



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

www.gloucesterhistory.com



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Winter 2015



An Old Snow Plow Plowing a New Alta Vista Drive

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THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE
THAT ITS HISTORY ROOM WILL NOT BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
DURING THE WINTER MONTHS, BUT
IS STILL OPEN BY APPOINTMENT

LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Cover Photo:

The cover photo shows an old snowplow clearing the fairly new Alta Vista Drive, which was begun in 1939 and finally completed in 1947. See story on page 4.

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

In this edition of Historic Gloucester, we present the history of Alta Vista Drive and why it was built. Although it has long been associated with the City of Ottawa, it is truly a Gloucester story as it was completed before the area was annexed in 1950. We also continue the listing of residents of nearby Rideau Park from 1948. In a future newsletter, we will provide a similar list for the Village of Billings Bridge.

We again remember the centennial of World War I with a new commemorative post card and an updated listing of war veterans. We welcome suggestions of additional veterans for our Virtual War Memorial, which appears on our website www.gloucesterhistory.com. Copies of the post card are available from our office, or at any event in which we participate or if you purchase a book from our website. If you have any photographs from World War I with a Gloucester connection, we would love to hear from you. Another commemorative post card is planned for 2016.

We are now planning our celebration for Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017. We will be embarking in an essay contest with our schools on Gloucester history. We look forward to the creativity of our young people. The best essays will be published in Historic Gloucester in 2017.

I wish to extend our best wishes to all our readers for a wonderful Christmas and holiday season and all the best in 2016.

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where you will find a complete list of
Gloucester Historical Society Publications
which may be purchased by PayPal and shipped
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at our office by arrangement.

How Alta Vista Drive Began

By Glenn Clark

Alta Vista Drive is a familiar street to most Ottawa residents. It passes through an upper middle class neighbourhood that offers a good quality of life. It has become a major commuter route, not always ideal for those who live along it. But the history of the road made this inevitable.

It is hard to believe that it is not one of the city's historic streets. Its history does not date back to pioneer times or the 19th century, but it does go back far enough to be part of Gloucester Township history when the area was still almost entirely rural. It was built for a number of reasons and started at an unlikely time, at the height of the Great Depression. It provided a measure of hope for the future and ultimately it opened up much of the southeast part of Ottawa for suburban development following World War II.

The front parts of Lots 16, 17 and 18 of the Junction Gore, Gloucester Township were for many decades part of the Billings Estate that was bounded by Kilborn Avenue on the south and Smyth Road on the north. Prior to 1950, Smyth Road was frequently referred to as Smith Road and occasionally as John Smith Road. Modern pronunciation sadly denies the history of the road and the family that it honours. It memorializes John Smyth, early benefactor of Trinity Anglican Church, and his pioneer father Colonel William Smyth whose farm was in Lot 15 Junction Gore, on the north side of Smyth Road. William's wife was Sarah Wood, who was from a prominent loyalist family, well known in Cornwall (the City of Cornwall Museum is in the former Wood homestead) and previously from New York and New Jersey. William and Sarah are buried in Wood's Cemetery on Bank Street. Smith was the original family name but was changed to Smyth in the 19th century for reasons lost in time. Similarly, with the influx of newcomers in the 1950s and as the Smyth family faded from memory, the 'Smythe' pronunciation became prevalent.

The plan for a road began as part of a 2,000 acre subdivision scheme with the major proponent being Roger Billings. The subdivision needed a road access and a route running north off of Metcalfe Road (now Bank Street) was suggested. A bylaw was passed at the Gloucester council meeting on May 3, 1937 to permit the construction of a road

across Rideau Park as a beginning of this project. This was to be a zoned community and eventually to be taken over by the City of Ottawa [*Ottawa Journal*, May 4, 1937 page 12].

At a Gloucester Township meeting on November 15, 1937, it was referred to as the '100 foot road' and would initially cross Lots 16, 17 and 18. It was expected that the owners would be eager to donate their land for the road in the exchange for profits derived from selling lots [*Ottawa Journal*, November 16, 1937 page 22].

A plan was prepared by Norman B. MacRostie and presented by a committee to Gloucester council at their April 3, 1939 meeting. The plan recommended that a 100 foot right of way with a 50 foot road be acquired as soon as possible. The plan was extended southward to Heron Road and would serve the Rideau Park and Alta Vista subdivisions [*Ottawa Journal*, April 7, 1939 page 3]. The latter was a failed subdivision originally registered in 1913 (Plan 365) with the lots subsequently acquired by Gloucester Township for tax arrears.

At the July 3, 1939 council meeting, township engineer Norman B. MacRostie was authorized to 'fix the grade' along the proposed road between Smith Road and Kilborn Avenue [*Ottawa Journal*, July 4, 1939 page 13]. Construction had already commenced by the time of the July 17th council meeting and township engineer MacRostie was authorized to make a plan to continue westward to the Alta Vista subdivision. It was noted that Gloucester was undergoing a 'mini-boom' on accessible lots and this would open up more township owned lots [*Ottawa Journal*, July 18, 1939 page 17].



Construction of New Houses
 Construction of New Houses

At a September 3, 1940 council meeting, authorization was given to acquire land across Lot 19 Junction Gore to extend the road at least to Randall Avenue (originally named Alpine Avenue) [*Ottawa Journal*, September 4, 1940 page 11]. By this time, the '100 foot road' had become the '100 foot highway' which suggested a grander plan, and it is believed that it was to become an alternate route from the south into downtown Ottawa via Hurdman's Bridge. This would have bypassed Bank Street congestion. This idea ended with the Greber Plan that proposed other bypass routes.

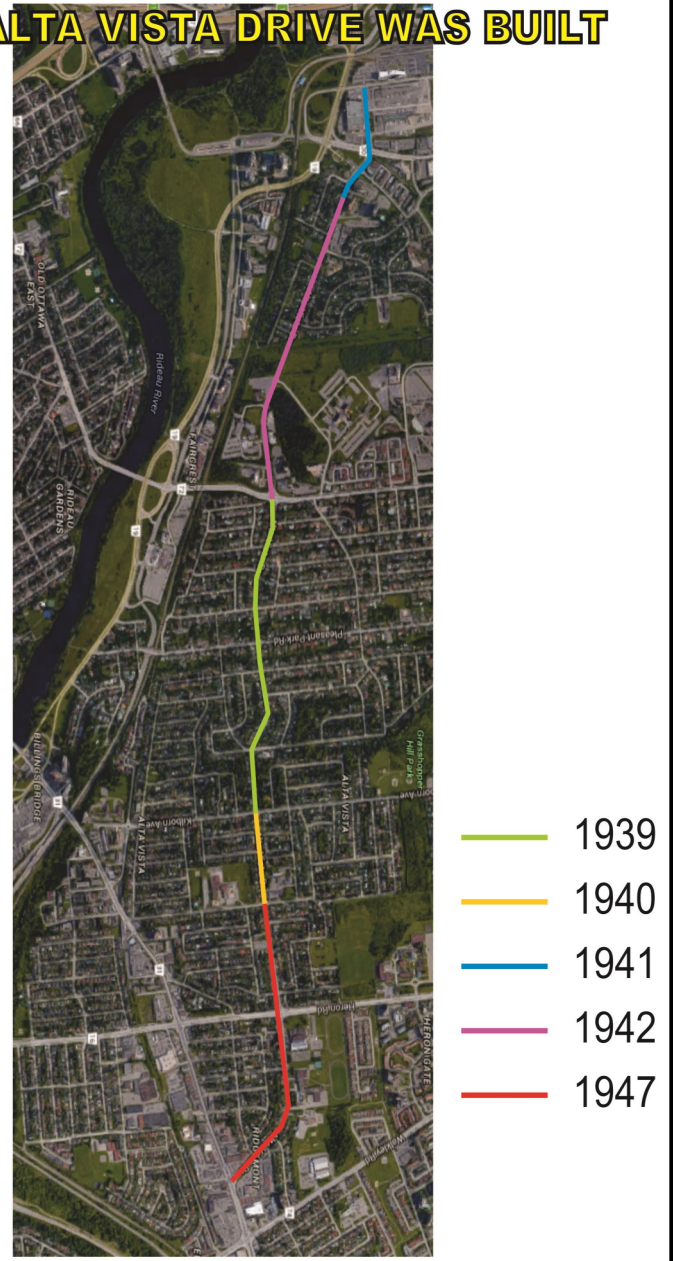
The entire route between Smith Road and the 'Alta Vista subdivision' was completed when Road Superintendent William L. Borthwick was authorized to grade the road at the October 21, 1940 council meeting [*Ottawa Journal*, October 22, 1940 page 7].

On February 3, 1941, Allan K. Hay, Engineer of the Ottawa Suburban Road Commission discussed with Gloucester Council the extension of the 100 foot highway northward from Smyth Road as far as Russell Road (now Terminal Avenue) giving access to the newly converted and opened Rideau Military Hospital (formerly the Grey Nuns Novitiate). This would require a crossing of the CNR tracks. Although an overhead crossing was preferred, a temporary level crossing was proposed. The Novitiate was previously accessible only by a laneway from River Road and was inadequate for a hospital.

At a council meeting on September 17, 1941, the '100 foot highway' was proposed to be named Churchill Drive to honour then Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain. By this time, it was noted that the 'highway' was proposed to run from Metcalfe Road to Russell Road. Application was to be made to the Board of Transport Commission to gain permission to cross the CNR near Hurdman's Bridge. [*Ottawa Journal*, September 18, 1941 page 4].

At the November 3, 1941 council meeting, By-Law 22 of 1941 was passed opening 4th Street in the Hurdman Heights subdivision as a public road to connect the Rideau Military Hospital to the Russell Road. This was to become the northeast end of the

HOW ALTA VISTA DRIVE WAS BUILT



'100 foot highway'. In today's terms, this is adjacent to Alta Vista Postal Sortation Centre at Terminal Avenue.

The township road superintendent reported at the December 1, 1941 meeting that the road between the Rideau Military Hospital and Russell Road was nearing completion but the road westward to Smith Road would have to wait until the following spring [*Ottawa Citizen*, December 2, 1941 page 13].

Township engineer MacRostie reported that the highway between the Rideau Military Hospital and Smyth Road was under construction at the

November 2, 1942 council meeting [Ottawa Journal, November 3, 1942 page 26]. At the subsequent meeting on November 16, 1942, Mr. MacRostie was asked to study the cost of extending the road southward across Lots 20, 21 and 22 to the Metcalfe Road at a point north of Walkley Road. The township would pay 1/3 of the land cost while the remaining cost would be assumed by the property owner. It was reported that the remainder of the road between the Rideau Military Hospital and Smyth Road was complete [Ottawa Journal, November 17, 1942 page 4].

With access to the Rideau Military Hospital and the Rideau Health and Occupational Centre on Smyth Road completed, extension of Churchill Drive towards Metcalfe Road was put on hold for the duration of the war.

At the October 1, 1945 council meeting, the project was restarted and township engineer MacRostie was authorized to complete the survey of the Churchill Drive extension to Metcalfe Road [Ottawa Citizen, October 2, 1945 page 8]. Construction did not proceed quickly as it was reported in the Ottawa Journal on October 21, 1947 (Page 23) that the road had reached as far west as Desjardins Road (now Ridgemont Avenue). It is expected that Churchill Drive was completed by the end of 1947.

At a council meeting on March 21, 1949, a bus service operated by Uplands Bus Lines was approved to run on Churchill Drive as far as Metcalfe Road. This bus service was not inaugurated until November 30, 1953 and was then operated by the Ottawa Transportation Commission which had taken over Uplands Bus Lines routes on July 1, 1950.

The portion of Gloucester Township in which Churchill Drive runs was annexed by the City of Ottawa on January 1, 1950. Because of name duplications, Churchill Drive was renamed Alta Vista Drive in July 1950 [Ottawa Journal June 13, 1950 page 1].

The name 'Alta Vista' came from the original 1913 subdivision that was located on the north side of Randall Avenue. This was the high point of land, which explains why the Alta Vista water tower was located there for a number decades. The name means 'high view', which was a selling point for the original subdivision. Alta Vista provided good views of the City of Ottawa including the Parliament Buildings in the distance.

The farms and market gardens of Alta Vista are long gone, the landmark water tower has come and gone, and the 'vista' of the Parliament Buildings has disappeared behind modern buildings, but Alta Vista Drive continues to be a vital transportation link in southeast Ottawa.



Rideau Park - 1948

This is a continuation of an article started in the last issue of Historic Gloucester.

On May 17, 1948, Gloucester Township By-Law 17 of 1948 was approved to number houses in Rideau Park as follows. This is a record of those who were living in Rideau Park at the time. All houses have subsequently been renumbered but as a guide 76 Stanley Avenue is now 276 Pleasant Park Road.

Stanley Avenue (now Pleasant Park Road) - south side Rideau Park (cont'd)

Edward A. Rooke	52
William W. Tennant	54
Norman W. Guest	56
Mrs. Alma Jeffrey	58
Harold Rudd	60
Russell Scollon	62
Gordon Brackenbury	64
Township of Gloucester	66, 68, 70, 72

Churchill Drive intersection (now Alta Vista Drive)

William E. Slinn	74
Henry Haas	76
Mrs. Gladys Wheeler	78
Allan F. Lebreton	80
Kenneth Scollon	82
Walter Lebreton	84
Samuel Stewart	86
Thomas Mockett	88, 90, 92, 94
Arthur G. Jones	96
Roy H. Goudie	98
J.C. Lascelles	100

H.K. Lancaster	104
Alvies C. Denniston	106
Township of Gloucester	108
Arthur Ball	110 & 112
Township of Gloucester	114 & 116
Denis Lavigne	118 & 120
Mrs. Rose Ouelette	122, 124, 126, 128, 130
Edward Jones	132 & 134
Lewis C. Potter	136 & 138
Roland Rous	140, 142, 144
Mrs. Kate Woodruff	146 & 148
Albert Bennett	150 to 160
Joseph Gervin	162 to 178
Walter Wootton	180, 182, 184

Stanley Avenue – North side Rideau Park
Rideau River

Pat Boyce	1
George B. Craig	5
Mrs. Carrie Christie	7 & 9
George Wert	11 & 13
Mrs. Fred Kennedy	15, 17, 19
Charles Hobbs	25
Charles Mignault	27
Ken Wylie	31
Frank A. Reynolds	33
Rolf K. Berg	35
Lawrence Egan	37
Clifford Treganowan	39
George Massey	41
Orville F. Gross	43
D. Kelly Estate	45, 47, 49, 51
H. Robert McLacklan	53, 55, 57, 59
Donald Rudd	61
Kenneth P. Benson	63
Graham Lancaster	65
Ronald Toone	67
Graham Lancaster	69

Churchill Drive intersection

R.B. Lee	73 & 75
John W. Rostetter	77 & 79
Fred J. Isbister	81
William Gallinger	83
Charles B. Grey	85
Walter Derby	87
P.J. Webster	89
Mrs. Helen Howe	91
Reginald F. Toone	93

George Laing	95 & 97
Mrs. H. Phillips	99 & 101
Ralph Lang	103
Alexander Officer	105
Miss Mary Bennett	107 & 109
Max Jack Silver	111
Robert P. Welland	113
Joseph Whitmore	115 & 117
John Kelso	119
Mrs. Elizabeth Plumb	121 & 123
Harvey Hardy	125
Mrs. Sarah Crouch	127, 129, 131
Arthur J. Reynolds	133 & 135
Mrs. Annie Sutherland	137 & 139
Joseph D. Lynch	141
Arthur G. Reynolds	143 & 145
Joseph D. Lynch	147
William J. Helferty	149, 151, 153
B. Winning	155, 157, 159
F.D. Millar	161
Bert Dowler	163, 165, 167
Albert Bennett	169 to 181

Billings Avenue – south side Rideau Park
Rideau River

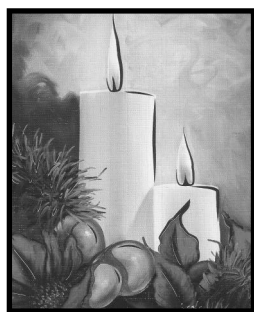
Louis Meyer	2 & 4
Mrs. Elsie Hooper	6
W.E. Barnes	8
W.G. Loper	10, 12, 14
William Robillard	16
Murphy & Morrow	18
John R. Murphy Jr.	20
George Morrow	22
John R. Murphy Sr.	24 & 26
William F. O'Blender	28, 30, 32
D. Kelly Estate	34 to 40
Moise Lebreton	42 & 44
David R. Smith	46 to 52

Churchill Drive intersection

Hugh Johnston	64, 66, 68
Harold Wootton	70 & 72
S.J. Axford	74 & 76
Mrs. H. Howe	78
Mrs. Carrie Christie	80
William James Laing	82 & 84
N.H. Longstreet	86 & 88
Ralph Lang	90
Alexander Officer	92
Harold Clark	94 to 104

Fairbanks Intersection

Mrs. M. Mockett	106
Elizabeth Plumb	108 & 110
Lewis Potter	112 to 122
Mrs. Sarah Crouch	124, 126, 128
A.G. Reynolds	130 & 132
J.D. Lynch	134
William J. Helferty	136 & 138
Township of Gloucester	140 to 148

**Proposed Billings Bridge Street Car Service Never Materialized**

By Glenn Clark

The idea of extending street car service southward began with the annexation of Rideauville, and Wyoming Park (now Old Ottawa South) and the village of Ottawa East on December 16, 1907. But street car service was dependant on suitable bridges crossing the Rideau Canal. At the time, swing bridges existed on Bank Street at Lansdowne Park and at Argyle Avenue and could not carry street cars. Almost immediately, new bridges were being planned.

In 1912, the Canadian Northern Railway was under construction just to the south of the Rideau River in Gloucester. A railway bridge over Metcalfe Road (Bank Street) was being planned in January [Ottawa Journal, January 5, 1912, page 10] and the bridge across the Rideau River at the Dowler Farm was expected to be completed by September 1st [Ottawa Journal, July 6, 1912 page 9]. The next year, a passenger railway station south of Billings Bridge was under consideration [Ottawa Journal, May 22, 1913 page 2].

On March 21, 1913, the centre span of the old wooden Billings Bridge collapsed from high water [Ottawa Journal, March 22, 1913 page 3]. This blocked vehicle traffic and began the process of planning a more permanent bridge.

The new Bank Street bridge over the Rideau Canal opened for traffic on July 25, 1913 after the temporary swing bridge malfunctioned [Ottawa Journal, July 25, 1913 page 1]. This would make way for the street car extension into Ottawa South, which opened on October 10th with a 4 minute service frequency [Ottawa Journal, October 9 and 11 page 1]. The route followed Bank Street to Sunnyside then looped by Sunnyside, Seneca, Grove and back to Bank Street. This route would remain in service until January 12, 1959 when street car service ended [Ottawa Journal, January 3, 1959 page 25]. Interestingly, street car rails extended southbound on Bank Street from Sunnyside to Grove Avenue but likely were never used.

The extension of street car service into Ottawa East would have to wait for a new bridge to be built at Pretoria Avenue [Ottawa Journal, January 24, 1913 page 2] but also a suitable crossing was needed with the Canada Atlantic Railway at Elgin Street. The new bridge was delayed by World War I.

However, a new bridge at Billings Bridge was in greater need after the earlier collapse had created treacherous crossing conditions. Following a considerable discussion on whether a temporary bridge would be needed (a temporary bridge was finally built), the new Billings Bridge (the current bridge) officially opened on September 2, 1915 [Ottawa Journal, September 3, 1915 page 14]. The bridge was built to accommodate street cars.

The new Pretoria Avenue bridge would follow and it opened to traffic on October 31, 1917 [Ottawa Journal, October 31, 1917 page 10]. After considerable protest from the community, the old Argyle Avenue bridge began to be dismantled on March 18, 1918 [Ottawa Journal, March 18, 1918 page 17]. With the war continuing and the Ottawa Electric Railway's contract up for renewal, there was no immediate action to open an Ottawa East street car extension.

It was not until the Robert M. Feustal Report was produced in 1922 that further street car extensions were considered [Ottawa Journal, December 28, 1922 page 5 including map]. This included an extension to the Elgin Street car line into Ottawa East as far as Main Street and Clegg and an extension of the Bank Street car line across Billings Bridge to the proposed passenger railway station. This was part of a four year plan with the Ottawa

East extension to take place in the first year and the Billings Bridge extension in the last year of the plan. The former began operation on July 29, 1925 with 10 minute frequency and 5 minute service during rush hour [*Ottawa Journal*, July 30, 1925 page 18].

In order test the viability of transit service in the Billings Bridge area, bus service was provided from the Bank and Grove street car terminus south on Metcalfe Road (Bank Street) as far as Ridgemont near Walkley Road. This was for a one month trial starting on May 18, 1927. Average daily receipts were only \$10.93 and the service was cancelled following the trial [*Ottawa Journal*, July 20, 1927 page 11]. This proved to be the death knell for the Billings Bridge street car extension as Ottawa Electric Railway officials saw little hope of significantly increasing receipts.

Further street car extensions were planned including running the Ottawa East line further south on Main Street to near the Rideau River. This would never take place.

Jacques Greber arrived in Ottawa in 1937 with his ideas opposing street cars. The National War Memorial was completed in 1939 and the grand promenade on Elgin Street was not considered suitable for street cars. On April 24, 1939, the Elgin Street and Ottawa East car lines were abandoned and buses were placed on the route [*Ottawa Journal*, April 21, 1939 page 1]. In the weeks leading up to this conversion, there were increasing demands to extend service to Billings Bridge via Main Street and Riverdale Avenue. The Ottawa Electric Railway resisted those requests wishing to wait for the results of the switch to buses first.

A six month trial would begin on September 1, 1939 with bus service terminating with a loop at Riverdale, Bank and Cameron [*Ottawa Journal*, August 31, 1939 page 2]. This trial was extended another 6 months [*Ottawa Journal*, January 26, 1940 page 22]. Ultimately, it proved to be too successful with many Gloucester residents taking advantage of the service immediately to the north of the bridge. There were complaints of overcrowded buses and with war restrictions on the hours allowed for bus service, the route was shortened with buses turning around at Belmont Avenue starting on December 14, 1942 [*Ottawa Journal*, December 21, 1942 Editorial Page]. This ended any service to Billings Bridge by the Ottawa Electric Railway.

From then on, bus service to the Billings Bridge area was offered only by Uplands Bus Lines and starting on July 1, 1950, by the Ottawa Transportation Commission.



We

Wish

You a

Very, very,

Very Merry

Christmas and

A Happy New Year

From

Gloucester Historical Society



Members Wanted:

The Gloucester Historical Society is always looking for new members. Regardless of age, anyone who is interested in the history of Gloucester, as a Township, City, or part of the City of Ottawa, can benefit from membership in the Society. There is a well-stocked history room at our Leitrim Road office. One day per week, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm from early June to after Labour Day, the Reference Room is open and there are knowledgeable people there to help you in all aspects of research about your family, friends or neighbours in Gloucester.

Your membership entitles you to receive the *Historic Gloucester* newsletter four times a year so that you can keep up with what is going on with the GHS and read interesting articles of times and places of long ago. For more information on the Gloucester Historical Society be sure to check out our wonderful website at www.gloucesterhistory.com.

Family Histories Wanted:

If you have information on any family who resided in Gloucester, we would be happy to add this to our records. There may be others who would like to share this information but have been unable to find it. And, you may find that the family of someone you know was once a neighbour of your ancestors!

Volunteers Needed:

The GHS is always looking for volunteers to assist others with research, to assist at society functions or to help the Board of Directors in many other ways.

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 1 to March 31)

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

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