



# Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

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Robert Serré Honoured with the Grace Johnston History Award in 2014



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**President’s Report**

By Glenn Clark

I write this in January 2023 and wish everybody a Happy New Year.

Our winter Newsletter was delayed when the scope of the story I was writing exceeded the reasonable capacity of this newsletter. The good news is that the Gloucester Historical Society will soon have a new publication. The bad news, it became necessary to write new alternative stories suitable for the Newsletter.

The new publication will be titled ‘Bridge to Bridge’ which is a follow-up to my Jane’s Walk from May 7, 2022. It provides a comprehensive history of the Bank Street corridor in Old Ottawa South. It covers the history of every building including the several fires that changed the face of Bank Street over the years. Please watch for a book launch some time later this year.

**A Tribute to Robert Serré**

By Glenn Clark

We were shocked to learn of Robert Serré’s passing on December 27, 2022. We were aware of his rather steep decline with dementia and his last few years were spent in a nursing home. This is so sad for a man of such high intellect.

Our frequent conversations went back to his childhood, and he explained that at one point, he was on a path to the priesthood. When this did not fit his goals and interests, ‘Bob’ embarked on a career as a professional translator.

In retirement, Bob became an avid genealogist and historian. Before coming to the Gloucester Historical Society, he served with the Cumberland Township Historical Society. Bob joined the GHS Board in 2004 and his impact was immediate. He later became the Recording Secretary and then President from 2009 to 2013. He retired from the Board in 2014.

During his tenure, Bob was a prolific researcher and writer. His legacy is amazing. He wrote 15 books for the society, four of which he also translated into

As for the newsletter, we are including the story on the Bristow family and particularly Henry Bristow contributed by Jennifer York. In place of the original story on Old Ottawa South, I have been writing the stories of six lost buildings from the same neighbourhood. The first four of these stories appear in this newsletter.

Our spring newsletter will include a story titled ‘Overbrook Revisited’, which will provide additional information to that provided in the Time-Line history published last fall including more detail on the old Russell Road corridor.

Finally, we received sad news shortly after the New Year, that our Past President, Robert Serré had passed away on December 27, 2022. This is a serious loss to the heritage community of Ottawa.

French. This included nine books in the Pioneer series that covered 19th century genealogy for most parts of the north half of Gloucester. He often spoke that he preferred life in the 19th century.

Bob also contributed elsewhere as a translator. He provided English translations for the many plaques now installed along St. Joseph Boulevard in Orléans, a project of Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l’histoire d’Orléans. He also wrote a series of articles on local indigenous history, a contribution to the Manor Park Chronicle, the community in which he lived with his wife Rose-Aline.

Bob was my mentor with the GHS. He offered encouragement, and sympathy during my mother’s final illness. He also set a great example, so that I could lead the GHS into the future as his successor

When he retired from active service with the GHS, he was an instructor in language classes and focussed on family, particularly the care of his mother, Yvette, who passed away in 2016.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Rose-Aline and the rest of his family.

## The Bristow Family

By Jennifer York

Each person has a specific story on how they became interested in their family tree. Some have heard stories from family members, while others had an opportunity dropped in their lap. Mine is slightly different.

Back when I was in grade six at First Avenue Public School in the Glebe, our teacher asked the students to write a paper on someone in their family who was famous, or who did something interesting. I was dumbfounded.

There wasn't much talk about the previous generations in my family circle. I hadn't heard anything amazing or fantastic that happened to any long-lost relatives, I had mostly heard about crazy things they did that got them in trouble. I was bewildered. I walked to my grandmother's house after school, and she noticed that I had something on my mind. I told her of the teacher's assignment and how I didn't think I would have anything to write.

She proceeded to get up and go to her jewelry box and pulled out a newspaper article about her grandfather, Henry Bristow, and told me to read it.

I carefully took in the words in the obituary. Came to Canada with the Governor General and his wife. Saved Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise??? FULL STOP!

My Mouth dropped open. How did she keep this from me? How could she not have known that this would thrill me to the core? There it was. The thing that drew me in to researching my family tree.

Henry Bristow was a huge focus for me in my first few years of research. Being that I started this research at 14, the work was hard to do in the early 1970's.

The research meant hours at the library looking through old books, microfilm, and microfiche. I would leave the library, with a full-on migraine, with my eyes automatically flipping from left to right, the same way the microfilm rolled.

I came across so many interesting things about this man, including the actual article from the

Morning Paper, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1880. It was titled "A Narrow Escape". The photocopy from 1973 is very hard to read, but it endeavors to go through the entire accident where the Princess was injured when the horses bolted, and the carriage flipped onto its side. Her ear had a small cut, and of course she was a bit panicked, but mostly ok.

My great-great grandfather had been riding on his horse near the carriage, and quickly got his horse up to speed and stopped the runaway carriage.

Of course, over the years I have developed a certain "image" of him in my head. The 1880's own James Bond! To which, I asked my aunt about him. He must have been an amazing man!

She replied that Henry was presented with a gold watch from Queen Victoria, that he promptly went out and sold. He arrived at the house on Christmas with a bag of candy for all 10 children. Cheapest man ever born!

Well, that ruined the Henry in my minds eye!

In the years of documentation in the newspaper about Henry Bristow, he had trained a pair of Moose that were a gift from Edgar Dewdney, the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, to pull a sleigh with a single harness.

He drove them around Rideau Hall as well as up Sussex to Rideau Street with the Governor General in the passenger seat on many occasions. He even drove them right into Rideau Hall at the request of the Governor General, during a party when he wished to show the trained moose off to his guests.

He eventually "retired" and started the first cab company in Ottawa. Of course, cabs were horse and buggies or sleighs back in those days. The cab company was located very close to Parliament Hill.

A meeting of the Cab Proprietors' Protection Association will be held at their rooms, O'Connor street, at 8 o'clock this evening.  
H. BRISTOW, Secretary. N. HELMER, President.

Mr. Bristow reflected on his life at Rideau Hall when he was interviewed for the following Ottawa Journal article from April 7, 1939 (p.15).

### ***Drove Tame Moose Into Rideau Hall***

#### ***Henry Bristow Recalls Unusual Experience as Coachman for Marquis of Lorne***

*Memories of Government House nearly three-score years ago were recalled to Henry Bristow, 84, of 18 Wilton Crescent, Ottawa, by a recent photograph in The Journal, showing an elk harnessed to a sleigh, and said to be the first animal of its kind in the United States ever tamed to harness.*

*In 1881 when he was coachman for the Marquis of Lorne, then Governor General of Canada, Mr. Bristow "broke in" a pair of moose and drove them in single harness around Rideau Hall grounds, and even up Sussex Street as far as Rideau. On occasion he also drove the moose right into Rideau Hall. "United States may be ahead of Canada in many things, but we have them beaten by 58 years when it comes to taming wild animals to harness.*

#### ***Gift to Marquis of Lorne***

*The two moose, one an antlered bull nearly full-grown, and a cow of the same age, were sent to Rideau Hall as a gift to the Marquis of Lorne, by Edgar Dewdney, then Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. At first a little non-plussed by the strange gift, His Excellency turned them over to Mr. Bristow and asked him to try and break them to harness.*

*"I got Mr. Craig to make me a nice set of brown harness for them and a light two-wheel cart, and by degrees managed to break them to single harness. For a while I had quite a time with them but by feeding them and being with them every day, I managed to get them quite tame. I used to feed them hay and grass as much as they wanted and I'd give them a bit of oats and some carrots now and then."*

*"When broken to harness either of the moose would go very well and trot fast but they didn't go together as a team. I drove them around Rockcliffe and New Edinburg, but they got excited easily and I never ventured on Sparks Street. One time the bull-moose, Jack, got frightened near the Edwards mill and made a dash for the water. It was all I could do to hold him."*

### ***Rush for Nearest Water***

*Mrs. Bristow, 81, also had the keenest recollection of the moose. "I never trusted that bull-moose," she said. "When he got excited he'd make a rush for the nearest water, and would have jumped over the bridge as easily as not."*

*Recalling the training of the moose and the interest taken in them by the Marquis of Lorne, Mr. Bristow said:*

*"His Excellency was a great man for a bit of fun. One evening after a dinner party at Government House, when the guests had retired to the drawing room, he sent for me to know if I could bring the bull-moose into the drawing room. I told him that I believed I could. I put the halter on him and brought him up to the door, guiding him by a touch of the knee."*

*"The footman opened the door and in we came. I didn't know exactly how the moose would take it, especially as there were mirrors all around the room, but he behaved very well. He just looked around as if to say, "What are all these people doing here?" I don't think His Excellency ever had any guests who were as surprised as those at that dinner party.*

*The Marquis had the moose brought into Rideau Hall another time when he had a mind-reader there, and there was great fun, with the moose rivalling the mind-reader as an attraction of the evening. When His Excellency's term was finished, the two moose were shipped to London where he presented them to the Zoological Garden."*

### ***Difficult to Tame***

*Known to woodsmen as the most self-willed and intractable of animals, moose are much more difficult to tame or train than reindeer, caribou or red deer. Mr. Bristow had a reason for his success.*

*"I'd been around horses since my boyhood days and knew how to treat them. I fed them well, never came on them suddenly or scared them, took things easy. Kindness, too, has a lot to do with training animals to do what you want. My father was a coachman before me and even before I came to Canada from the Old Country I had driven a great deal, including four-in-hand."*

## Saved Princess

*Mr. Bristow was honoured by Queen Victoria for his courage and presence of mind in saving the Princess Louise (daughter of Queen Victoria) from possible serious injury in a sleigh accident near Rideau Gate in 1880. The covered sleigh with the Princess, Their Excellencies, Lady MacNamara and Sir John McNeill, upset in one of the deep drifts. Mr. Bristow was driving another sleigh in the Royal procession.*

*“When I saw the sleigh upset.” Mr. Bristow said, “I handed my reins to an A.D.C., jumped down, and managed to stop the runaway horses. Her Royal Highness was badly shaken and was conveyed back to Government House in one of the horse-car sleighs. She didn’t forget the incident, and I was rewarded by Queen Victoria for stopping the runaway.*

*“I went back to England in 1882 and when acting coachman to the Royal family on the Isle of Wight, Her Majesty received me and we had a long chat. She offered me the use of one of her cottages in Scotland on account of my wife’s ill-health for three months, but Mrs. Bristow wanted to get back to her native town of Ottawa.*

*“I was lucky when I started a cab business in town, after coming back from England. The biggest proportion of Government House cab business came to me and I employed the best men and the smartest turnouts. But the beginning of the end came in 1908 when the automobile came unto common use.”*

He seemed to have had a wonderful life, from growing up in England, meeting Queen Victoria and coming to Canada with Princess Louise and the Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne. He was a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters, the eldest member of the St George’s Society (at that time) and had been a founding member of the Cab Owners Protection Association.

He helped in the creation of Lansdowne Park, and anything to do with horses, that was his passion.

He got to celebrate his 59<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with his wife, and she died the following year.

Ironically in 2015, when I stopped by the house he and his family lived in, 18 Wilton Crescent, I was prepared to meet and ask the current owner a bunch of questions. I brought photos of the two of them on their lawn, back in the day to prove who I was and that I was legitimately asking family questions. To my surprise, the lady who answered the door knew his name!

I had stated that I wasn’t selling anything, and just wanted to ask her about her house, and showed her the photos. To that she remarked that she was only the second or third owner of this house, and those photos that I had shown her were of Mr. Bristow and his wife.

She grabbed my arm and invited me inside. She toured me around the house and explained that nothing was structurally changed in the house except that she had a bay window installed so she could enjoy the pond in the backyard, and the electrical and plumbing upgraded.

What a thrill to come face to face with my heritage



Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bristow celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary on Saturday at their home, 18 Wilton Crescent. They were at home to many friends who called to express congratulations. The Bishop of Ottawa and Mrs. Robert Jefferson were among the visitors. Buffet refreshments were served.

*Ottawa Journal, January 13, 1941 p.9*

### MRS. HENRY BRISTOW

Mrs. Henry Bristow, a highly respected resident of the Capital, died suddenly this morning at her home, 18 Wilton Crescent. In her 83rd year, she had been a member of this community for nearly three-quarters of a century.

Married to Henry Bristow shortly after he had come to Canada from England, the couple celebrated their 59th anniversary only a week ago last Saturday, on Jan. 11.

She was a native of Belleville, Ont. Prior to 10 years ago she had been active in the work of St. Matthew's church, as well as being a member of the St. George's Society.

Surviving besides her husband are two sons, Charles and Albert, both of Ottawa. There are also nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be from her residence on Monday, to St. Matthew's church for service at 2.30 p.m. Burial will be in Pinecrest cemetery until the spring, thence to Ramsayville cemetery.

*Ottawa Citizen, January 24, 1941 p.21*

# Henry Bristow Dies Suddenly

A well-known Ottawa personality, Henry Bristow, who once stopped the runaway horses of Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, died yesterday morning suddenly at his home, 18 Wilton Crescent. He was in his 95th year.

Henry Bristow came to Canada in 1878 as a coachman in the service of the Marquis of Lorne, then the Governor-General. One day in February, 1880, he was driving along Rideau Street in a sleigh when he noticed a sleigh with runaway horses coming towards him. He dropped the reins, leaped from his sleigh and stopped the runaway team.

The sleigh being pulled by the maddened horses contained the Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria and her husband, the Marquis of Lorne. In recognition of his service, Queen Victoria later presented Mr. Bristow with a gold watch.

Born at Fritton Lake, Norwich, England, Henry Bristow became a coachman for the Marquis of Lorne in that country and came to Canada in 1878 when the Marquis was named Governor-General.

### Keen Horseman

In Ottawa the late Mr. Bristow became known as a keen horseman and was, for many years, a familiar figure at the horse shows in the Ottawa district. He was a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters. He also had the distinction of being the first and the oldest member of St. George's Society in Ottawa.

An Anglican by faith, Mr. Bristow attended St. Matthew's Church. In spite of his advanced years he was hale and hearty almost up to the day of his death. He was married in Ottawa in 1882 to the former Eliza Jane Davis, who predeceased him in 1941.

Surviving are two sons, Charles and Bert, both of Ottawa; two sisters and a brother, all of Ottawa; five grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

The body is resting at Hulse and Playfair, Ltd., 315 McLeod Street. Funeral arrangements are not yet completed.

## Lost Old Ottawa South

By Glenn Clark

This is a series of stories of six lost buildings in Old Ottawa South.

### 1 Hugh Masson's Blacksmith Shop, Riverdale and Windsor Avenue intersection



*Mason's Blacksmith Shop, Riverdale Avenue, 28 October 1898  
Is that Hugh Masson in the picture?*

This is a famous historic photograph of early Old Ottawa South from Library and Archives Canada. But exactly where was this taken? A careful examination of City Directories, land records and fire insurance maps finally reveal the secret.

We see the blacksmith shop on the right, and the house to the left was the parsonage for Billings Bridge/Ottawa South Methodist Church from 1893 until 1921. The houses in the background to the right were owned by John H. Bartlett

(frame house) and the residence of Hugh & Christina Masson (the two-storey house partially obscured by the Masson Shop).

Rather than Mason's Blacksmith Shop, it was actually Hugh Masson's blacksmith shop. We are looking north on Riverdale Avenue, known as Gloucester Road in 1898 (and earlier as New Road and Macadamized Road). The camera is positioned near today's intersection of Riverdale and Windsor Avenues.



The Hugh Masson property was the very first property severed from the Peter Fairbairn farm on November 29, 1865. The property consisted of over 19 acres. Over the years, Mr. Masson sold off portions of this property to Benjamin Stock and a ½ acre lot to John H. Bartlett on September 18, 1891. The Stock property then passed to Albert B. Honeywell on April 15, 1910 who proceeded to subdivide part of the property into building lots on June 15, 1910. Windsor Avenue was created as part of this subdivision .

Hugh & Christina remained in their home until Hugh's death on December 27, 1906. The remaining 1+ acres were sold to James Ballantyne on November 5, 1908 by Hugh's executors, which consisted of wife Christina, and sons-in-law William Ide and Frank Williams (Rideau Gardens).

The house was re-purchased by William Ide on May 13, 1919, who sold a portion to the City of Ottawa on June 30, 1919. Adjacent property owned by Albert B. Honeywell (and previously owned by Hugh Masson) was also sold to the city on June 25, 1920 which became the popular Brighton Beach operated by the Ottawa South Municipal Association starting that summer. The remainder of the Ide property was sold to the city on December 23, 1946, and with the Brighton Beach property became Windsor Park. The old Masson house was demolished some time after the 1946 sale. The blacksmith shop was demolished by no later than 1928.

But who was Hugh Masson? His obituary that appeared in Ottawa Citizen on December 29, 1906 page 3 tells his story.

### **“Veteran Gone**

*Mr. Hugh Masson, Billings' Bridge Succumbs to Paralysis*

*By the death of Mr. Hugh Masson which occurred at his home near Billings' Bridge, the community mourns one of its most popular highly respected and veteran citizens. The late Mr. Masson was most widely and favourably known, not only in the city, but throughout the surrounding country. He was the son of the late Charles Masson and was born in Nairn, Scotland, 77 years ago, near where the famous battle of Culloden of April 16, 1746, was fought. Bonnie Prince Charlie of Scotland, with his*



LATE HUGH MASSON.

*army of loyal Scotchmen, marched on the way to Culloden, over the farm upon which Mr. Masson was born and Mr. Masson, when a boy, played around the mounds under which the heroes of Culloden lie asleep.*

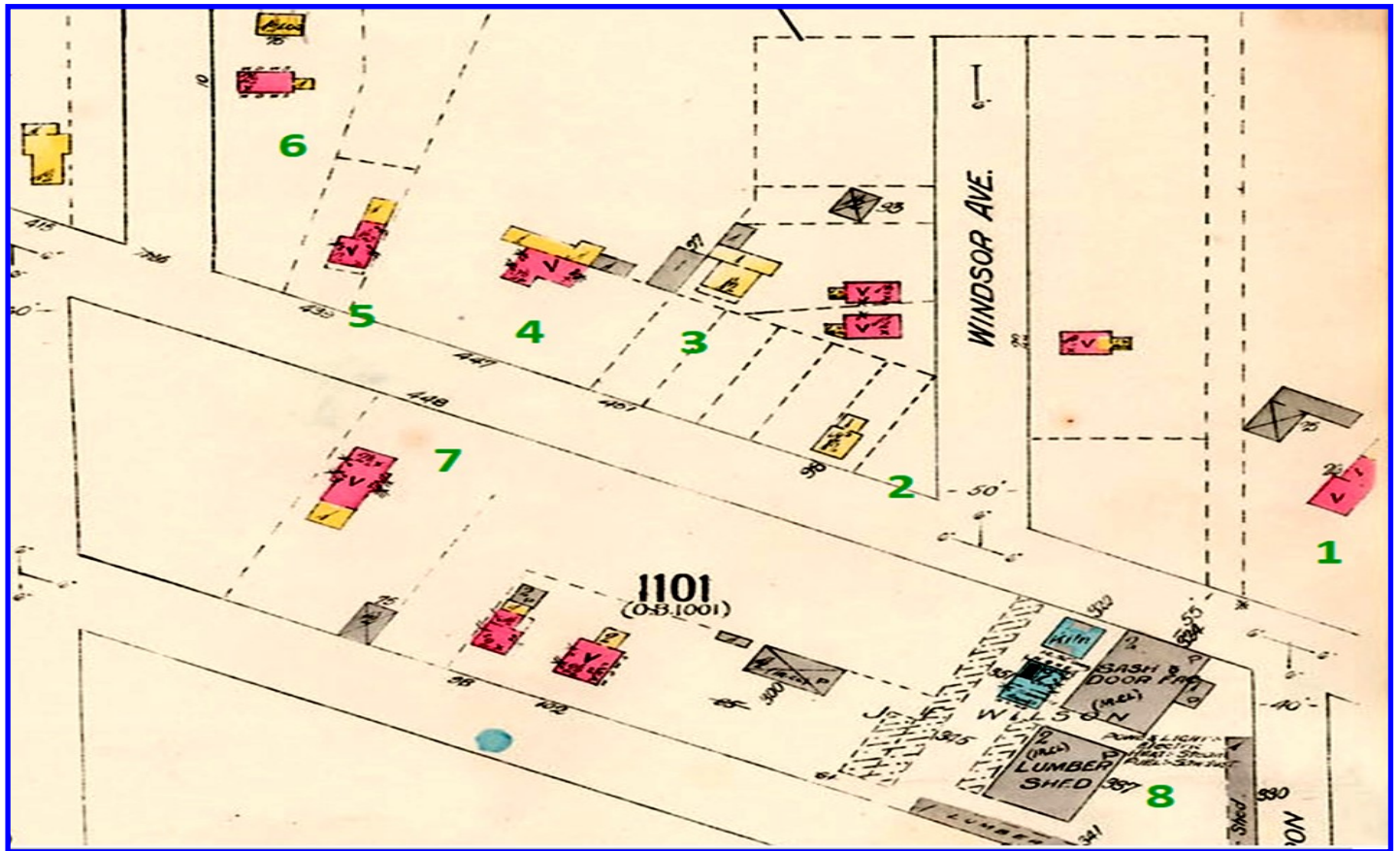
*Mr. Masson came to Canada at an early age and has lived the greater part of his life at Billings' Bridge. Upon arriving in Ottawa, he found employment in a local foundry. He rose rapidly, however, and steadily advanced by shrewd management until at the time of his death he owned considerable property in Rideauville and was one of the most widely known financiers in the community. Mr. Masson*

was a member of the lodge of I.O.G.T. at Billings' and was a strong upholder of the temperance cause all his life. In politics, he was a Liberal and ran for the Ontario legislature in Russell County some years ago. He was defeated, however, by a small majority. He was always a great lover of his native land and always upheld the cause of the land of the thistle.

Just one year ago today, the Citizen published an account of his golden wedding which was celebrated at that time.

The late Mr. Masson was married 51 years ago to Miss Christina Kennedy of Beckwith. His wife survives him along with six daughters, Mrs. Anderson of Goderich, Mrs. F. Williams, Mrs. Ide, Misses Mary, Annie, and Margaret Masson all of whom, with the exception of Mrs. Anderson, reside near Billings' Bridge.

Up to the time of his fatal illness, he was hale and hearty. He was seized with paralysis a few weeks ago and never rallied."



Excerpt from 1912 Insurance Map centred on Riverdale Avenue

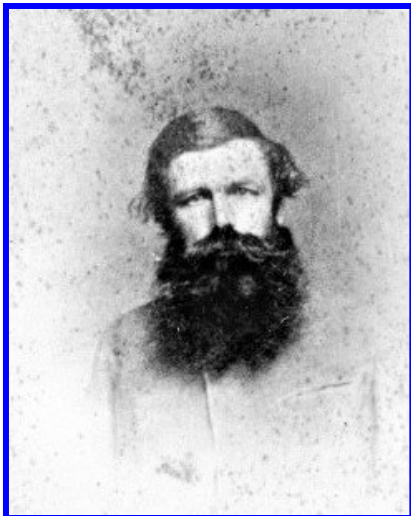
- 1 – Residence of Robert Switzer, market gardener
- 2 – location of blacksmith shop (in 1898 photo)
- 3 – Residence of John H. Bartlett (in 1898 photo)
- 4 – Residence of Hugh & Christina Masson (partially obstructed in 1898 photo)
- 5 – Residence of Edward Ackroyd, market gardener
- 6 – Residence of Benjamin Stock
- 7 – Methodist parsonage (in 1898 photo)
- 8 – Ottawa South Planing Mill (James Edward Wilson) (1910 to 1933)

## 2 The Billings House – 1256 Bank Street/30 Chesley Street (same location)

The property south of Cameron Avenue was part of the Billings Estate as early as 1835. After Braddish Billings II's marriage to Elizabeth Gray Ross (1819-1896) in 1845, a house was built in Old Ottawa South where their first three children (Braddish Billings III (1846), Walter Ross (1848), and Frances (1851)) were born. His family appeared in 1851 census in Nepean along with other Old Ottawa South neighbours. By 1854, Braddish II became a general agent for the Bytown & Prescott railway and his family moved to Prescott, Ontario where they appeared in the 1861 census. Their last daughter, Myra (1856) was likely born in Prescott.

The Nepean property was transferred to Braddish Billings Sr. on November 15, 1853 and was willed back to Braddish Billings II following his father's death in 1864. The Walling Map of 1863 offers no clue of the location of the Billings house, so it is possible that the 1840s pioneer house could have been at a different location from the known location in more recent years.

Soon they returned to Ottawa and the family appeared in the 1867 and 1868 city directories on Stewart Street in Sandy Hill. At the time of his death on September 29, 1871, it is believed that Braddish II was estranged from his wife and children. His death was reported by his brother Samuel. Braddish Billings II was buried in the family Billings Cemetery.



***Braddish Billings II had his residence in Old Ottawa South as early as 1845***

At the time of the 1871 census, Braddish's wife and children were recorded again at the Old Ottawa South locality. Both sons had become architects and had obtained positions in the federal public service.

Braddish Billings III was married to Charlotte Elizabeth Humphrys on March 8, 1876, but the mother and siblings continued to live together possibly in an attached residence until Braddish Billings III's death from cancer on September 16, 1893. They had no children. Braddish III was active in the militia and had attained the rank of Major. He also served in the Montreal Bridge of Garrison Artillery No. 6 Battery during the 1885 North West Rebellion. In 1889, he graduated from the Royal School of Infantry. He also enjoyed collecting fossils and was a member of the Field Naturalists Club. His wife, who lived until January 13, 1940, had been President of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Ottawa now known as the Historical Society of Ottawa.



***Braddish Billings III and wife Charlotte Elizabeth Humphrys***

Following Braddish III's death, the remaining three siblings (Walter Ross, Frances and Myra) remained in the house. None would ever marry. The 1879 Belden Map for Nepean Township confirms the location of the Billings house some distance west of Bank Street on a laneway that later became Chesley Street.

That same map implies that the Billings house was a hotel, but 'Hotel' almost certainly refers to another nearby building at the corner of Riverdale Avenue, a known hotel location.

City directories from 1909 and 1910 give a municipal address of 1256 Bank Street and the 1912 fire insurance map shows a sprawling 1 ½ storey frame house with a nearby 'auto house'. In 1911, most of the property adjacent to the Billings home in the vicinity of the Bank and Chesley Street intersection and to the west was sold by Billings to the Victor Realty Company Limited and was subdivided under plans M-34, M-37 and M-38. Within a few years, this facilitated the construction of new housing on Chesley Street, Harvard and Wendover Avenues, as well as a two-storey apartment building at 1238-1240 Bank Street (now Yardley's Antiques) and a service station at 1242 Bank Street (now Bond's Décor).

Following subdivision, the former laneway officially became Chesley Street. With the new street pattern, the Billings house now faced Chesley on the south side between Harvard and Wendover Avenues. A revised municipal address was assigned, 30 Chesley Street (now 14-16 Chesley Street and a few side street addresses). Walter Ross Billings died on March 1, 1920. His obituary appeared in the Ottawa Citizen the same day.

### **"Prominent Civil Servant Passes**

*W.R. Billings Almost Half Century in Civil Service.*

*Ottawans will learn with keen regret of the passing of Walter Ross Billings, for almost half a century a member of the architect's branch, department of public works, Dominion government, himself one of the pioneer residents of the city and a descendant of one of the very first settlers of this district. He passed away at 2:15 o'clock this morning at his late home, 30 Chesley Street, at the age of 71 years.*

*He was a son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Braddish Billings, Billings' Bridge. Here he spent his early days and obtained his first education. Later he studied under a private tutor at Prescott, and still later studied medicine for three years with the late Sir James Grant. He also attended one year at McGill University but was unable to complete his course owing to illness. At some later period, he resumed his studies and completed his course in architecture. He entered the architects branch more than forty years ago.*

*He was a very kindly man by nature and extremely well liked by all who knew him and who came in contact with him. He was not actively engaged with or a member of many of the charitable organizations in the city, but quietly and unobtrusively he went about assisting*

*the needy and the poor. It was said of him that no person ever in need of assistance was turned away.*

*He was a scientific man also and spent much of his time in the study of nature. He leaves behind possibly one of the rarest collections of books of all subjects that is possible to collect and has one of the finest collections of fossils in the country. He was a believer in sports, in which he took a keen interest and was a great horseman. He spent days roaming about the country, studying the lives of birds and plants and insects. He was a member of the Ottawa Hunt and Motor Club.*

*He is survived by two sisters, the Misses Frances and Mira, both at home. An elder brother Braddish predeceased him many years ago. The funeral will take place Wednesday morning, when the body will be taken to Montreal. Because of his expressed desire, his remains will be cremated."*

Walter's entire estate was turned over to his sister Myra, who in turn, donated his fossil collection to the Canadian Geological Survey. Also mentioned in an Ottawa Citizen, July 17, 1920 news story "Many of his vacations were spent on his luxuriously furnished house boat.", which was described in a sales ad in the Ottawa Citizen on March 14, 1920:

*"House Boat, 65' Long x 17' wide, contains 6 bedrooms, sitting room, 3 dining rooms, pantry, kitchen, 'Bleu' gas stove, bathroom, 3 closets, lighted by Bleu gas. Stationery wash stands. Boat fully equipped excepting linen and silver. No motive power. Price \$1,500. Miss Myra Billings, 30 Chesley St., Ottawa"*

Sisters Frances and Myra remained at the address at the time of the 1921 census. The house was sold on November 19, 1930 to Coltrin Realty Company Limited and was demolished. A 1933 air photograph shows only a foundation remaining.

Sister Frances Catherine Billings passed away on May 7, 1928 at her new residence of 68 Ossington Avenue. Myra Eliza Billings passed away on October 20, 1934 at her new residence of 21 Glen Avenue.

**BUILDING MATERIAL.**

WE are demolishing, large residence at 30 Chesley St., O. S., all kinds 2nd hand lumber, bricks, windows, doors, basins, toilets, sinks, baths, h. w. furnace, coils and radiators, cheap. D. E. MacKenzie. C. 2878 or R. 2844. 1-2-8M

*Ottawa Citizen, October 8, 1930 p.6*

### 3 Riverside House Hotel - Bank Street and Riverdale Avenue Intersection

Between 1865 and 1867, Bank Street was extended from downtown Ottawa to Billings Bridge by the Ottawa and Gloucester Road Company. This new road was macadamized and known as Bank Street Road in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, the 'Gloucester Road' was also macadamized by the same company from Nicholas Street to Billings Bridge. The Gloucester Road is now known in parts as Echo Drive and Riverdale Avenue, which had a direct connection to Nicholas Street before the rail ways were extended to Rideau Street in 1895. Some early names for the Gloucester Road were 'New Road' and 'Macadamized Road'.

1303-1305 Bank Street became an important junction for these two roads. The property south of Cameron Avenue was owned by the Billings family and 1303-1305 Bank Street became the first lot to be severed in 1868. One acre was sold by Braddish Billings II to William Lawson and within a year, it was noted as Lawson's Hotel on October 28, 1869, when a farm auction took place. On November 3, 1869, Lawson was fined for selling liquor without a license.

The hotel was then leased to John Graham in 1870 and his father, Andrew Graham was noted as the innkeeper in the 1871 census. In 1872, William Lawson sold the property to William Powley who in turn leased it to James Tallon and Frank Thatcher. Mr. Powley was a known hotel proprietor during this era, including the St. James Hotel, Metcalfe Street and the Albion Hotel, at the corner of Nicholas Street and Daly Avenue.

In 1874, James Tallon is noted as the hotel keeper and then in 1875-1876, it was known as George Hitchcock's Junction Hotel. It then became Hugh Alexander's Rideau Cottage Hotel in 1877-1878 and this was followed by John Templeton as the proprietor with the same hotel name in 1879-1880. The 1879 Belden map for Nepean Township shows a hotel at this location although, it appears to point to another close by building, which was the Billings family residence. The Bank Street and Riverdale Avenue intersection was the correct location of the hotel.

**RIDEAU COTTAGE HOTEL**  
**Corner of Bank and Nicholas Streets,**  
**BILLINGS' BRIDGE.**

**T**HE above Hotel has recently been fitted up in first-class style, and has ample accommodation for Tourists, Travellers and pleasure-seekers. Boating, fishing and shooting in close proximity to the house. This Hotel is convenient to the city, being distant from it only two miles. Terms reasonable, either by the day or week. Stages to and from the house four times each day.  
**H. ALEXANDER.**

*Ottawa Citizen, August 17, 1877 p.3*

Michael Hastings then became the innkeeper from 1881 to 1886 and acquired the property in 1883. He is noted in both city directories and the 1881 census. The hotel was lost in a fire in March 1886. The property was then acquired by Michael McCarthy in 1887, who rebuilt the hotel and is noted as hotel keeper in 1888-1889. During 1884 and 1890, Samuel Davidson is noted as the hotel keeper in city directories.

**A WOULD-BE INCENDIARY.—Mr. Hastings, a hotel-keeper of Billings' Bridge, last night brought in to the Police Station a man who had threatened to set fire to Hastings' property. The man was drunk at the time.**

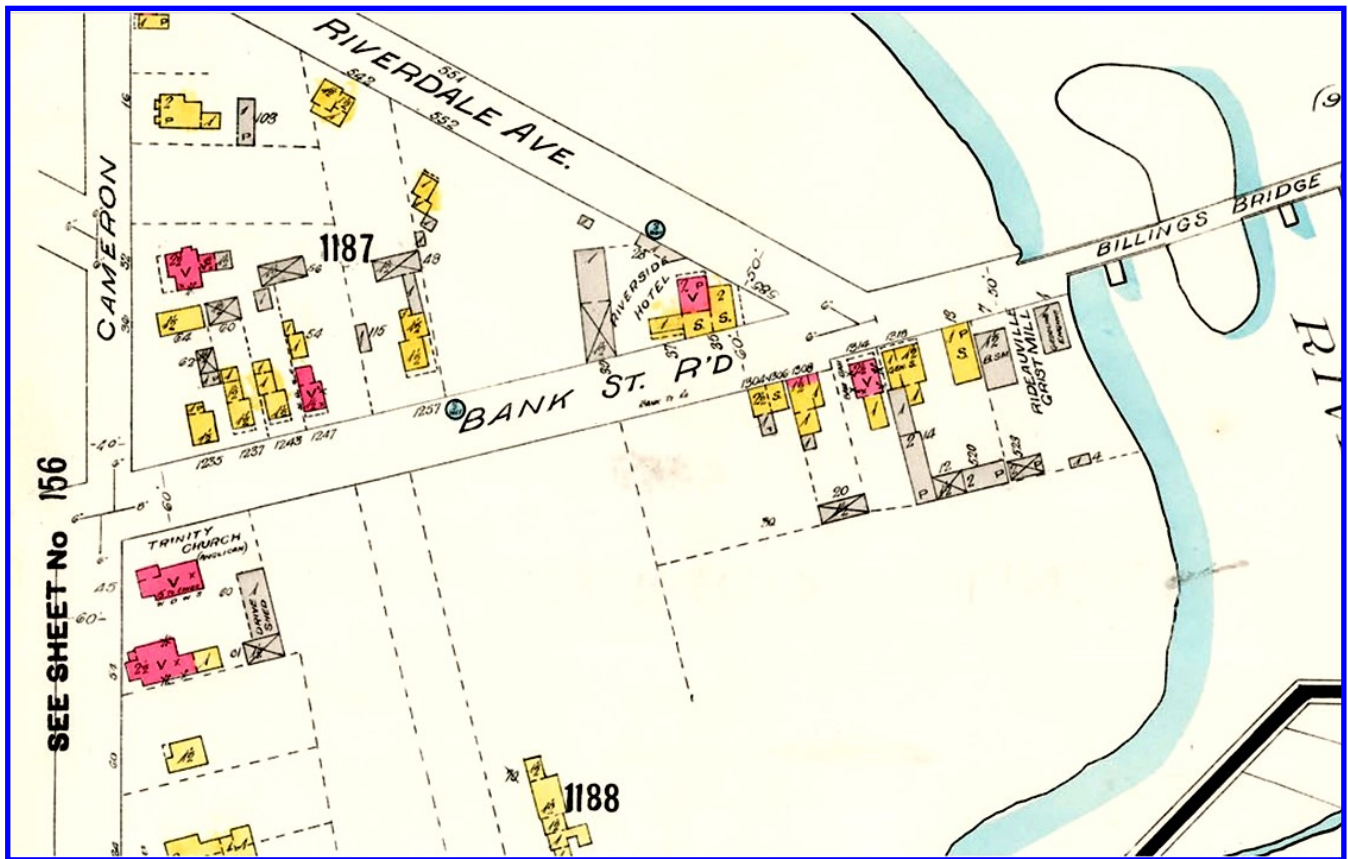
*Ottawa Citizen, January 22, 1886 p.4*

**It is not now likely that Mr. Hastings will rebuild his hotel, recently burned at Billings' Bridge.**

*Ottawa Journal, March 31, 1886 p.4*

The property was then sold to James P. Ryan in 1891, who expanded the hotel shortly thereafter. It remained in his ownership until after his death in 1923. During the Ryan era, it was known as Riverside House (Hotel). It continued to function as a hotel until about 1909 after which it was a combination of retail stores and apartments.

In 1910, Mr. Ryan operated a shoe store and grocery. The following year the stores were vacant and in 1914, it became Mullins & Dowler butchers. From 1915 through 1920 the shops were again vacant. James P. Ryan then operated a cigar store (1303-1305 Bank Street) in 1920 to 1922.



**1912 Fire Insurance shows the Riverside Hotel at the Bank Street and Riverdale Avenue intersection and the Billings residence on Chesley Street (next to “1188”)**

In September 1922, the property was described as 2 shops, 5 apartments, a barn boarding 20 horses, a driving shed, an ice house, and garage with 4 lots facing Bank Street and another 4 lots facing Riverdale Avenue. The 1912 insurance map shows that the hotel was a two storey brick building with two fronting stores being two-storey wood frame buildings..

James Patrick Ryan died on March 6, 1923 in his 61<sup>st</sup> year and it was noted that he had operated the Riverside Hotel for 30 years. He was born on July 28, 1861 in Pakenham, Ontario.

Son, Charles Alfred Ryan took over his father’s tobacco shop and confectionery until 1931. Charles died suddenly on January 10, 1938 at a rooming house at 511 Gladstone Avenue at the age of 41 after years of unemployment. He never married and had served in the First World War but did not go overseas. The second shop was vacant in 1924 and became the John H. Todd barber shop from 1926 to 1933.

In November 1933, shop fixtures were be-

ing sold and it was vacant in 1934. In May 1934, a building permit for a \$2,000 service station was issued to Hammill Fitzsimmons and the old hotel and shops were demolished.

The service station was known for many years as Riverdale Garage and opened on September 29, 1934. Elizabeth Fitzsimmons sold the garage to Supertest Petroleum Corporation on July 16, 1936.

The Riverdale Filling Station Opens Saturday

**FREE** A Complete Grease Job With  
Every Purchase of Five Gallons  
of Gasoline — Two Days.

**SATURDAY and SUNDAY**

Drive in and Fill Up Your Tank — Greasing May Be Done at Any  
Time During the Following Ten Days — Absolutely Free.

The Riverdale Filling Station, Cor. of Bank and Riverdale Ave.  
Ottawa South.

*Ottawa Citizen, September 28, 1934 p.12*



*1305 Bank Street at Riverdale Avenue circa mid 1950s*

*This is the former site of the Riverside House Hotel*

#### **4 The Ottawa South Planing Mill, Riverdale Avenue and Cameron Avenue intersection**

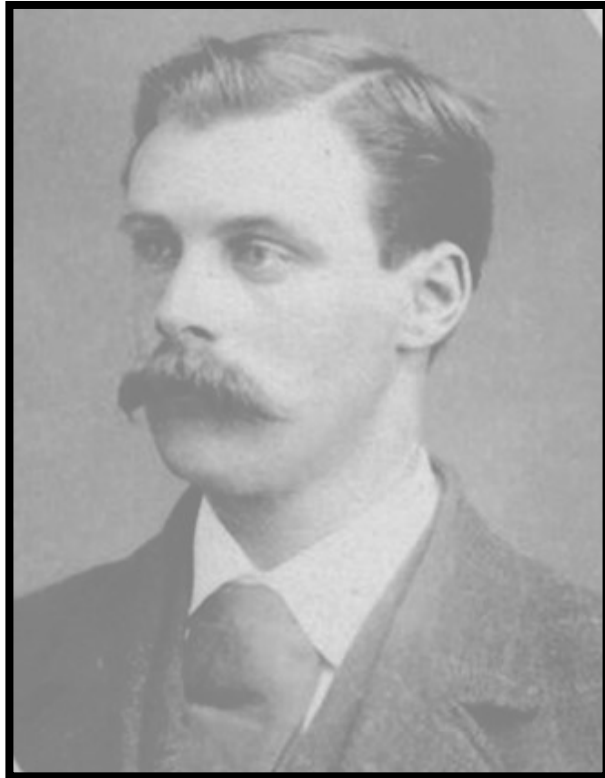
A large building can be seen on early air photographs up to 1933 at the northwest corner of Cameron and Riverdale Avenues. The building was demolished but foundations were still evident in a 1938 air photograph. This was the Ottawa South Planing Mill owned by James E. Wilson & Sons Limited.

James Edward Wilson acquired the property from Oakland Heights subdivision owner, Cassius C. Ray in 1910. On September 29, 1910, Mr. Wilson submitted his application to Ottawa Board of Control to build a sawmill on the Riverdale Avenue site<sup>1</sup>. A building permit was issued a short time later<sup>2</sup>. The mill operated from 1910 until 1933 when the company sold the property.

The site included a sash and door factory, kiln and a number of lumber sheds. According to a

September 6, 1919 Ottawa Citizen advertisement, Mr. Wilson had been in the house building business for 37 years. He had constructed buildings at 1091 and 1147 Bank Street as well as several other houses in Old Ottawa South and the Glebe. The business was in bankruptcy due to mortgage foreclosure in 1935 and all properties were for sale by tender<sup>3</sup>. The mill site was later redeveloped with housing on both Bellwood and Riverdale Avenues.

James Edward Wilson was born on July 26, 1861, a native of Thorganby, Lincolnshire, England and came to Canada in the Ramsayville area with his family around 1873. He married Miriam Lucinda Evans (1862-1930) whose family was originally from Billings Bridge. His residence was first on Sunnyside Avenue in Rideauville (west of Bank Street) and after 1910, adjacent to the Planing Mill at 87 Bellwood Avenue. James died on November 29, 1928 and is buried at Ramsayville Cemetery.



**James Edward Wilson**

His obituary appeared in the Ottawa Journal on November 29, 1928 which read:

***“Lumber Merchant James E. Wilson Died Early Today***

***One of Best Known Business Men of Ottawa South Was Ill But a Few Hours***

*James Edward Wilson, president of James E. Wilson and Sons, Limited, lumber merchants, died suddenly early this morning at his home, 87 Bellwood Avenue. Mr. Wilson, who was 67 years of age was head of one of the best-known business firms in Ottawa South.*

*Mr. Wilson had been feeling unwell the last few days, but nothing was thought of it. He was at his office as usual yesterday morning. He went to bed during the afternoon and death occurred about 1:30 a.m. today.*

***Born in England***

*Born at Thorganby, Lincolnshire, England on July 26, 1861, he came to Canada 54 years ago. For a few years after his arrival in this country, he*

*lived at Ramsayville, where his father, James Wilson had a farm. When about 20 years of age, after the death of his father, Mr. Wilson came to the city to live.*

*He began as a carpenter in which trade, he soon became an expert. His business acumen soon enabled him to start in business and for more than 30 years, he conducted a building and contracting business.*

*In 1910, he opened a lumber and planing mill on Riverdale Avenue at Cameron Avenue. Until 1920, Mr. Wilson operated this under his own name. The business was incorporated in 1921 under the name of James E. Wilson and Sons, Limited, with which was associated his three sons.*

***Highly Successful***

*From its inception, Mr. Wilson’s undertaking proved successful. Under his own management and that of his sons, it thrived well and became widely known in all sections of the city in addition to Ottawa South.*

*A member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Sunnyside Avenue, Mr. Wilson took a deep and active interest in all the activities of the congregation. His honesty and trustworthiness were bywords with all who knew him, and he was held in the greatest of esteem and respect by all personal and business acquaintances.*

*Surviving him are his wife, formerly Miriam L. Evans, of Billings Bridge: three sons, Wilbert, Arthur and Edward, of Ottawa, two daughters, Mrs. H.P. Morgan, Providence R.I. and Miss Florence Wilson, at home: three brothers, John A., Frank and Frederick A., all of Ottawa. Another brother, Joseph D. died in 1923.”*

1. Ottawa Journal, September 30, 1910 p.3
2. Ottawa Journal, October 8, 1910 p.7
3. Ottawa Citizen, June 11, 1933, p.7



# BUILD of WOOD

FOR

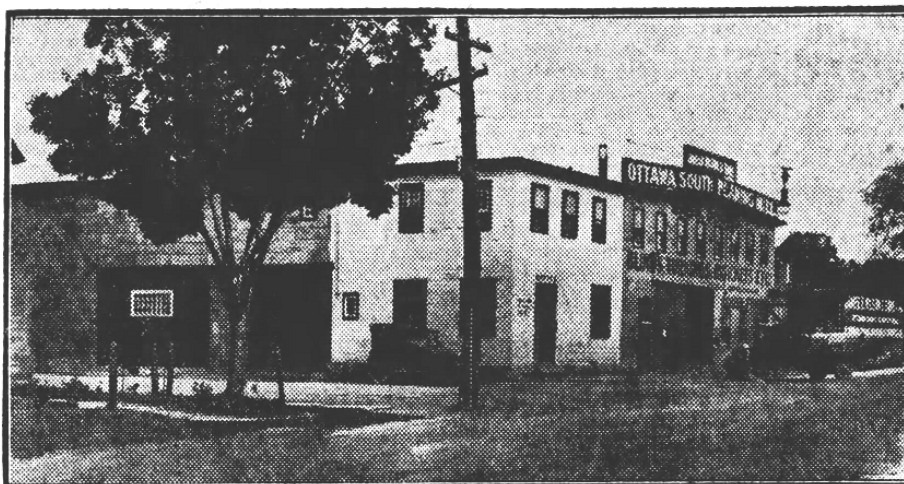
## Posterity and Prosperity

EVERY TIME A NEW STRUCTURE IS ERECTED IT MAKES ANOTHER STEP IN THE PROGRESS OF OTTAWA'S ADVANCEMENT

# James E. Wilson & Sons

Limited

OTTAWA SOUTH PLANING MILLS



VIEW OF YARDS AND PLANING MILL, 506 RIVERDALE AVE.

W

W

# LUMBER

**ROUGH AND DRESSED,  
General Factory Work, Sash  
Doors, Blinds, Etc.**

JAMES E. WILSON, having had forty-five years' experience in the lumber and building business, established the firm of JAMES E. WILSON, LIMITED, in 1910. The Plant is located on 10 lots at the corner of Riverdale and Cameron Streets, Ottawa. The lumber yards consisting of 5½ acres, are located on the Sussex Street Branch of the C. P. R. We claim we know how and can supply our customers' needs, to their satisfaction.

**Call up Carling 1971.**

**THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY ROOM WILL  
 BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
 BY APPOINTMENT ONLY FOR NOW.  
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 (ENTER FROM AT LEITRIM ROAD, NEXT TO FIRE STATION)  
 FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT  
 Glenn Clark at [english@gloucesterhistory.com](mailto:english@gloucesterhistory.com) or  
 call 613-822-2076 and leave a message.**

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**Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester**  
 (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31.)

**Please note that we added a new category of long term (10 year) membership and discontinuing life memberships. Current life members will continue to be honoured. Details are below.**

Annual Membership/ - \$20.00 for one year.....      10 year Membership \$150.00 .....

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ PROV \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

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