



# *Historic Gloucester*

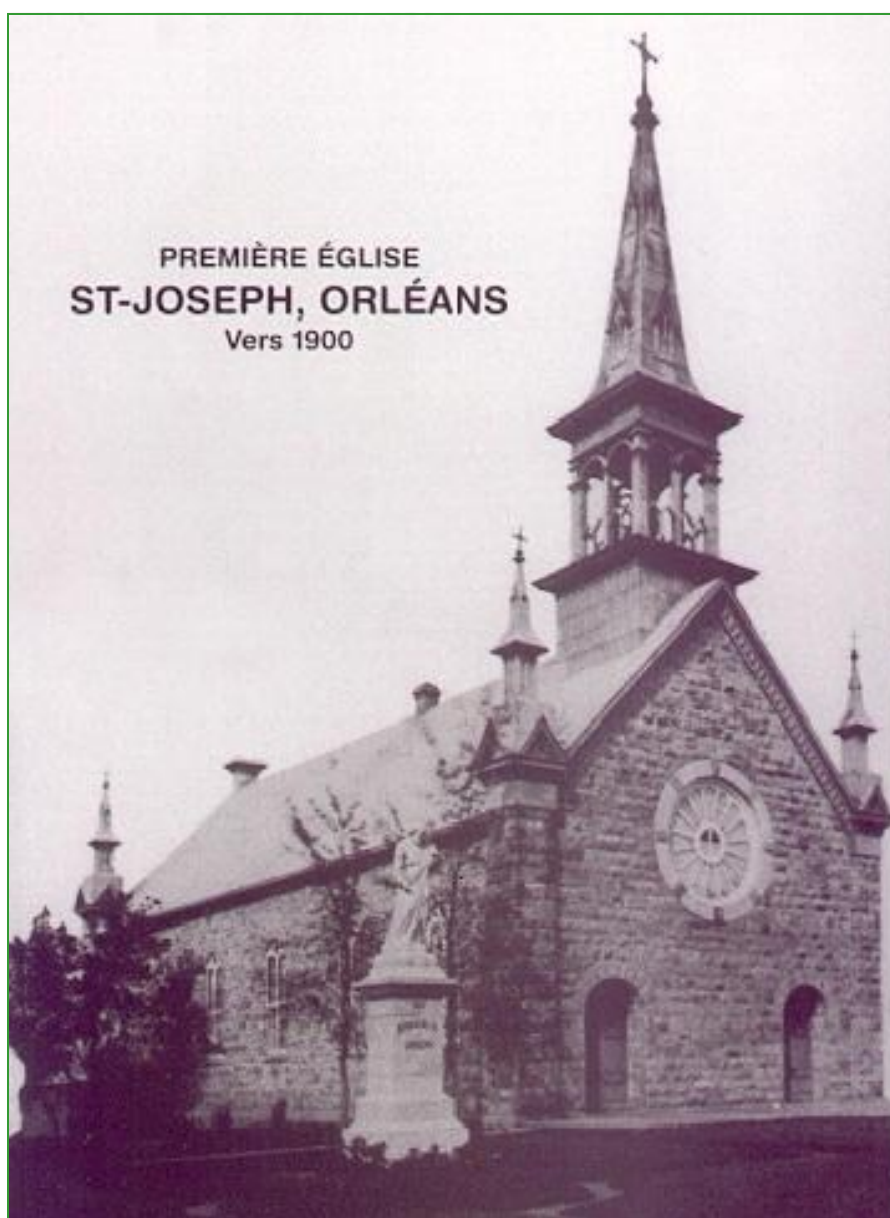
Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

[www.gloucesterhistory.com](http://www.gloucesterhistory.com)

VOLUME 15, NO. 2

Summer 2014



## Contents

From the President's Desk.....	Glenn Clark	3
The History of Orléans Talk by Louis Patry.....	Joan Scott	4
Some Streets in the Alta Vista Vicinity.....	Dr. J. David Roger	8
Membership Form.....		10

THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE  
THAT ITS HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
EACH THURSDAY FROM 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.  
BETWEEN JUNE 5 AND AUGUST 28, 2014,  
OR BY APPOINTMENT

LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Robert Serré at 613-749-0607 or [bob.rosealine@gmail.com](mailto:bob.rosealine@gmail.com)

### Cover Photo:

*This is a photo of the Church of St. Joseph d'Orléans. This was the first stone church as it appeared about 1900. Construction of this church began in 1871 and was replaced in 1922 a new, larger church was opened to meet the growing needs of this parish.*

*Photo from the St. Joseph d'Orléans Parish website: <http://www.stjosephorleans.ca/>.*

**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.*

## President's Report

By Glenn Clark

After what seemed to be an endless winter, summer is quickly arriving and with the delayed spring, also has come a bumper crop of mosquitoes.

Our spring program has been a great success. Our annual meeting speaker Louis Patry drew a full room of guests at the Orléans Public Library in April and we had about 75 visitors during Doors Open this past weekend. My Jane's Walk had modest but enthusiastic attendance as result of less than ideal weather.

Please consider visiting the Grace Johnston History room any Thursday (10 am to 3 pm) through the summer until the end of August or say hello to us on Colonel By Day next to the Bytown Museum.

We are also excited that a new book on the History of Ramsayville School and the Top Generation Club will be released on June 28<sup>th</sup>. A big thank you to our Treasurer, Laurel Sherrer, who wrote the book.

Enjoy a wonderful summer.

### Board of Directors 2014-2015

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\*Indicates date when this person is up for re-election to Board of Directors.

*'Be sure to check out our website at  
**[www.gloucesterhistory.com](http://www.gloucesterhistory.com)**  
for a complete list of publications available from the GHS,  
as well as information on various historical events, an historical timeline, and  
links to other sites of interest to historical and genealogical interest.*

## **The History of Orléans Talk by Louis Patry**

By Joan Scott

Following our Annual General Meeting on April 13, 2014, those present enjoyed a very interesting and informative talk by Louis Patry on the history of Orléans.

Louis Patry is the Vice-president of SFOPHO—Société franco-ontarienne du patri-moine et de l'histoire d'Orléans. As a resident of Orléans since 1978, Louis has developed a great interest in its history and heritage and is very knowledgeable about its founding fathers.

Over the years there has been much discussion about the origin of the name Orléans. The consensus seems to be that the name was chosen by Jean Théodore Besserer, the first postmaster of Orléans, in 1860. Besserer was born on the Ile d'Orléans in Quebec which took its name from the city of Orléans in France - famous for Jeanne d'Arc after whom one of our main streets is named.

### **First Settlers**

The first settlers of Orléans were mainly francophones, but Anglophones such as the Kennys and the McNeelys were also pioneers here. In 1880, the parish had 43 anglophone families and 1312 francophone families. Six of the better known francophones are mentioned here.

### **François Dupuis**

François Dupuis, a veteran of the War of 1812, arrived in the 1830s. He is considered by many to be the founder of Orléans. He built a log cabin where many Catholic missionaries would stop, and later donated eight acres of land to the Bishop of Bytown for the establishment of a new parish community - St. Joseph d'Orléans - in 1860.

In recognition of the significant role played by Francois in founding Orleans, a new

recreation centre in the Avalon community has been named in his honour. As well, the Mary Scott Park in the northwestern part of Orléans, was named after François' wife.

From 1950, until she died in 1983, Eva Dupuis, a descent of François and Mary, lived in a house without water and electricity on St. Joseph Boulevard. After her death the house was moved to the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum.

### **Louis-Théodore Besserer**

Louis-Théodore Besserer, a notary, was known as the "Father of Sandy Hill" but he also bought acreage in the Orléans area in 1831, close to the Ottawa River. Eventually he and his wife owned 600 acres which became known as "Besserer's Grove" and the dock as "Besserer's Landing."

A 65-room hotel called "Jubilee House" was built around 1850s/1860s and later renamed the "Hiawatha Park Hotel". Boatloads of tourists, departing from the Rideau Canal Locks, would come to spend an afternoon at the park or enjoy moonlight cruises on the Ottawa River. In 1918 the Hiawatha Park Hotel was still operating with the adjacent land offering amusements such as a dance hall and ferris wheels. The site is near today's Saint-Louis Residence.

The Saint-Louis Residence was opened by the Grey Nuns in 1965 as a long-term facility. In 2011 construction began on Bruyere Village with independent and assisted living units. One of the buildings is called "Place Besserer Place."

An interesting bit of trivia about the Besserers is that Jean-Theodore Besserer, son of Louis Besserer, had a daughter Eugenie Besserer, who went to Hollywood, became an actress, and played in 174 silent movies and the 1927 version of "The Jazz Singer" with Al Jolson, which was the start of the talking movies.

**Luc Major**

Luc Major was a labourer by trade and worked on the construction of Ottawa's Notre Dame Cathedral. About 1856 he, his wife and their eight children moved to Orléans where he established a tavern.

One of Luc's descents, Dr. Emile Major, practiced medicine for 47 years, mostly in Orléans and surrounding area. He was involved in his community in many ways, earning him the title of "Citizen of the Year" in 1963. He died in 1972 but some of his descendants still live in Orléans and there is a park named in his honour on Bilberry Drive.

**Joseph Vézina**

Joseph Vézina came to Orléans in 1837 and eventually purchased 400 acres of land. When he died four years later, his wife converted her house into a tavern in order to provide for her family of eight children. A fifth generation of Vézinas still lives in Orléans today. In 1978 a street was named for him but the name was misspelled as "Viseneau." A park is to be opened this year in the Avalon community bearing Joseph's name, at the suggestion of SFOPHO.

**Jean-Baptiste Duford**

A blacksmith, Jean-Baptiste Duford, came to Orléans around 1845. He and his son built a house a few years later and ran a vegetable and dairy farm which continued to be carried on by their descendants until 1957. Today the Place d'Orléans Shopping Centre and the Shenkman Arts Centre are situated on this property. The original house was moved to Cumberland Township Heritage Museum, but a seventh generation of Dufords continues to live in Orléans today. In 1963 a street was named for the Duford family.

**Joseph Laflamme**

Joseph Laflamme was a carpenter who owned approximately 500 acres in the Orléans area, purchased in 1824. He owned a sawmill

mill where Brigil is currently building Petrie's Landing Phase II. The park to be opened there in the near future will be named in Joseph's honour.

**Early Anglophones in Orléans****Joe Jamieson**

Joe Jamieson was an Irishman who came to the area in 1870. Joe Jamieson Park in Orléans, which is situated on land where his farm once was, was named after him.

**John Kenny**

Another Irishman, John Kenny, was an early pioneer. From 1920 to 1975, the Kenny family prospered in dairy production and eventually in beef cattle.

**Isaac Whitney Taylor**

Isaac Whitney Taylor settled here in 1854. The lands which he cleared and worked beside Taylor Creek near Petrie Island and the Fallingbrook area are a tribute to his hard work on his farm near the creek.

**John Tompkins**

In 1873 John Tompkins purchased a lot and began farming. Today this property is known as Tompkins Avenue.

**McNeeley Family**

Starting in 1918, the McNeeley family was best known for their Golden Valley Farm on St. Joseph Blvd, which included the Golden Valley Riding Academy from 1946 to 1984. Vestiges of the Academy still remain.

**Churches**

Until the 1970s St. Joseph d'Orléans Church was the only one in Orléans. Today there are many English Catholic, and Protestant Churches as well as another French Church, in Orléans.

**St. Joseph d'Orléans Cemetery**

Originally parishioners were buried on the property of the early pioneer François

Dupuis, near the first mission in 1849. Later, the cemetery was moved to the north side of Notre-Dame Street between Belcourt and St. Jean Streets. The land for the current cemetery, still in use today, was purchased by the Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa in 1893.

### **Toll Gate at Green's Creek**

In 1850 a wagon road was constructed between Bytown and Orléans. A private company took over road maintenance and set up toll gates at several locations including Green's Creek. Cost was 10 to 20 cents to ride across the creek on a makeshift ferry. In 1920 the province of Ontario abolished all tolls.

### **Police Village and Evolution of Governance**

In 1922 a police village was authorized for Orléans, consisting of a council of three volunteers elected to preserve peace, health and public safety. In 1960 a request to incorporate the village was rejected by the Ontario Municipal Affairs Commission and it remained a police village until 1974 when it became annexed to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton. Control of development was lost and the village was divided between the Township of Gloucester and the Township of Cumberland with the dividing line being Champlain Street. Gloucester became a city in 1981 but Orléans became part city and part township. In 2001, Orléans was amalgamated into the City of Ottawa.

### **Hotels**

#### **Orléans Hotel**

The first hotels/taverns were built or managed by the Majors, Besserers or Vézinas, as mentioned earlier. In 1900 Antoine Leduc opened the Orléans Hotel on St. Joseph Blvd. It was situated almost directly in front of the church and was frequently renovated until it was destroyed by fire in 1982. A senior's residence "Jardin Royal Garden" opened on the same site.

#### **Le Normandie Motel**

La Normandie Motel was built in 1962 at the corner of Champlain Street and the Queens-

sway. A restaurant, gas station, reception hall and a bowling alley were added over the years and it was very popular. In 1985 it was expropriated and the OC Transpo Park and Ride now occupies this space.

### **D'Youville Farm**

The Grey Nuns of the Cross (Sisters of Charity of Ottawa) operated the d'Youville Farm from 1885 to 1970. It originally occupied 1,025 acres extending from St. Joseph Blvd to the river. In 1970, housing developer Costain purchased 1,000 acres of this property for the Convent Glen neighbourhood and Grey Nuns Drive is also named for this religious congregation.

### **Orléans Train Station**

The Canadian Northern Railway, the CNoR, constructed a rail line between Ottawa and Orléans in 1909. The station was located near where the Park & Ride is at Place d'Orléans Shopping Centre. The line closed in 1939 at which time the station was demolished. In 1945 the Province of Ontario built the new Highway 17 (now Highway 174) over the abandoned CN rail line.

### **Family Owned Stores**

Until the 1960s and 1970s, many businesses in Orléans were family owned. One of the major ones was the "Montpetit General Store" on St. Joseph Blvd. which was operated by three generations of the Montpetit family. One other noteworthy store was "Lacroix the Source for Sports" with André Lacroix still being in business on St. Joseph Blvd. after 42 years.

### **Schools**

There was little formal public education in Orléans prior to 1890 when the first Catholic Separate School was started by the Grey Nuns and named Académie St. Joseph, on St. Joseph Blvd. It closed in 1939 and was replaced by école St. Joseph in a modern building. This closed in 1969 and McDonald's now is situated on this site. The first English language separate

school opened by Irish Catholics in 1895 was demolished in 1956.

In 1969 an intermediary school called Léo D. Côté opened and in 2003 it was converted to an elementary school and renamed Saint Joseph d'Orléans. In 1972 Garneau Secondary School opened as the first secondary school in Orléans and today there are more than 40 schools in Orléans.

### Orléans Today

Mr. Patry then went on to tell about Orléans today. He elaborated on the many facilities available, the electoral wards, population, major buildings, recreation complexes, cultural centres, health facilities, financial institutions, major builders, heritage buildings and roundabouts. He touched on the 150th anniversary of Orléans, major festive events - Santa Clause Parade of Lights, Soap Box Derby, Caravibe - and mentioned local newspapers. Mr Patry also touched on the controversy of the spelling Orléans and the ruling of the Geographic Names Board that the word should be spelled with an acute accent in both French and in English.

### Tragedies/Major Events

Louis Patry gave an interesting glimpse into some of the tragedies and major events which have affected Orléans. Here is a brief recap.

### May 1956 Crash

The Villa Saint-Louis convent for about 90 sisters of the Grey Nuns of Charity, was built close to the Ottawa River in 1954. Two years later, on May 15, 1956, a CF-100 RCAF fighter aircraft fell 30,000 feet crashing into the Villa at about 700 miles an hour. Fuel and ammunition aboard the jet exploded and shook the entire village of Orléans. The building burst into flames and 15 people died including 11 nuns and the two pilots. The exact cause of the accident was never established.

### Sinkholes

In September 2012, a car plunged head first into a hole after the collapse of a portion of Highway 174 close to the Jeanne d'Arc Blvd exit. The incident left the major road closed for two weeks, diverting commuters and causing major delays. In October 2013, another large sinkhole was created on St. Joseph Blvd when a water main burst. Luckily, in both cases, no one was seriously injured.

### Tobogganing Death

A young girl named Laurette Besserer, a descendent of Louis-Theodore Besserer, while tobogganing down the hill in front of the d'Youville farm, hit a tree and died of her injuries. This was in January 1929.

Louis Patry also commented on some interesting stories of Orléans such as the use of drones to drive away geese at Petrie Island; Waldo, the 14 foot tall snowman built each winter for the past four years by a resident on Toulouse Crescent; and the Christmas decorations on Tafy Lane each year.

At the end of Mr. Patry's talk he showed a 1960 Historical Capsules Slide Show based on a brochure of 32 historical capsules called "Orléans 1950-1960" produced by SFOPHO. Photos in this brochure will be reproduced on plaques to be installed along St. Joseph Blvd.

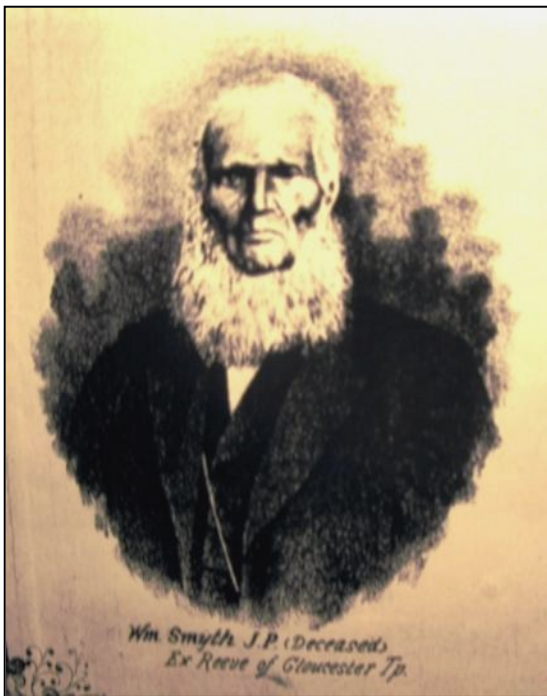
After his presentation, Louis graciously answered many questions. Everyone present enjoyed this very interesting and enlightening peek at the past in Orléans.

*A little girl became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"*

## SOME STREETS IN THE ALTA VISTA VICINITY

By Dr. J. David Roger

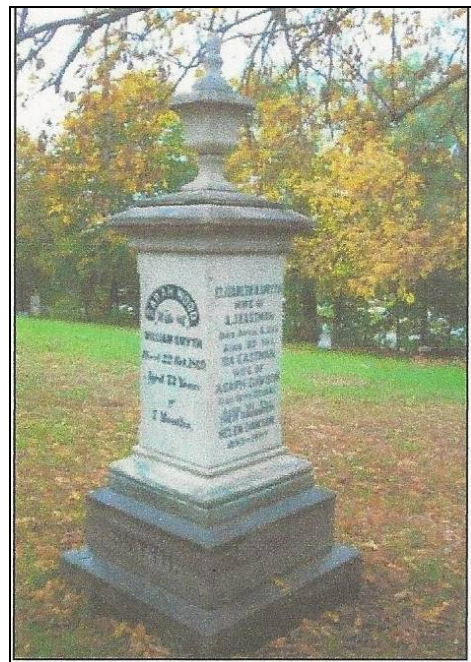
Street names are of various sources. Some are named for very prominent people, local residents, places elsewhere, descriptive or fanciful names. Five streets in the Alta Vista area are named for members of my family, so I can provide background of who they were or how this came about.



**Smyth Road** was named for **Lt. Col. Wm. Smyth** (1794-1877), until the 1830s spelled Smith. It was probably the South boundary of the Smyth farm, although about 1856 he owned 540 acres plus a town lot so he may have owned on both sides of the road.

He and his wife Sarah Wood came to the Junction Gore in 1821, when because she was daughter of U.E. Loyalists they were granted land in part of the District of Dalhousie which became Township of Gloucester. He farmed in Gloucester; lumbered along the

Rideau; was Coroner and Justice of the Peace; one of the Arbitrators appointed by the Imperial Government to adjudicate what was owing to landowners affected by the building of the Rideau Canal; first Reeve, and for many years Treasurer of the Township of Gloucester. He and his wife Sarah and some descendants are buried in the Wood Cemetery on Bank Street South.



**Roger Road** was named for **Alexander Roger** (1882-1977), great-grandson of Wm. Smyth. It crosses Alta Vista two blocks south of Smyth. It was named by his friends Dr. Barnhart &/or Rod Billings when they opened the Alta Vista area. He was Land Surveyor, Engineer, President of the Ottawa Children's Aid Society, Reeve of Gloucester, then Alderman in Ottawa, President of Beechwood Cemetery for many years. As Canadian Government Representative at the New York World's Fair, he received the King and Queen at the Canadian Pavilion when they visited the Fair in 1939.



*Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Roger*

**Caton Street** was formerly the front drive of the home of Alexander Roger. He named it in memory of a son-in-law, **Major Michael Orr Caton M.C.**, (1920-1957), husband of daughter **Elizabeth** (1924-1961). He was a WW2 Major in the British Tank Corps. The M.C. was awarded for his action when his tank was knocked out, and he organized his crew on foot and they prevented the retreating enemy from demolishing a bridge. He and Elizabeth met when after the war she was in charge of a British Intelligence Unit in Hamburg, and he was back in Germany with the Imperial War Graves Commission.



*Michael Orr Caton & Elizabeth Constance (Roger) Caton*

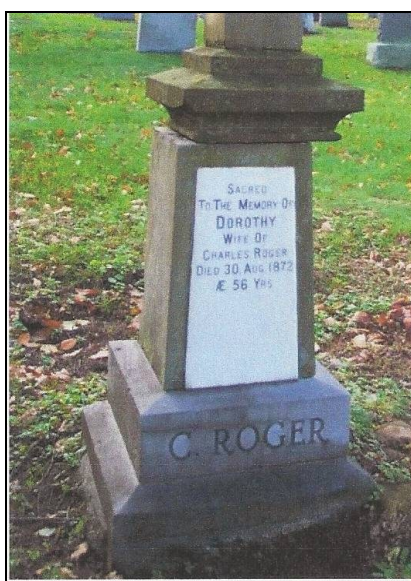
**Thorne Avenue**, connecting two parts of Thessaly Circle, was named for **James Thorne B.A.** (1864-1950) and his wife **Katherine (MacFarlane) Thorne** (1862-1942), parents of Mrs. Alexander Roger. He was Principal of Glashan Street School. When he retired in 1911, a newspaper article was headed 'About the Best School Principal Ottawa Has Had'.



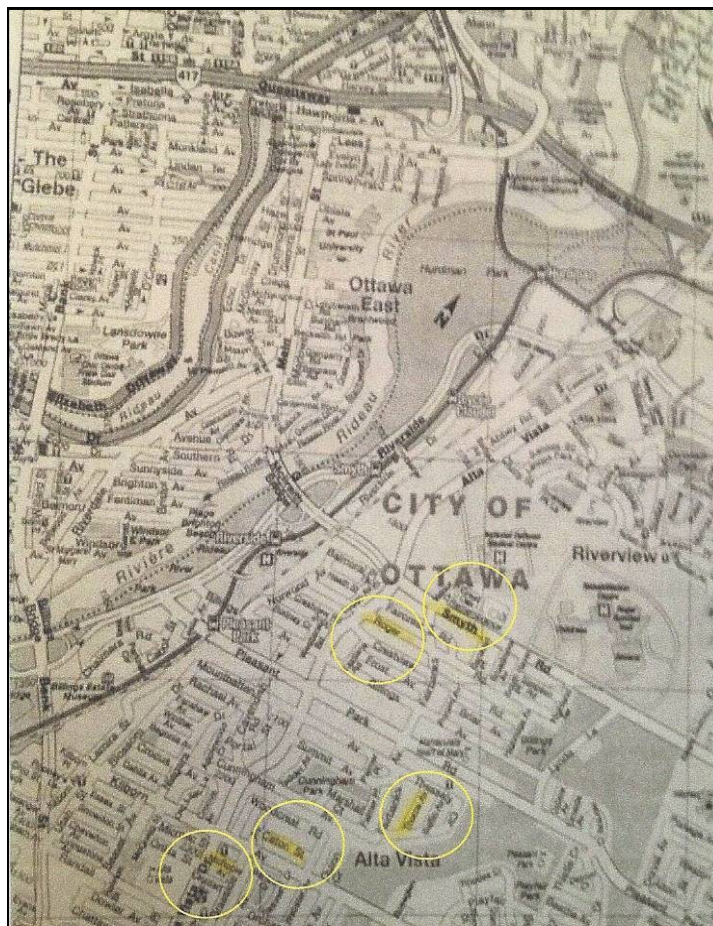
*James Thorne & Katherine (McFarlane) Thorne*

**McRobie Street** crosses Alta Vista first street South of Kilborn. It is on former property of Wm. J C Roger, and is named for the family of **Dorothy (McRobie) Roger** (1816-1872) grandmother of Wm. and Alexander Roger.

**Probable:** **Sheffield Road** may have been named for descendants of **Elisha Sheffield** and **Mary Polly (Wright) Sheffield** (1778-?), great-grandparents of Alexander Roger. Elisha was a mill wright who came to Hull from the US with Philemon Wright. Mary Polly was granddaughter of Thomas Wright, brother to Philemon Wright.



*Roger/McRobie Gravestone,  
Aylmer Cemetery, Aylmer, Quebec*



*Area Where Streets Located in Alta Vista*

**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.** (Membership year runs from April 1st to March 31st)

**Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester**

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

NAME:\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:\_\_\_\_\_

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

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