



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

www.gloucesterhistory.com

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This photo of an uprooted tree at Dunlop Public School in South Keys, was a result of the tornado which touched down in this area on September 21, 2018, one of six tornados which struck the region on that day.

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President’s Report
 By Glenn Clark

On September 21st, the city experienced weather history, the first EF-3 tornado ever recorded in Canadian history during the month of September. On the path of that storm, many homes and businesses were severely damaged. It will take several months for those worst affected to recover. Fortunately, nobody lost their life. But it was not just one tornado. Instead, six tornados touched down in the greater Ottawa area. One of those tornados crossed former Gloucester territories. In this newsletter, we trace the path of that latter tornado. The path was not well documented in the media. We also relate this to two historic weather events. We hope that all those affected are getting the help that they need.

The Gloucester Historic Society has been pleased to support and assist Carleton history student in researching her Masters’ thesis. The title of her research is ‘Voices of the Greenbelt’. As part of this research, she interviewed several families affected by the Greenbelt expropriations that took place almost 60 years ago. Jennifer has graciously accepted our invitation to speak on this topic on November 25th at 2 p.m. at the Greenboro Community Centre. This has been a topic never covered before and I hope you can come to this presentation. We are expecting to receive a copy of her research, which is expected to be in multi-media format.

Also, in this newsletter, we cover some of the history surrounding a portion of the old Bowesville Road as a follow-up to a Jane’s Walk that took place last May. Enjoy!

We are always looking for interesting stories about our area. Many people have stories to tell that are often different from traditional history. We already have lined up a few stories for our upcoming newsletter, but we are looking for more. If you or someone you know has a story to tell about interesting people, places or events, please let us know.

THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 BY APPOINTMENT ONLY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS
 LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)
 FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT Mary Boyd at 613-521-2082 or boydmary172@gmail.com

Historic Gloucester is published by The Gloucester Historical Society. 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 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.



Celebrating its 40th Anniversary

The Gloucester Historical Society

Presents

A talk by Jennifer Halsall titled

“Voices of the Greenbelt”

How the Greenbelt Impacted Families



Boardwalk at Mer Bleue Bog, a Greenbelt treasure

Sunday, November 25, 2018 2:00 p.m.

Greenboro Community Centre

363 Lorry Greenberg Drive, Ottawa

Free parking and admission, Bus Route 98

www.gloucesterhistory.com



The Gloucester Historical Society acknowledges financial assistance of the City of Ottawa

September Tornado Makes and Remembers History

By Glenn Clark

September 21st, 2018 was not your typical Ottawa September day, the last day of summer. An unusually warm surge of very humid tropical air had moved north bringing temperatures to as high as 28c by early afternoon. The weathermen were predicting that this was to be very short-lived. A sharp cold front was expected by evening, pushing down from the northwest. The conditions were right for thunderstorms and accordingly a thunderstorm watch was issued.

As the cold front approached in late afternoon, meteorologists noticed worrisome movements in the cloud cover from radar observations and at 4:44 p.m. a tornado warning was issued and pushed through the new radio and cellular network warning system. It was rush hour on a Friday afternoon. Within minutes, an EF-3 tornado had touched down near Kinburn with wind speeds of up to 265 km/hour and caused tremendous damage particularly in Dunrobin before crossing the Ottawa River and through Gatineau Park, again causing considerable damage in the Mont Bleu neighbourhood of Gatineau. This tornado had travelled 40 km over a 40-minute period. This was the first EF-3 tornado to hit Ontario since 2011 and the first ever recorded in the month of September.

But that was not the end of it. Near 6 p.m. a second, EF-2, tornado touched down in suburban Nepean with wind gusts as high as 220 km/hour. It very quickly crossed the south tier of the city causing havoc in several neighbourhoods. It began just west of Arlington Woods, then proceeded eastward through that community, Craig Henry, severely damaged the Merivale hydro station, then tore through the Colonnade Business Park before crossing the Rideau River near the railway bridge into our area.

Damage was minimal as it crossed Riverside Drive south of the VIA Rail overpass. By the time that it hit McCarthy Road, damage intensified in the Quarry Co-op community, Owl Drive just north of Bayview Public School, and then Plante Drive near where the street turns west. It crossed the Airport Parkway about midway between the railway overpass and the South Keys pedestrian bridge and then it hit the north end of South Keys Shopping Centre where shoppers in at least one store were urged to take cover.

It crossed Bank Street just south of Johnston Road where trees were ravaged and uprooted around a bus shelter. Was anybody waiting there at the time? East of the Rideau River, the broadest area of damage was in South Keys. Trees were uprooted or ripped apart from as far north as Johnston Road to Cahill Drive. That very evening, the South Keys community was to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a wine and cheese party at Dunlop Public School. I had planned to be there and had attempted to drive to the school. It is only then that I realized that a tornado had touched down so close to home. I was amazed by the damage. Almost every street in South Keys had been blocked by downed trees. I later saw the damage at Dunlop Public School with large trees uprooted directly in front of the building. The tornado had also caused a gas leak, creating a potentially dangerous situation. The celebration has been rescheduled to November 9th.

At Albion Road, utility poles were broken, bent or completely knocked over. Wires lay on the street. Perhaps the worst building damage in our area was found at both ends of Tapiola Crescent, where roofs and siding were ripped off several houses. As the tornado continued eastward, the path narrowed to at most one block wide in most locations. It was amazing to see the severity of damage on one street and no damage along the next street. We are not used to this kind of pattern of damage from storms.

At Zaidan Drive, it followed Johnston Road then crossed through Fanterra Way, but the tornado must have lifted temporarily as there was no apparent damage along Conroy Road itself. I was oblivious to the fact that there had been a tornado crossing when I drove down Conroy Road only minutes later. Beyond that, it followed along the north portion of Karsh Drive. It was last apparent along Johnston Road between the two intersections with Cellini Court.

Weathermen initially believed that damage east of the Rideau River was caused by a microburst, but residents immediately recognized that the narrow path of the storm suggested that it could have been nothing other than a tornado. It also became clear that this was the same tornado that had first touched down near Arlington Woods, some 20 km to the west. No news coverage was given to the Hunt Club tornado until Ian Black of CBC News displayed the path in his weather forecast a day or two later. In a

TORNADO PATH

September 21, 2018



sense, it was the ignored tornado. In retrospect, it had weakened to an EF-1 level east of the river, but for those who had experienced it, it was a moment of terror that lasted perhaps no more than that.

A review of the September 21st storm by meteorologists confirmed not two tornados, but six. Another tornado had crossed through the Calabogie area, and three others had touched down in thinly populated areas of the Gatineau hills north of the city.

The Hunt Club-Nepean tornado oddly reflects to a far worse weather-related event in our history. News coverage explained the tremendous damage in the Arlington Woods neighbourhood which had been built amongst ancient pines planted following the great fire of 1870. Most of those pines in the path of the tornado were decimated and therefore destroying the community's original charm. The 1870 fire had started on August 17th as a small fire to burn off brush piled by railway workers near Pakenham. But a similar strong cold front had brought what was described as hurricane force winds that whipped the small fire into a raging inferno that blew across much of Carleton County and across the Ottawa River, destroying hundreds of homes and farms, leaving thousands homeless and threatening the very existence of Ottawa. In just a day or two, it had reached Gloucester, where it was described as the 10-mile fire, extending from Green's Creek and the Ottawa River to almost Manotick including some of the same areas affected by the 2018 tornado.

Another severe storm also affected the Hunt Club and South Keys area on June 6, 1888. Described as a cyclone and unlikely a tornado, it crossed through the area just before the lunch hour on a hot day. The storm swept across from the west and extended from at least Billings Bridge to Leitim. Houses and farm buildings were destroyed on this wide path. St. Thomas Aquinas Church at Billings Bridge was blown down leaving one child dead and the nearby Ellwood school that was formerly across from today's Home Depot on Bank Street, had its back wall blown out and the students scattered in the school yard.

While historical weather-related events did produce fatalities, we are fortunate that even injuries from the tornados were limited. Hydro outages were mostly limited to hours or a few days.

This was a weather event to remember. A map accompanies this article that shows the approximate path of the tornado east of the Rideau River.

Note: The Gloucester Historical Society collects stories and copies of photographs from members and the public. If you have photographs or stories related to the 2018 tornado, we welcome receiving them at english@gloucesterhistory.com.

A Spring Stroll along the Old Bowesville Road

By Glenn Clark

On a sunny morning on Saturday, May 5, 2018, I was accompanied by about 60 fellow Ottawans exploring a short stretch of the old Bowesville Road as part of the annual Jane's Walk.

We began our stroll at the entrance to the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club at 10 a.m. The Hunt Club had graciously given our group access to the club including the clubhouse itself where refreshments were served, and a beautiful arrangement of historic photographs were displayed.

The entranceway into the club was significant to this story as we walked northward from Hunt Club Road. This access route into the parking lot and clubhouse was part of Bowesville Road until it was declared surplus by the City of Ottawa in 1995 and turned over to the club [*Ottawa Citizen*, November 8, 1995 p.A11]. As we would later continue northward past the club property, the public roadway reappeared, where it is named North Bowesville Road, a mere half block in length. This is the only surviving portion of the original Bowesville Road that retains its name. Bowesville Road can also be found south of the airport, but that section was originally known as Bogtown Road.

Going back in history, fox hunting, steeplechases and related pursuits were popular during the late 19th and early 20th century. Various clubs were formed with such names as the Toronto and Ottawa Hunt Club, the Ottawa Fox Hunt Club, the Ottawa Jockey and Hunt Club and the Ottawa Race and Hunt Club. It is unlikely that any of these clubs were related to the modern Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club.

Starting in September 1906, founders of the current club began organizing several 'fox hunts.'

The early runs originated out of Cartier Hall and headed to Billings Bridge and beyond towards Bowesville. The Dowler and Upton farms were a frequent destination, and entertainment evenings were organized at Bowesville for the various farm families in thanks for allowing riders to cross their farms. Hound kennels were established at various locations including Rideauville (Old Ottawa South), Rideau Park and opposite the wireless station at Billings Bridge.

Although the emphasis of the club was on riding pursuits, as early as January 1907, Mr. J.W. Woods had taken out an option on property owned by John McKellar of the Richmond Road for the building of a golf course [*Ottawa Citizen*, January 12, 1907 p.2]. Interestingly, this same tract later became just that.

On September 27, 1907, the founders of the club purchased the farm of William Upton Jr., known as Groveland for \$4,000. On March 23, 1908, the club was incorporated as the Ottawa Hunt Limited. The following year, the first cottage clubhouse was opened.

Before continuing, we must mention the interesting history surrounding the Upton family. William Upton Sr. was born in 1811 in England and went to Russia with his parents (John and Mary née Payne) in 1827. He and his father were instrumental in the construction of the docks and naval base at Sevastopol. John went on to achieve the rank of Colonel of engineers before he died on February 8, 1851.

William married Charlotte Rowles, also a British expatriate, in 1845 who lived until 1895. Not long after his father's death, the naval base was passed to Corps of Marine Engineers and William Upton was discharged, also with the rank of Colonel. He was granted a 160-acre estate and vineyard, four miles from Sevastopol, which was named Teghenek.

The Crimean war broke out in 1854 and he became caught in between British, French, Turkish and Russian forces. His villa was pillaged by all parties and he was eventually taken prison of war by the British. While in captivity, he decided to assist the British with his knowledge of the naval installations in exchange for restitution for damages to his property. It was during this time that he met Florence Nightingale. However, restitution was not forthcoming from the British military, so after returning to England in 1855, he used his connections to make a direct appeal to the Prime Minister. In the end, he got little other than the runaround.

William decided to cut his losses and emigrated to Canada in the Fall of 1857. He came to Ottawa and soon afterwards purchased the land he named Groveland at Lot 5, Concession 2, Rideau Front, Gloucester Township. It is here that he established a comfortable farm-

ing life with his wife and raised his five daughters and one son. From 1827 until his death in 1893, he kept a diary that is a living document of his time in both Russia and Gloucester. A microfilm copy of these diaries is on file at Library and Archives Canada. William Upton Sr. is buried in Long Island Cemetery, Gloucester.

During his tenure at Groveland, several groves of pines were planted to stabilize the sandy land that was prone to drifting. One of those plantings consisted of trees arranged in a series of concentric circles, which resembled the modern hoax of crop circles. This was still very evident in a 1945 air photograph and today is commemorated with a circular rock wall northwest of the clubhouse on the opposite side of the former Bowesville Road.

Early 1911 brought a typhoid epidemic to the City of Ottawa caused by inadequate water treatment. In response to this, entrepreneurs from the Ottawa Wine Vault Company sourced a clean water source near what would later become the 18th tee at the Hunt Club and marketed it under the name Tally-Ho Water. Their water and soft drink products were delivered door to door through the remainder of the decade and into the 1920s. As Ottawa municipal water quality improved and became reliable, the market gradually declined. Apparently, the well is still present on the golf course but has been capped because of the cost of ongoing testing of the water quality. The Tally-Ho bottling facility was located across from the entrance to the Hunt Club on the south side of Hunt Club Road. At the start of the World War II, the building was taken over by the federal government but was not demolished until the 1950s.

The advent of the first World War brought a suspension of activities at the Hunt Club as many of the riders volunteered for the war effort. Then President Sir Clifford Sifton suggested that a small group of members pay a subscription to maintain the club during its closure. Following the war, the world had changed for Canada and the returning soldiers. Many had died, and many had been permanently disfigured in body and in mind. It was also a time when the automobile began to quickly gain popularity replacing horses. Consequently, a new age had begun, and the Ottawa Hunt Club needed to adapt. When club operations resumed in 1919, the focus was no longer on riding pursuits. The club was renamed the Ottawa Hunt and Motor Club reflecting the new auto craze. But not only that, the emphasis of the club was about to change permanently when the first temporary golf course was opened in late summer 1919.

The club executive then took a leap of faith and hired the world-renowned Willie Park Jr. to design an 18-hole golf course. Construction began in 1920 under the supervision of John Foley and was mostly complete in 1921 except for the greens. During construction, train-

loads of black muck and enormous piles of manure were brought in to improve the otherwise barren land. The course opened on July 1, 1922.

This article is not designed to be a comprehensive history of the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club, but I will point a few other important events in the club's history. First, a 6-sheet curling club opened on December 5, 1959, which survived the devastating clubhouse fire that occurred on February 25, 1962. The club responded immediately, and the current clubhouse opened on November 24, 1962, the architect being Ron Ogilvie.

Following our visit to the clubhouse, we were greeted by Mr. André Audette who brought his prize 1926 Franklin automobile to be part of the event. As you can imagine, this attracted a lot of attention and many questions were asked by our walkers. This automobile had great significance since a similar 1926 Franklin transported the famous pilot Charles Lindbergh on this very same stretch of road on July 2, 1927 as he travelled to Parliament Hill to be a part of Canada's Diamond Jubilee ceremonies. Mr. Lindbergh was embarking on a continent-wide tour following his famous trans-Atlantic flight earlier in 1927 and Ottawa was his first destination. His famous plane, The Spirit of St. Louis touched down at the Uplands airstrip to the delight of thousands of on-lookers. Unfortunately, the event was marred with tragedy when two accompanying aircraft had clipped their wings and Lieutenant J. Thad Johnson parachuted to his death, having jumped too close to ground level.

The Uplands name was derived from Ottawa Uplands Ltd, which was planning a subdivision during the land boom that preceded World War I. When the boom suddenly crashed, no subdivision plan was registered. As flying became popular after the war, the location was found suitable for an air strip. Not long after Charles Lindbergh's visit, flying operations increased and the Uplands name was tied in with the air strip that became Ottawa's civilian airport by the late 1930s. It is interesting that Ottawa Mayor Charles Hopewell was involved as this all began in 1911 when he purchased the future air strip property and resold it just a year later to Ottawa Uplands Ltd.

As we walked north, we passed Tudor Hall, a longstanding reception centre. Originally named Pineland, the first building dated to 1944 when dance halls were popular and there were many young flyers being trained at Uplands airport. Also, associated with Pineland was a go-cart track that was popular with teens and young adults in the 1960s and 1970s. The go-cart business was sold in 1981 and a new track opened on May 23, 1981 on Conroy Road. A dispute arose with the previous owner over the Pineland name. [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 6, 1981, p 5], and, as a result, the new track was eventually named the Thunderbird Club. Go-carts continued to operate on Bowesville Road until 1984. The Pineland Hall was renamed Tudor Inn in 1973 and Tudor Hall in 1980. The original building caught fire on February 24, 1999 but a new much larger building had already replaced it some years earlier on the former site of the neighbouring go-cart track. Tudor Hall has been owned by Franco Giammarria since 1975.



As we reach Uplands Drive, this fragment of Bowesville Road ends. The abandoned right of way continues northward between a modern gas station and a strip mall. In some capacity, both were present going back to at least the 1950s when both were gas stations. These two stations were at the original intersection of the Bowesville and River Roads. In 1982, Riverside Drive was widened and rerouted and the old intersection was closed [*Ottawa Citizen*, September 24, 1982 p.7].

To the west, where the Quinterra subdivision is today and extending southward to the Hunt Club Road Bridge and beyond were large sand pits that were operated by the Upton, Dowler and Foster families at various times. The pits first began along the river bank where 'sand boats' collected and transported material to the Silica Brick Company in Ottawa East near today's Pretoria Bridge. In later years, particularly after World War II, sand was used for road construction. The pits were also known for 'parking' (romantic interludes), parties and other mischief and it was a source of problems for both Gloucester Township and the City of Ottawa. It was also a place where exciting discoveries were made in 1948 and 1955 when Beluga whale bones were unearthed during digging operations [*Ottawa Journal*, June



22, 1948 p.1, November 19, 1955 p.29]. This illustrated how the Ottawa area has changed over the last 10,000 years when the area was then submerged under sea water.

Also, looking southwest from the Uplands and Riverside Drive intersection along the west edge of the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club can still be seen a split in the pine trees. This split was the original right of way for the old River Road.

As we continued walking northward, we crossed modern Riverside Drive to Rivergate Way, which was another remnant of the old Bowesville Road. On the west side, Harry Fine opened his greenhouse operation in 1958 on land that was previously an orchard. Fine's Flowers expanded to include a large nursery as well. In 1984, the property was sold, and the greenhouse operation relocated to the River Road just north of Manotick. The Quintera and Riverwood subdivisions were built on the old Fine's Flowers site. The new Fine's store opened in 1987 on the east side of the road on a wedge of land between the old Bowesville Road and the current Riverside Drive. Harry Fine died in September 1988 and the business was sold in 1991. The land and building were acquired by Tubman Funeral Homes who had plans for a funeral home on site. After complaints from members of the local Asian community and the community association [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 15, 2000 p.C5], the building was demolished, and a new strip mall was built.

Immediately to the north of the Fine's Flowers property was a Department of National Defense laneway that took you to a small sewage disposal facility near the Rideau River. This was connected to the Uplands base community before city sewers were available. Once the city had connected to the base in the 1980s, the facility was closed and eventually removed. Starting in the 1960s, the same location was also the site of the Uplands Marina, a private marina for military personnel. The marina closed in June 2002 and fire destroyed the abandoned boathouse on November 30, 2006 [*Ottawa Citizen*, December 1, 2006 p.F8].

Perhaps the least noteworthy location on the walk but also the most historic was at the north end of Rivergate Way where it dead ends just short of the railway line. Only scrub and abandoned fences remain of the once well-known Ossian Hall, which pre-dated the founding of Bytown, at a time when



Snow crews at work on clearing the Bowesville Road at Mooney's Bay in 1935

only a handful of families lived in Gloucester Township.

Captain Andrew Wilson, a magistrate and veteran of the Napoleonic Wars built the log Ossian Hall and it was located at the northern point of navigation on the Rideau River. Beyond his Wilson's Wharf was a series of rapids that ran to beyond Hog's Back Falls, that did not exist at that time. Those rapids were known as the Three Island Rapids and the Three Rock Rapids and were later flooded when the dam was built at Hog's Back. Many a traveller of the back woods of the Rideau River would seek refuge at the Ossian Hall, which was considered an outlier of civilization amid the wilderness. It was here that James Johnston made his trek into the interior of Gloucester Township to locate his land and returned afterwards referring to it as one Hard Scrabble to reach, a name that was associated with the area surrounding Rideau-Carleton Raceway for some decades. It was also refuge for Daniel and Margaret O'Connor who spent a night with Captain Wilson in May 1826. They were so enamoured by the old-world library that they bought the house in 1829 after Captain Wilson had experienced financial difficulties. Daniel O'Connor soon became a prominent Ottawa citizen and O'Connor Street is named in his honour. The property remained in the O'Connor family ownership until a legal dispute arose amongst the family that forced an auction sale of the Ossian Hall farm on August 14, 1883 at the Grand Union Hotel. [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 13, 1883 p.3]. At that time, the farm consisted of 341 acres in the

south half of Lot 2 and the northwest half of Lot 3, Concession 2, Rideau Front. This was 1 ½ miles south of Hog’s Back. Of the total acreage, 200 were cleared. The auction notice described the buildings as follows:

1. A large frame barn and good commodious stable and storehouses, on the north half of Lot No. 3
2. A large frame dwelling, with verandah in front and on one side, about 40 feet in length and 1 ½ storeys in height, with sheds, etc. in rear and a good well.
3. A small dwelling house for workman.
4. A large frame barn with a cattle shed adjoining. These three buildings and sheds are all upon the south half of Lot No. 2
5. An extra-large frame barn is situated on the north half of Lot No. 2

Ossian Hall Farm was purchased by Gabriel Dowler Sr. who was born in Ireland and previously resided in Quebec City. He died on June 29, 1906, but the farm remained in the ownership of descendants for several decades afterwards. The last newspaper reference to Ossian Hall appeared as part of the wedding announcement for the marriage of Miss Mildred Kathleen Dowler to J. Bayne Upton where the wedding reception took place [*Ottawa Citizen*, October 6, 1920 p.2]. A brick farm house remained

on this property until 1998.

Our last stop on the walk was to get a closer look at the railway bridge over the Rideau River. Today, VIA rail trains cross this bridge several times a day as well as an occasional freight train. The bridge was originally built for the Canadian Northern Railway in 1912 but construction problems were encountered when building the 4th pier on the west side of the Rideau River as it began to sink into quick sand [*Ottawa Journal*, July 6, 1912 p.9]. Reports at the time indicated that a wooden trestle bridge was placed on top of the large concrete piers, which still exist today. The railway between Ottawa and Napanee opened on January 5, 1914, but financial problems were soon on the horizon. By late in the war, the Canadian government was forced to nationalize much of the national railway network. Canadian Northern was formally merged with Canadian National Railways on January 20, 1923.

Our modest 1.5 km walk was over. Who would have thought that such a short stretch of an old Gloucester rural road had so much history?

Where should a 2019 walk take place?

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 WITH YOUR CHEQUE. (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31.)

Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester

Membership/Adhésion - \$20.00 for one year..... \$150.00 for life membership.....

NAME: _____ Email Address: _____

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CITY: _____ PROV _____ POSTAL CODE _____

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