



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

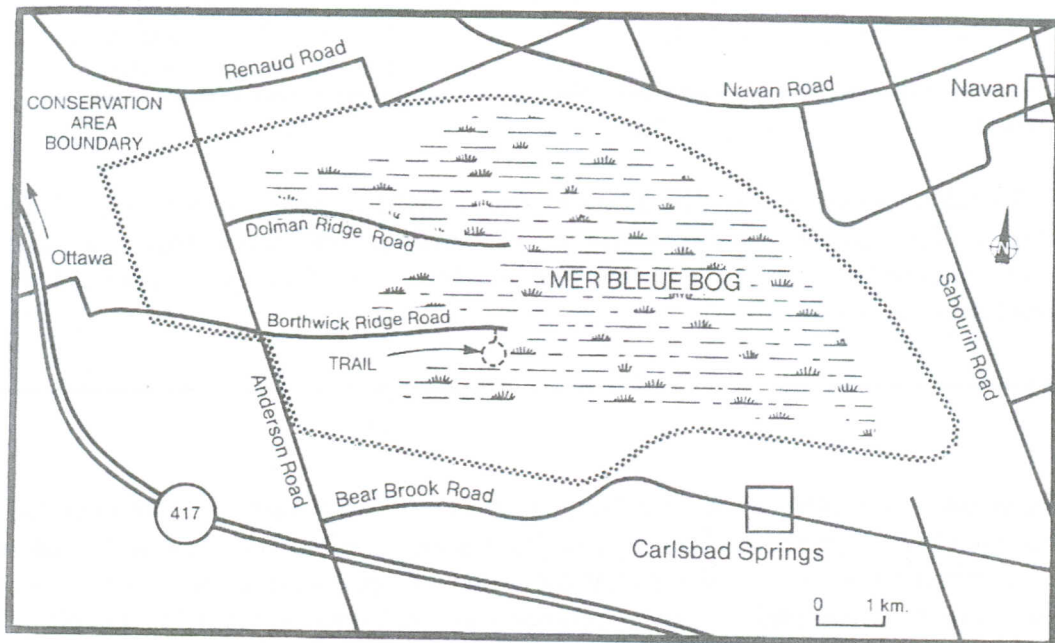
**GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

www.gloucesterhistory.com

VOLUME 9 NO.3

Fall 2008

28) Mer Bleue Conservation Area



Mer Bleue Conservation Area

Editor's Comments.....	Joan Scott	2
Two Early Reeves of Gloucester Township: Honoré and Alexandre Robillard.....	Robert Serré	3
Mer Bleue Conservation Area		5
Publications Available From the Society.....		7
New Publication.....		9
Membership Form.....		10

Cover Photo:

The Mer Bleue Conservation Area covers almost 5000 hectares of natural lands and is considered to be of provincial or national significance ecologically. It is perhaps the most important natural area in the City of Ottawa. See article on page 5 for more information on this rare and beautiful location.

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 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.

Editor's Comments

The summer is usually a quiet time for the Gloucester Historical Society, although we do have some people making inquiries regarding relatives or friends who used to live in Gloucester. It is always interesting to hear their stories and help them in any way we can.

New signs were prepared by Bob Kemp so that we can be more visible when a function is being held as some people who are unfamiliar with the whereabouts of the society may find it difficult to locate.

On September 28, 2008, Robert Serré spoke at the Vanier Museopark in Vanier about the pioneer families of Janeville (now known as Vanier). He also introduced his new book *Pioneer Families of Janeville*.

Board meetings are open to the public. Non-board members are welcome to attend these meetings which are usually held at 9:30 am on the third Saturday of each month , in the Society's office.

If you would like more information on any of the GHS activities, research activities or genealogical studies, please contact Mary Boyd or phone the Gloucester Historical Society Office at 613-822-2076 and your call will be returned. As well, if you are interested in volunteering with the Society or making a donation, we would like to hear from you!

Joan Scott

Two Early Reeves of Gloucester Township: Honoré and Alexandre Robillard

by Robert Serré

Alexandre and Honoré, also known as Alexander and Henry, were two sons of Antoine Robillard, who married Émilie Lauriot in Terrebonne near Montreal on 4 October 1819. Antoine was a stonecutter, and he was hired to work on the Rideau Canal. Construction of the canal began in 1826, and after it was opened in 1832, Antoine decided to settle in Bytown. He brought Émilie and their first children from Montreal, and eventually he became a prominent contractor and property owner in Lower Town. His residence there was a frame house on the south side of Clarence street, between Sussex and Cumberland.

Antoine Robillard's name first appeared in the assessment rolls of Gloucester Township in 1839 (lot 23), and when the 1861 Census was taken, he was living at the Quarries, in a stone house, with Émilie and three of their children. Antoine retired from active business soon after that.

Antoine Robillard died in January 1884, and Émilie died in December of 1893, but their sons Honoré and Alexandre continued the family's operations at the Gloucester Quarries. Later on, Honoré's son Bruno took over the business, and three of Bruno's sons (Matthew, John and Henry) maintained the family tradition at the Quarries well into the twentieth century.

Three sons of Antoine and Émilie became prominent citizens in their own right. Adolphe, born in Lower Canada around 1836, married Sophia Cross in April 1868 in Ottawa's Notre Dame church. Sophia was the daughter of Andrew Cross and Elizabeth



Photo: Honoré Robillard (Library and Archives Canada, C26338)

Goodwin. Adolphe was a well-known physician in Ottawa.

Honoré Robillard was born in January 1835 in Saint-Eustache. He attended St. Joseph's College, later the University of Ottawa, in Bytown. At the age of 17, he left Canada to catch a glimpse of the outside world, working in gold mines in Australia, and visiting other countries before returning to Canada in 1858. As Rose explains in the 1886 edition of *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography*, Honoré "purchased one of the farms belonging to his father, on which was a lime stone quarry, and this he commenced to operate (...) as the Gloucester Quarry and Lime Works." In February 1860, he married Philomène Barrette, the daughter of Pierre Barrette and Flavie Robin, in Ottawa's Notre Dame church, and they had at least nine

children, named Hortense, Albertine, Rodrigue, Marie-Louise, Cécilia, Bruno, Antoinette, Corinne and Blanche. Honoré entered politics as a Conservative, becoming Reeve of Gloucester Township in 1873. He was elected Member of Parliament for the provincial riding of Russell in 1883, and Member of Parliament for the federal riding of Ottawa in 1887 and again in 1891. His wife Philomène was only

39 when she died in February 1879, and that same year Honoré married Gléphire, daughter of Jean-Baptiste Richer. There were no children from this second marriage. Honoré was enumerated at the Quarries in 1861, 1871 and 1881, but then he went to live in Ottawa, on Daly avenue in Sandy Hill. He died on 13 June 1914, and was buried in Ottawa's Notre-Dame cemetery.

Alexandre Robillard was born in Gloucester Township in 1843, and joined his older brother at the Quarries as a Contractor and Lime & Stone Merchant. He married Sophie (Elmire) Lafleur, the daughter of Joseph Lafleur and Félicité Labonté, in August 1866 at St. Joseph's church in Ottawa. They had at least seven children, named Alexandre, Rosina, Eugène, Ubald, Albert, Horace and Philippe. Sophie was in her early forties when she died in 1885, and Alexandre married Clara Caron. They do not appear to have had children. Alexandre entered politics as a Liberal, and was Deputy Reeve of Gloucester Township for five years, then Reeve in 1881-1883. He ran against his brother Honoré in the 1883 Ontario elections, and lost, but he was later elected MPP for Russell in 1886, 1890 and 1894. Alexandre Robillard died on 2 September 1907 in Russell, Ontario, and the funeral took place in Embrun, as was reported in the following day's edition of *The Ottawa Evening Journal*.

Bibliography

Serré, Robert. Pioneer families of the Gloucester Quarries in Eastern Ontario.

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



Photo credit: Alexandre Robillard
(City of Ottawa Archives, R. Serré collection, CA21292)

Three boys are bragging about their fathers. The first boy says "My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a poem, they give him \$50;00."

The second boy says: "That's nothing. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a song, they give him \$100.00."

The third boy says, "I got you both beat. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a sermon, and it takes eight people to collect all the money!"

Mer Bleue Conservation Area

The Mer Bleue bog is the focal point of natural lands in this area. It is a huge peat-land of almost 5000 hectares, 3100 of which are owned by the National Capital Commission and managed as conservation lands. When the land in the Capital was recovering from the weight of thousands of years (and hundreds of meters) of glacial ice, various drainage channels formed, changed and disappeared. One such channel formed a large depression east of Ottawa [now part of Ottawa]. When it ceased to function about 9000 years ago, a huge wetland was left on poorly drained clay and it became the Mer Bleue. This immense bog is one of the largest in south Ontario and is perhaps the most important natural area in the Municipality of Ottawa. Ecologically it is considered to be of provincial or national significance and has been the object of biological study for over a century.

Features:

The most striking natural feature of the area is the bog mat itself, a "sea" of deep, saturated peat overtopped by open heath and stunted to moderate-sized Black Spruce and Tamarack forest. The mat is home to a variety of plants, some rare, some common and almost all exhibiting unusual characteristics enabling them to survive in this demanding environment. Some literally eat insects, some have features of desert plants and others rarely rely on seeds for reproduction. These include the Pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), some rare orchids, several species of cotton-grass (*Eriophorum* spp.) and a variety of low heath shrubs. This habitat is ecologically a piece of northern Ontario wetland and has not changed a great deal in thousands of years. It is home for a variety of exceptional animals too, including nationally rare Spotted

Turtle and Fletcher's Dragonfly, an insect known from only a handful of sites worldwide. The richest part of the bog is the Islands - small sand outcrops (old sand bars) in the middle of the bog. They are covered by poplar and birch and are found where the bog mat is youngest, wettest and richest. A moat surrounds the mat. For millennia, Beaver have flooded the streams flowing out of the bog, creating a marshy/swampy wetland. The lagg, as it is technically known, is a marvellous place for turtles and frogs, as well as common swamp birds such as Alder Flycatcher, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Yellowthroat and Common Grackle.

A large cat-tail area, Ramsayville Marsh, has developed along Anderson Road by the Canadian National Railway track and contains an assortment of typical marsh birds. It is becoming very ingrown, however, and now supports fewer species of waterfowl than it did some years ago. Without the influence of fire or an equivalent natural disturbance, Ramsayville Marsh will become less important for wildlife as the cat-tail becomes completely dominant. The upland areas of the Mer Bleue Conservation Area are of considerable biological interest too. The Ridges, as they are known, are huge sand bars and islands that formed in the post-glacial drainage channel. They now support extensive hardwood, coniferous and mixed forests as well as large regenerating pasture areas. Some of the Ridge plants are relicts of the time when these were scrubby knolls in a cold, boreal landscape. Old Red Maple forests on the lower slopes of the Ridges contain lush fern undergrowth as well as provincially rare plants such as the Large Purplefringed Orchid (*Platanthera grandiflora*). These upland habitats combine with the wetland environment to offer the Capital a unique complex of natural diversity.

Visiting Mer Bleu:

The Ridges are easily reached along major routes like Doilman, Borthwick and Anderson Roads. They can be explored on the network of walking and ski trails maintained by the National Capital Commission. Toilet facilities are available at several of these trail heads and parking is ample. A private vehicle is necessary for getting to the trails. The bog mat is another question, however, because of the lagg surrounding it and due to concern for its protection. The short answer is DON'T go onto it. There is a self-guiding boardwalk trail off the Borthwick Ridge that will take visitors out onto the bog mat without causing damage to the delicate vegetation ... or the visitors! Ramsayville Marsh can be observed best along the drainage channels crossing Anderson Road; be cautious on the narrow road should when pulling off here.

Equipment and Considerations:

Regular walking shoes should suffice for most of the trails, although wet and rough spots can be found on many. Mosquitoes can be very bad in early summer and deer flies are murder on hot days in mid-summer (wear a hat). Binoculars are a great help in scanning across the bog and ridges. A camera would be used frequently too. DO NOT venture out on the bog alone. It is dirty, very hard going and potentially quite dangerous, to say nothing of damaging to the mat. Contact the Conservation Section of the National Capital Commission to see what arrangements can be made for a small group trip (if any). The area around the islands may still have unexploded bombs from the practice bombing that was conducted there several decades ago by the air force, although such duds (the bombs, that is) are likely buried deeply in the peat.

Seasonal Events & Suggestions:

Spring -

- Cottongrass in abundant flower on the bog mat.
- wildflowers on Dolman Ridge (west) trails.
- marsh birds at Ramsayville Marsh

Summer -

- rich flora and breeding birds of Red Maple forests along the Ridges.
- bog mat vegetation along the boardwalk trail on Borthwick Ridge (east end).
- Unusual turtles (Blanding's and Spotted) in the lag pools.
- Non-native plants of regenerating old pastures on the Ridges.
- Rich flora of young Ridge hardwoods.

Fall -

- migrating marshbirds, including thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles, in Ramsayville Marsh.
- Changing vegetation colour in scrub forest and young hardwoods on the Ridges.

Winter -

- Mammal tracks throughout the bog, including those of Otter, Marten, Coyote and Red Squirrel.
- skiing trip out to the islands from the Ridges.
- Winter birds in coniferous woods along the bog margin.

Reference:

You should contact the National Capital Commission (Visitor Services Section) at 613-827-2020 for further information.

Source:

Brunton, Daniel, *Nature and Natural Areas in Canada's Capital, The Ottawa Citizen*, 1988.

Publications Available From the Gloucester Historical Society: (Postage, if mailed, in brackets)

Blackburn—Glen Ogilvie—Centennial History 1887-1967 **5.00**
Compiled and Edited by Mrs. Anna Elliott (3.00)

An informative story history of that area of Gloucester.

Bowesville: A Place to Remember **20.00**
By Grace Johnston (12.00)

Tells the story of Bowesville and area up until the time
Bowesville disappeared when expropriated to build the airport.

***Famillies pionnieres des Carrieres de Gloucester dans l'Est de
l'Ontario*** **10.00**
(3.00)

By Robert Serré

Famillies pionnieres de Cyrville (Canton de Gloucester) **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)

Gloucester Memories **5.00**
By Mel Rowat (3.00)

Some memories of Gloucester Township.

Gloucester Roots **20.00**
Compiled and edited by Lois Kemp (5.00)

Articles that appeared in the "Roots" column of the
Gloucester Leader.

Memories of the Lock Stations **5.00**
Compiled and Edited by Grace Johnston (3.00)

Stories of Long Island, Black Rapids, Hog's Back and
Hartwell's Locks, by Mel Rowat, Camilla (Balcombe)
Forbes, Aletha (Dale) Davidson and Palmer Slack.

***Milk/Cream Producers—Distributors in
Gloucester 1892-1975*** **15.00**
(5.00)

Compiled and edited by Grace Johnston
This book is about the dairy industry in Gloucester.

Publications (continued)

- Pioneer Families of Cyrville (Gloucester Township)*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
About the pioneer families of Cyrville.
- Pioneer Families of Glen Ogilvie (Gloucester Township)*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
About the early families of Glen Ogilvie.
- Pioneer Families of the Gloucester Quarries*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
A history of the Gloucester Quarries and the pioneer families that settled in that area.
- Pioneer Families of Hurdman's Bridge (Gloucester Township)*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
A brief history of the area and the pioneer families that settled there.
- Pioneer Families of Janeville (Gloucester Township)*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
A brief history of the area and the pioneer families that settled there.
- Pioneer Families of New Edinburgh, Volume One: 1830-1870*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
About the history and pioneer families of the New Edinburgh area.
- Pioneer Families of Rockcliffe Annex and Manor Park in Gloucester Township*** **10.00**
By Robert Serré (3.00)
A brief history of the area and the pioneer families that settled there.

Publications (continued)

The Story of the First English Church of Gloucester Township

50.00
(20.00)

By Glenn Clark

The history of St. James Anglican Church, Leitrim,
150 years in God's hands - 1853-2003.

1879 Belden Map of Gloucester Township

10.00
(5.00)

From 1879 Belden Atlas of Carleton County

The map shows who owned each lot in 1879 as well as the location of roads, churches, schools and interesting features of the township during that early time.

Note: Copies of publications may be ordered through: Robert Serré, Secretary of the GHS, 1057 Riviera Drive, Ottawa K1K 0N7, e-mail: bob.rosealine@gmail.com. A shipping charge as shown for each publication will be added to mail orders.

NEW PUBLICATION

In July 2008, the Gloucester Historical Society (GHS) published its latest book, entitled **Pioneer Families of Janeville (Gloucester Township)**. Founded in 1873, Janeville later joined Clarkstown to form Eastview, which eventually was renamed Vanier, and is now part of Ottawa. This 47-page book contains a first chapter on the geographical location of the community, as well as a brief history of the village. A second chapter provides detailed biographical and genealogical information about 56 pioneer families which lived in the area of Janeville between the late 1820s and the early 1880s. Also included in this book are a map of the early village, a bibliography and an index of names.

Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do...write to these men? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mail-men could look for them while they deliver the mail? Or, better yet, why not just arrest them while they are taking their pictures!

The author, Robert Serré, is a retired translator who joined the Gloucester Historical Society in March of 2004. Since then, he has published books on the pioneer families of the Gloucester Quarries, Glen Ogilvie, Cyrville, New Edinburgh, Hurdman's Bridge and Manor Park. His next project will focus on St. Joseph (Orleans).

The price of this new publication is \$10.00 (mail orders \$13.00; outside Canada in US \$). Contact: Robert Serré, GHS Publications, 1057 Riviera Drive, Ottawa ON K1K 0N7; e-mail: bob.rosealine@gmail.com (tel. 613-749-0607).

An elderly woman died last month. Having never married, she requested no male pallbearers. In her handwritten instructions for her memorial service, she wrote, "They wouldn't take me out while I was alive, I don't want them to take me out when I'm dead."

A police recruit was asked during the exam, "What would you do if you had to arrest your own mother?" He answered, "Call for backup."

Gloucester Historical Society - Phone/Fax 613 822-2076**Board of Directors:**

President: Mary Boyd
Treasurer: Graham Ritchie
Recording Secretary: Robert Serré

Directors: Glenn Clark
Bob Kemp
Jean-Marc Jossinet
Ed Kirk
Aline Mageau
Shirley McCooeye
Mary Patterson
Joan Scott

Gloucester Museum & Archives

Collections Officer/Curator: Olga Zeale
Education Officer: Anik Despres

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. THE COST IS ONLY \$15.00 PER YEAR OR \$100.00 FOR A LIFE MEMBERSHIP!

----- cut -----

Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester

Membership/Adhésion 2008—\$15.00 for one year..... \$100.00 for life membership.....

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ PROV: _____ POSTAL CODE: _____

Mailing Address: Gloucester Historical Society

4550B Bank Street,

Gloucester, Ontario

K1T 3W6

Tel: 613-822-2076