



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

www.gloucesterhistory.com

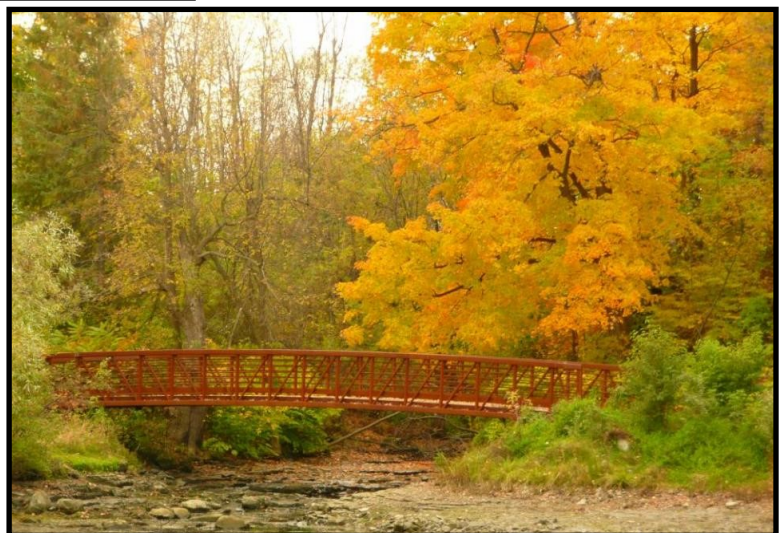
Vol.17, No. 1

Spring 2016



Sign for Victory Hill

Bridge over Black
Rapids Creek



Victory Hill at Black Rapids

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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

Contact

Mary Boyd at 613-521-2082 or boydmary172@gmail.com

Cover Photo:

The first photo is of a sign which may be over 70 year old. The second photo shows the bridge which spans Black Rapids Creek and connects Victory Hill with Black Rapids Locks area. It replaced the old wooden floating boom which existed for many years at this site. See story of Victory Hill on p 4.

Photo from Google.

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

I am writing this report on January 3rd, the evening of the first real blast of cold weather this winter. Our first newsletter for 2016 is coming very early because we are pleased to announce the official launch of our new book 'The Railways of Gloucester and Beyond', which will take place on Sunday, January 17, 2016 2:00 p.m. at the Blackburn Hamlet Community Hall, 190 Glen Park Drive. The author, Les Goodwin will be on hand and you can purchase an autographed copy of the book for only \$20.00. It includes many historic photographs. Also the same afternoon, there will be a presentation by Bill Horne titled "In the Age of the Cloud, is There Still Room for a Book?" which will explain how to prepare a personal or family history. What better gift can you give to your own family? Let's make this event a great success.

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Sunday, April 24, 2016 2:00 p.m. at the Gloucester Senior Adults' Centre, Earl Armstrong Arena, 2020 Ogilvie Road. Our feature speaker will be David Mowat and the topic will be the Gloucester Woodburns in the Klondike. David will explain about the Gloucester residents who headed to the Klondike gold rush at the turn of the 20th century and what happened to them. The gold rush was an exciting time in Canadian history so this should provide a fascinating tie in between local history and true Canadiana.

Also, if you are downtown on Heritage Day, Tuesday, February 16, 2016 please drop by and say hello at City Hall. The event is from about 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This is your chance to ask questions directly to our Board members and to look at all our publications. Almost all other local heritage organizations also participate on Heritage Day. There will be lots to see and many people to talk to.

As we prepare for Canada's sesquicentennial, 2016 should prove to be an interesting year for the Gloucester Historical Society. We welcome anybody to get involved, whether by donating a family history, copies of photographs and artifacts or by volunteering. Our meetings only take place monthly on Saturday mornings.

Board of Directors 2015-2016

President and
Webmaster: Glenn Clark
Vice-President: Russell Johnston
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Newsletter Editor: Joan Scott

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Be sure to check out our website at

www.gloucesterhistory.com

where you will find a complete list of
Gloucester Historical Society Publications
which may be purchased by PayPal and shipped
directly to you - or you may pick them up
at our office by arrangement.

Memories of Victory Hill

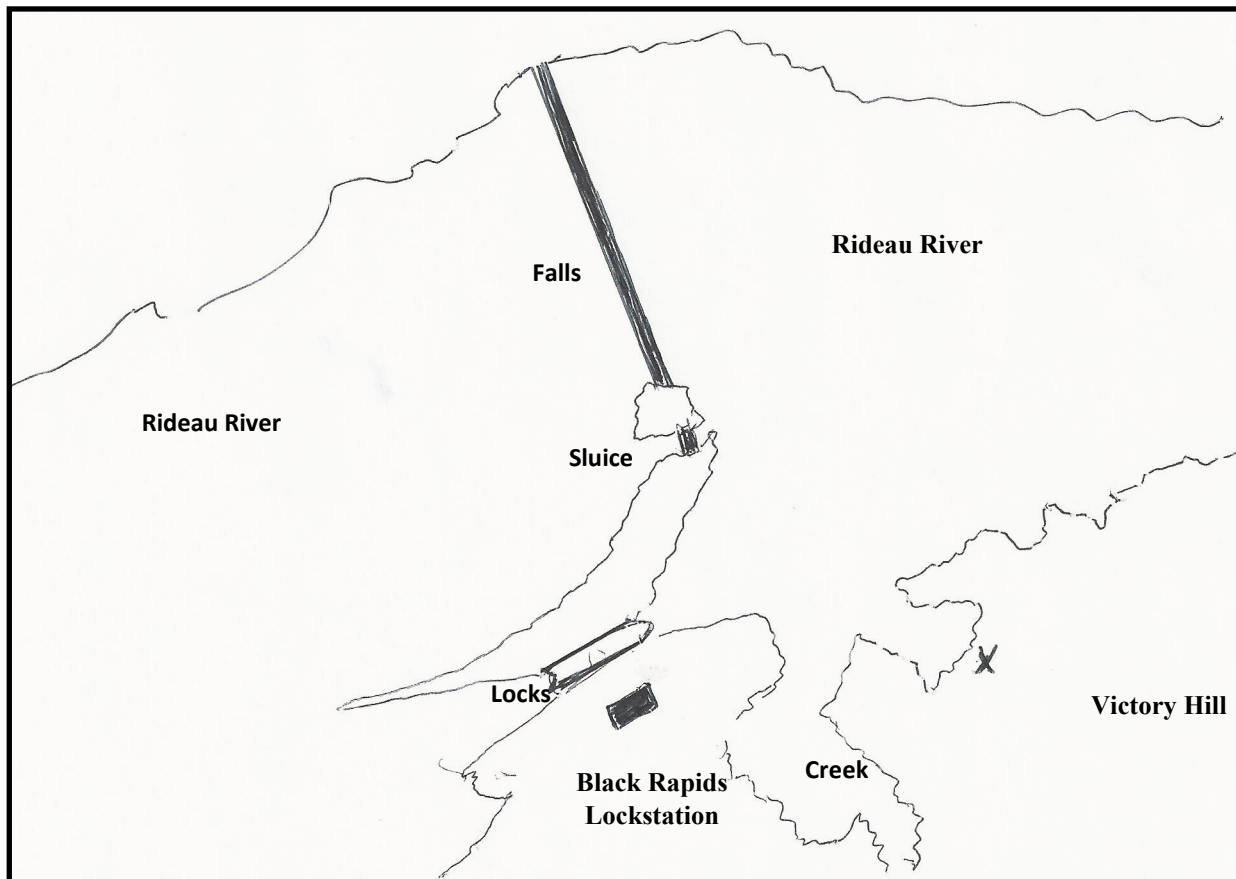
by Joan Scott

The small community of Victory Hill at Black Rapids on the Rideau River was an idyllic place in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1940s there were about 25 cottages spread throughout the area, some hugging the edge of the river, some along the top of the hill and others adjacent to the little creek which fed in to the Rideau at that point. The residents each owned their own cottage, but the property was owned by the Department of Transport and a yearly rental was charged for its use. There is some controversy about when it began, but I believe when it first opened, leases were only given to veterans of the First World War. My father was a WWI veteran but he bought our cottage from a former owner. That was in the 1940s and it was not a new building at that time. Over the years many of the veterans sold their cottages to non-veterans.

A recent newspaper article stated that the name Victory Hill was given to the community after the Second World War in recognition of the soldiers who fought in it. This, however, was incorrect. The name was actually conceived by the residents in the early 1940s when people were busy making victory gardens and were engaged in many patriotic pursuits

during World War II. A sign was erected near the highway bearing the name "Victory Hill." I don't know if it is the original sign, but there still apparently is a sign near the highway. It was a tight knit community and everyone knew everyone else. On special occasions there would be events where everyone participated and communal bonfires were always popular. The map below shows the location of our cottage with an X.

To us, our cottage at Black Rapids was wonderful. It was on a hill in a small bay and overlooked the locks so we could see every boat that went up or down the river and knew the names of most of the regulars. There were other boys and girls our age around and we had companions for swimming, boating or just spending time together. My mother loved to fish and my father would take her out with the boat and motor, or my sister or I would row her up the river. Even though she could not swim, Mom would go fishing in any boat and she was a good fisherwoman, catching some nice big fish. In the winter we would sometimes go to the cottage, Mom and Dad would put on snowshoes and my sister and I, my brother being overseas, would wear our skis and we would trek up the frozen river for a mile or so.



Each summer on the first Monday of August holiday, the cottage community would have a day of games and special events followed by a bonfire and wiener roast. My sister and I both loved to play horseshoes and we were able to compete successfully against many of the men – even beating them many times. After my brother came back from overseas he and his wife bought a cottage across the field from ours and they enjoyed spending the summers there for many years.

The front of our cottage was on a hill with a flight of stairs leading down to the dock which extended out into the sheltered bay. At the back of the cottage, beside the laneway coming in to the property, there was a small lawn, some beautiful roses of which I still have a bush, some other flowers and a fairly large vegetable patch where my father grew potatoes, tomatoes and a few other things. I used to love to help him work in the garden. I still have a large garden at my house and many of the plants are descendants of the ones in my father's garden at Victory Hill.

As children we spent many a happy hour around the locks, watching the boats coming and going, the people swimming, having a picnic or playing games on the lawn around the locks. Because of the war, a former lockmaster had been urged back from retirement. George Balcombe had been lockmaster from 1918 to 1935 and returned in 1939 to serve until 1946. He was assisted by an elderly lockman, Bob Fraser, who lived in the upper storey of the storehouse near the locks and loved to sit on a bench outside the door. I spent a lot of time sitting and talking with him. Sundays were especially busy for the locks, with sometimes two or three boats going through at one time. As kids we were intrigued with how the locks worked and often asked to be allowed to open and close them by turning the large wheel that controlled the sluices and allowed the giant gates to open and close. There were two boys my age who used to challenge me to a contest to see who could open the gates faster. I always won because they didn't realize that by the two of them working on one wheel they were actually working against each other thus allowing me to win. There was also a series of squared logs which controlled the flow of water going over the sluice near the falls. This was opened in the spring by raising some of the logs to let more water pass through to help fill the canal for summer or to regulate the flow when needed. As a result, when this was open

there was a fast flowing spate of water rushing out below the logs. We used to jump into these rapids and float on the current for a short distance, then swim back and do it again. I don't think our parents ever knew what we were up to. We loved the water and would swim across the river and back. Sometimes when we were at the locks and heard Mom call us for lunch we would just jump in, clothes and all, and swim home.

During the war the airport at Uplands was used to train pilots. It was a familiar sight to see the yellow Harvard Trainers taking off, one after another, at short intervals all day long. After a while we were so accustomed to hearing them fly over that we were barely conscious of the sound. There were one or two crashes at or near Uplands, but none near us.

There were a couple of sad events that took place near our cottage. One day my father and I were out on the dock in front of our place when we saw a man in a boat rowing very quickly toward the dock at the locks and then jumping out and running up to the lockmaster's house. This was the only place in the area where there was a phone at that time so we figured something had happened and we decided to take our rowboat and go have a look to see what was going on. I rowed up the river around the bend and saw a number of people, some in the water and some on shore. We asked what had happened and they said a young boy was missing in the water. Shortly after we saw a fire truck arriving at the opposite side of the river so we rowed over there. Because the call had come from the Nepean side, the Nepean fire department had answered instead of the Gloucester fire department. A couple of burly firemen jumped into our boat with their big resuscitator, their grappling irons and other equipment. I took them and my father across the river and, although they were able to recover the body of a young boy about eleven years of age, they were unsuccessful in reviving him. I was very saddened by this tragedy as I was not much older than the victim at the time. Another sad event was also a drowning. This time it was a young man who had only recently returned from overseas duty and was visiting his uncle, an Ottawa deputy police chief, at his cottage at Victory Hill. No one saw what happened but it was thought that he must have taken a weak turn and fallen in the river. It was some time before his body was found and I still remember seeing it being lifted from its watery grave.

Despite these sad occasions, my memories of life at the cottage are of a happy, carefree, time. When my sister and I were older and started to work, the family used to move to the cottage in May and return to the city in October. We sometimes got a ride in and out with one of the neighbours, or we took the bus which passed by every morning and returned each night at hours convenient for those who worked in the city. There was also a bus which left the city about 10 pm so if we had a date or went to a movie we could take that bus. Riding the bus people every day and we got to know them. My father drove to work but left too early for us to go with him. The city was close enough to go there occasionally for shopping, visiting or medical appointments. was always nice because it was usually the same people every day and we got to know them.

The lockmaster had two hound dogs, Bugle and Joe. Joe used to walk across the top of the dam over the falls, go hunting in the bush and then walk back. One day he was caught chasing golf balls at the Ottawa Hunt Club Golf Course and promptly evicted from their grounds. Bugle used to cross over the top of the dam, go hunting, and when he was finished, he would not walk back, but would sit on a dock at the edge of the water and howl mournfully until someone got sick of listening to him and would go get him. His owner never bothered to go after him because he knew someone else would. My sister and I regularly supplied transportation for him as we would row across the river and bring him back. Bugle also liked to visit the cottagers and see if they had any goodies for him. He was not the only dog who did this. There was a little smooth haired terrier called Alfie who visited us every day to see what there was for him. I had always been terrified of dogs from the time I was little, even going around the block on my way to school if I saw a dog on the street, so my parents were delighted to see me becoming so fond of these dogs.

My father loved the birds. He used to feed them crusts of bread and seeds and they waited for their handouts. There was one, a red winged blackbird who had only one leg. He used to come back year after year and he would follow my father, even flying from tree to tree along the road which led to my brother's cottage when my Dad went there. The birds were also very protective. After my father suffered a stroke and was hospitalized, they would not let any strangers near the place. When I would take my mother there they would behave normally because they knew us, but any one else was

not welcome. When my brother went up on the roof to fix something he had to take a broom with him to keep the birds from dive bombing him! Dad liked the chipmunks as well and he used to sit on the porch and let them retrieve peanuts from his shirt pocket or eat from his hand.

After I married and had children, we used to visit my parents on most Sundays. My children would immediately climb up on chairs in the kitchen with great anticipation because they knew Grandmother would have some special treats for them to eat. They often stayed with my parents, one or two at a time, or sometimes with a cousin from Toronto with them. The children loved the cottage as much as my sister and I had for so many years. They still, as adults, talk about the time they hooked a snapping turtle while fishing off the dock in front of the cottage, the tadpoles and minnows they caught, the swimming and just watching the boats going into and coming out of the locks. It is nice to hear them recite their many happy memories of the cottage.

During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s the community of Victory Hill flourished and was a happy place, but gradually some of the original or long time owners decided to sell and because of the Department of Transport policy, new leases were not available. Some cottages were rented, a few were winterized and lived in year-round, others were simply left empty. As a result, the area went into a slow decline. As the years passed, most of the cottages that had not been torn down were occupied by renters or, in some cases, by squatters. One cottage which had been built near the entrance to Victory Hill from the Prince of Wales Highway, was converted into a winterized home and still remains to this day on the property. As far as I am aware, most of the other buildings have been torn down, although I believe there are still one or two others, and the roads through the community have pretty well reverted to overgrown vegetation. The government still says that it is going to make this into a park. The property is now part of the Green Belt and is owned by the National Capital Commission so perhaps something will be done with it. The only improvement that I know of is a small bridge over the creek which replaced the removable floating boom that formerly gave access from Victory Hill to the Black Rapids Locks property. Even this has apparently been blocked by piled up branches at the Hill side so that access is denied. It is a sad end to what was once such a vibrant, fun filled place.



The Gloucester Historical Society **Officially Launches Its New Book**

THE RAILWAYS OF GLOUCESTER AND BEYOND

by Les Goodwin

(books will be autographed)

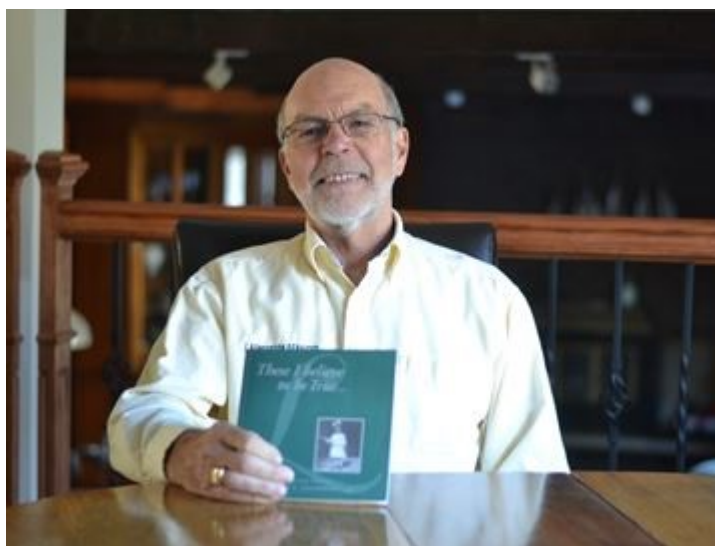
on Sunday, January 17, 2016 2:00 p.m.

Blackburn Hamlet Community Hall, 190 Glen Park Drive.

Also, a presentation by Bill Horne titled

"In the Age of the Cloud, is There Still Room for a Book?"

How to Prepare a Personal or Family History



Free parking and admission

Bus Routes 94 and 128

www.gloucesterhistory.com



The Gloucester Historical Society
Presents
A talk by David Mowat on
The Gloucester Woodburn's in
the Klondike



Sunday, April 24, 2016 2:00 p.m.
Gloucester Senior Adults' Centre
2020 Ogilvie Road (Earl Armstrong Arena)

Free parking and admission

Bus Routes 12, 124

The afternoon will begin with the Gloucester Historical Society Annual Meeting

Is it Gloucester or is it Gloucester? A question of Pronunciation

By Glenn Clark

A couple of years ago, out of the blue, Gloucester native Maureen Kemp nee McCulla, gently suggested that the pronunciation of Gloucester has changed over the years. It is something most people don't think about because pronunciations normally don't change.

I don't think anybody believes that the pronunciation of Ottawa has changed over the generations nor even the somewhat peculiar pronunciation of Nepean (Ne pee in). Yet Gloucester? Could it have changed in my lifetime alone?

I thought about it, going back to my childhood, to my days at Gloucester High School and I wondered. Has it changed? Has my own pronunciation changed?

It was time to ask others as my memories were somewhat hazy although I was already becoming convinced. So I placed the question out there. I asked family members. Then I put it up on our website and finally posed the question at Doors Open in 2014. There was a response and there were strong opinions.

The three most common pronunciations were: Gloss-ter, Gloss sess ter, and Gloss siss ter, with the latter two being a modest difference in emphasis. There were other pronunciations even from local natives, which surprised me. Could the 'Gloss' actually have been 'Glouse' as in 'house'?

Which is correct? Which is the current popular pronunciation? Has it changed over time? Was there a difference between the Anglophone and Francophone communities?

Some referred back to the proper pronunciation of Gloucester in England, which is Gloss-ter, or Glaw-ster. And what does the Internet say? It agrees with the English pronunciation and indeed this is the correct pronunciation also in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Virginia where there are other Gloucesters.

But older Gloucester residents often took exception. I considered my own common usage, and I confess that I now always say Gloss-ter and that seems to be the most common pronunciation used

today amongst most people. Our survey confirmed this but without a 100% consensus.

But did our Gloucester have a non-traditional pronunciation until quite recently? Our survey agreed and this included the francophone community. Many were quite strong in their opinion that the correct pronunciation is 'Gloss-sess-ter' with a fairly strong emphasis on the middle syllable. A few continue to hold onto this pronunciation, because that is the way it was and it should continue to be that way. Thinking back to my own childhood, as a 10 year old, I am sure that I would have also said Gloss-sess-ter.

So how did this change happen? We will probably never know the answer for sure. It all took place so silently. I suspect that it has a lot to do with the suburbanization of Gloucester and the displacement of so many old rural families when the Greenbelt was created. The older families dispersed to other places and new families moved in, often from other parts of Canada or even other countries. They brought their own assumed pronunciation, which quickly overwhelmed the local historic pronunciation.

This all creates a bit of nostalgia of how times have changed and how easily even the pronunciation of an entire township and former city can be altered. And there are other examples. Did you know that Blais Road was pronounced as 'Blah' Road? Or Do-aust Street was pronounced as 'Doe' Street? I am sure there are other peculiar Gloucester pronunciations that are quickly disappearing with the passage of time.

In answer to our original question, is it Gloucester or is it Gloucester? The correct English pronunciation is Gloss-ter and this is now the common pronunciation but there has been a change in recent years and the traditional local pronunciation was Gloss-sess-ter.

I would love hear from any of our readers on this subject and whether you agree with my conclusions or not. Also, are there other examples of changes in local pronunciations? I know that even some family names have had subtle changes over time. For example, Heron has changed from 'Her un' to 'Hair un'.



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. Every Wednesday, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm from early June until Labour Day, 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 each year)

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 _____

Mailing Address: Gloucester Historical Society
4550B Bank Street,
Gloucester, Ontario
K1T 3W6
Tel: 613-822-2076