wonderful as we slid on our sleighs and toboggans down "Red Light Hill." The steep hill started at Laurier Avenue, right behind the Russian embassy. If we got up enough speed we could jump the stone wall at the foot of the hill and fly right out onto the ice. What a thrill!! The winter carnivals, throughout Eastview, were wonderful. Dressing up in costumes and competing in skating races were a must. The coloured lights strung around the rinks and the hot chocolate, served free, made it all very special. The frozen river gave us a shortcut up to Strathcona Park where we could catch the street car. By crossing the ice we could save the extra 5 cent bus fare. Don't forget, that 5 cents could buy a chocolate bar or an ice cream cone!

Going to the Eastview theater was a popular thing to do, especially in winter. We would walk to the "show" in bitter cold weather. We would be so cold that we would leave our coats on, forgetting that we had to walk back home. I can remember being so stiff with the cold that I would just fall into bed with my clothes on. But seeing Tarzan and Roy Rogers made it all worth it. It left me with these special memories

It was a time of huge snowfalls. Perfect for making snow angels and building forts and igloos on the street. Snow ball

fight were such fun. Once, when running out of snowballs to throw at the other kids, I spied a frozen horse ball, as you know the delivery horses were always generous with those gifts. I picked up a choice morsel and fired it into the face of one of the "enemy." Well, I can tell you that the telling of the event by the father of my victim did not sit well at all with my parents. I was given a good smack across the fanny and sent to my bed without any supper. Horse-drawn ploughs, piling large banks of snow along the way, cleared the streets and sidewalks. As the ever-present snow banks melted into smaller piles and the weather changed, we all looked forward to another season.

Spring

We all looked forward to the spring. A time when we could leave fleece lined bloomers and ugly galoshes behind. As the climate warmed, preparations to prevent the flooding of the river began. First, the keys at Cummings Bridge were cut, allowing the current to carry away the blocks of ice. Men in rowboats set off blasts of TNT to open a channel and giant plumes of white water sprayed high into the air. All of the residents of Eastview enjoyed watching the annual event for they knew that this process would prevent the spring flooding. The spring of 1948 however proved them wrong. The banks of the Rideau River overflowed and a flood, like no other, took place. Our home was not far from the river. Looking back, I remember being picked up in a rowboat to go home. The water rose higher and higher, reaching many homes in Eastview and Overbrook. My mother cried as our garage collapsed and all of the firewood floated off, down the street. The cleanup was horrendous and the musty smell in the basement lingered for weeks after the water had receded.

Spring also brought its pleasures. A wooden footbridge, four feet wide, was erected, allowing people to cross to the other side of the river. It was built just where the tennis club is today. We could walk or take our bikes across to Strathcona Park. Flying over that bridge on our bikes, with the bridge swaying and the water of the rapids making us dizzy was scary, but great fun. St. Hyacinthe Street, later named Washington, after Colonel Washington, was abloom with plum blossoms, lilacs, honeysuckle and two magnificent magnolia trees. They were a rare sight in our climate. People would come from all over Eastview to marvel at their beauty. The early vegetable gardens were planted as the coming of summer was here at last.

Summer

Once again, in summer, the Rideau River was our favorite playground. Swimming at the two willows was a favorite spot but nothing could compare with the "Three Rocks." The rocks were not visible from the shore, except for a small ripple in the surface. We all knew that if we swam out across the deep water, our feet would eventually touch down on one of the rocks. The large one made a perfect jumping off spot. We would spend hours there, never concerned about the dead carcasses floating down the river from a slaughterhouse further up the Rideau. Sitting on the rocks in the shallow rapids, feeling the slimy green weeds run along our legs was a favorite pastime. Catching crabs, sunfish and frogs kept us busy and contented. We would often take off our shoes and walk across the rapids to the other shore on our way to Brighton Beach. Carefree and happy parents never had to worry about us going off on our own.

Our bread man, Scottie, made deliveries from a horse-drawn wagon. He would let us kids take turns riding on the back of his horse. It seemed enormous. What a sweet, patient man he was, never to be forgotten. As the weather grew hotter in August, the ice man would deliver huge, square blocks of ice for the ice-box. It was buried in sawdust to keep it from thawing. Sometimes, chips of ice would fall onto the road. Getting a piece of ice to chew on was just awesome.

Our summer holidays in the 30's were wonderful. We played outside all of the time: bolo-bat, skipping, ball, yo-yo, jacks and whittling wooden soldiers were great fun. At night, after supper, when it got really dark, we would watch the fireflies; fascinated. The sound of an airplane flying overhead, was a rare treat. We would all run to the end of the street to get a better look.

I attended Eastview Public School. Later, the eight-room schoolhouse on Montgomery Street was renamed J.O.Swerdfager PS after the principal who had served there for so many years. At the time, the Chief of Police was named Manion and he had a son, John, a real devil, who happened to be in my class. On Wednesday afternoons, during spelling class, Mr. Swerdfager would call out the words for us to write in our books. As it happened Mr. Swerdfager was quite deaf and as he called each word, John would spell it out loud and we would write it out. It was amazing to our teachers how we all got such high marks in spelling. It proved to be a mistake in later life, since none of us could spell.

Autumn

Back to school and, routinely,

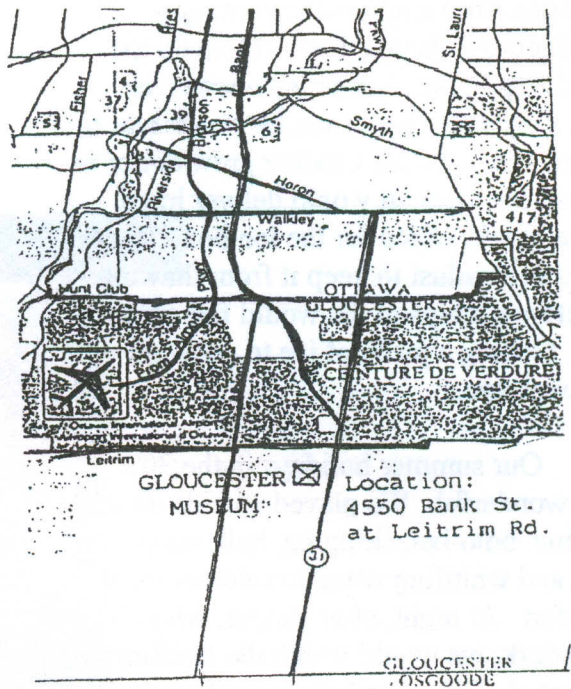
clothes were handed down from the bigger kids to the smaller. A trip to market could result in a new pair of shoes. Freiman's, on Rideau Street, was the best place for getting great bargains and maybe a malted milk too. Sweaters and mitts were knit preparing for colder weather. Pickling and preserves were put down for the coming winter. Outdoor games were still the best and playing Indians and Cowboys in the cedar bush was the best of all. The cedar bush was located right where the big Loblaws sits today.

But best of all was halloween! Homemade costumes were prepared with much excitement. A large pumpkin would become a jack-o-lantern with a candle inside to light the night. Eastview was full of witches and tramps. Gypsies roamed the streets along with angels. There was a large red brick house on the corner of McArthur Road, and the tracks alongside were in complete darkness. Those of us, brave enough to knock on that door, were given a penny. That was very special since no other house in Eastview gave out "money." Thanksgiving was a family time in Eastview. Indian summer and the harvest moon, so beautiful, were upon us.

Some things never change. Bundle up; winter is on its way.

**BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE
GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY:**

- A History of Gloucester Historical Society*
by Grace Johnson.....\$2.00
- Belden Map of Gloucester, 1879*.....\$5.00
- Billings Bridge: My Village, My Life*
by Gerard and Bernard Pelot.....\$20.00
- Blackburn-Glen Ogilvie: Centennial History*
by Anna Elliott.....\$ 2.00
- Bowesville: A Place to Remember*
by Grace Johnston.....\$15.00
- Carlsbad Springs/Ramsaywille Branch East
Carleton Women's Institute 1934-1994*..\$ 4.00
- Gloucester Roots*
by Lois Kemp.....\$20.00
- Memories of the Lockstations*.....\$ 4.00
- Milk/Cream Produce-Distributors in
Gloucester 1892-1975*
by Grace Johnson.....\$10.00
- Valley Views*.....\$10.00



If you have memories of life in Gloucester or stories of schools or families from early days, and would like to share them, please give us a call. Artifacts and photographs of yesteryear are always welcome additions to the Museum.

Call us at 822-2076 to talk about it!

About the wooden bicycle (see front cover) -

In 1898 James Blair, a 17-year old who lived in Gloucester on the present site of Ritchie Feed & Seed store off Innes Road, built himself a wooden bicycle which he rode all over the farm and to the Byward Market in Ottawa. This amazing bicycle can be seen in the Gloucester Museum.

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GLOUCESTER MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

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IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP, OR IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW AND SEND IT IN WITH YOUR CHEQUE. STILL ONLY \$10.00 PER YEAR OR \$40.00 FOR A LIFE MEMBERSHIP!

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Membership Form -Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester

Membership/Adhésion 2004 - \$10.00 for one year..... \$40.00 for life membership.....

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ PROV _____ POSTAL CODE _____

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