



## *Historic Gloucester*

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

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

Vol. 18, No. 1

Spring 2017

**A RAGING INFERNO !!**

**OTTAWA'S LARGEST FIRE !**

**HUNDREDS OF FARMS DESTROYED**

**THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

presents the story of

**THE GREAT FIRE OF 1870**

Learn the details of this catastrophe at our Annual General Meeting

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THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE  
 THAT ITS HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
 DURING THE WINTER MONTHS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.  
 LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (ENTRANCE ON LEITRIM ROAD)  
 FOR MORE INFORMATION  
 OR TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

Contact

Mary Boyd at 613-521-2082 or [boydmary172@gmail.com](mailto:boydmary172@gmail.com)

### Cover Photo:

*The cover photo is a reminder of the "Ten Mile Fire" which did catastrophic damage to farmlands in Nepean and Gloucester and barely missed destroying the whole city. To learn more about this historical fire you are invited to attend our Annual General Meeting on April 23, 2017.*

**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

### 2017 Annual General Meeting

I am pleased to announce our Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Sunday, April 23, 2017 2:00 p.m. at the Greenboro Community Centre, 363 Lorry Greenberg Drive. Our presenter is Terence Currie, who will speak on The Great Fire of 1870.

This was the biggest fire to ever affect the Ottawa area. It left hundreds of farms destroyed, and the villages of Bell's Corners and Stittsville in ashes. In Gloucester, it was referred to as the 'Ten Mile Fire'. The fire was so intense, that it was able to jump the Ottawa River and left the City of Ottawa almost surrounded. Only heroic measures saved the city.

Our speaker wrote a book on this subject titled 'The Ottawa Valley's Great Fire of 1870' and copies will be available for sale. I have personally read this book, which includes the story of a stage-coach that was overtaken by the fire. It is a very good read. The book explains how and where the fire started, why it became a fire storm and how people saved themselves.

For the first time, the extent of the fire in Gloucester will be mapped and put on display. Do you live where the fire burned? Come and find out.

As always, we welcome all of you to join us for this interesting presentation. Admission is free whether you are a member or not.

### Sesquicentennial Grade 8 Writing Contest – Deadline April 30, 2017

Our Grade 8 writing contest is still open. The topic is 'Gloucester 1867-2017'. If you know any Grade 8 students, let them know of our contest. The details can be found on our website [www.gloucesterhistory.com](http://www.gloucesterhistory.com). The essays which are to be limited to 3 pages plus photos, maps, and diagrams may be submitted by mail to the Gloucester Historical Society, 4550B Bank Street, Gloucester, Ont. K1T 3W6 or by E-Mail to [english@gloucesterhistory.com](mailto:english@gloucesterhistory.com). Essays may be in English or French and there will be prizes for each language; \$150 for first prize, \$100 for second prize, and \$50 for third prize.

In keeping with our celebrations, this newsletter includes the start of an article that takes us back to Centennial year, 1967. Enjoy!

Also, please join us for Doors Open, which will take place on Saturday, June 3 and Sunday, June 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This is one time of the year that the Gloucester Museum is open to the public. The Grace Johnston History Room will also be open to visitors every Wednesday from June 7<sup>th</sup> to August 30<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

*For more information about books for sale by Gloucester Historical Society,  
Please visit our website at*

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

*For a complete list of all our publications.*



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**OTTAWA'S LARGEST FIRE !**

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**THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**presents the story of**

**THE GREAT FIRE OF 1870**

**THE FIRST TIME THE FIRE IS MAPPED  
IN GLOUCESTER**

**OUR SPEAKER: Terence Currie, Author**

**His book on the subject will be available For Sale**

**Sunday, April 23, 2017 2:00 P.M.**

**Greenboro Community Centre**

**363 Lorry Greenberg Drive, Ottawa**

**Free Admission and Parking, Bus Route 98**



## Centennial Year in Gloucester, Eastview and Rockcliffe

By Glenn Clark

It is hard to believe that 50 years have passed since we celebrated a fabulous Centennial Year in 1967. Who can forget Bobby Gimby's "Ca-na-da" song or Ontario's "A Place to Stand" and the grandest party of all at Expo 67 in Montreal with its theme song "Hey Friend, Say Friend". But every community in Canada also celebrated in their own way and every community had its projects. How many Centennial Arenas or Centennial Schools can you think of? What is taking place this year (2017) pales in comparison with the excitement of 1967. It was a different time, a time of far more optimism.

Now we will remember what was done in our own community and who was involved. In many respects, it was a turning point. Certainly, in the case of Gloucester, it was a time when our rural roots were for ever put behind. You will see how so many projects had their genesis in 1967 even when they were not specifically Centennial projects. Sit back and enjoy the memories.



### Let the Celebrations Begin - New Year's 1967

Following the lighting of the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill by Prime Minister Lester Pearson at 7:14 p.m. on New Year's Eve, representatives from 15 municipalities in the National Capital Region lit torches to be taken by runner or vehicle to their local communities [*Ottawa Journal*, December 28, 1966 p.3]. This included a 43 km New Year's Eve torch run with destinations at the

Nepean and Gloucester Township Halls and the skating rink in Rockcliffe Park. At that time, the Nepean Township Hall was at Bell's Corners and in Gloucester, at Leitrim. In Nepean, a Centennial flame was lit, while in Gloucester and Rockcliffe, stacks of discarded Christmas trees were set ablaze in celebration.

In Eastview, a parade proceeded to Parliament Hill and returned with the torch, which lit the Centennial flame of Friendship in front of the former City Hall on Montreal Road. This prompted a short musical program by *Loisir Musical d'Eastview* singing an original Centennial song and a fireworks display. Five hundred people then attended a dance at the Eastview Community Centre. [*Ottawa Journal*, January 3, 1967 p.3]



*Prime Minister Lester Pearson lights Centennial Flame on December 31, 1966*

Gloucester had planned an alternative to a Centennial flame by installing a white revolving beacon light from the radio tower behind the township hall but this was quickly shut down as it was conflicting with nearby beacon lights at Ottawa airport. In its place, Gloucester council decided to install a six by seven foot sign depicting the Centennial symbol and lit with 200 light bulbs. In addition, a flood lit sign reading 'Gloucester Township 1867-1967' was installed at the township hall [*Ottawa Journal*, January 17, 1967 p. 9, January 10, 1967 p.8].

On January 2nd, it was the military and RCMP's turn to welcome in the Centennial with levees at all its bases and other facilities in the Ottawa area. At the RCMP barracks at Rockcliffe, Commissioner G.B. McClennan was the host. Group Captain J.H. Rouseil greeted the public at RCAF Station Uplands, while Group Captain J.T. West did the same at RCAF Station Rockcliffe [*Ottawa Journal*, January 3, 1967 p.3]. The traditional Governor General's Levee was cancelled due to His Excellency's poor health [*Ottawa Journal*, December 28, 1966 p.3].

### Centennial Projects

In Gloucester, Centennial projects included the building of its first indoor swimming pool, and its first arena and a community hall. The swimming pool was named Centennial Swimming Pool and was officially opened on October 21<sup>st</sup> by Reeve Earl Armstrong [*Ottawa Journal*, October 23, 1967 p.39]. The Swimming Pool is now known as the Gloucester Splash Wave Pool. The arena and community hall became the Leitrim Arena that was not opened until September 27, 1969. It is now known as Fred Barrett Arena honouring the life-long Leitrim resident and former Gloucester Mayor.

Projects proposed in Eastview included the removal of the CPR tracks in preparation for a new Eastview arterial, the construction of a Centennial arena and the creation of a 3.25 hectare park south of Cummings Bridge along the Rideau River. The arena, initially named Eastview Arena, officially opened on September 15, 1967 [*Ottawa Journal*, September 16, 1967 p.43]. It was renamed Vanier Arena in 1969 and is now known as

the Bernard Grandmaitre Arena. It is located near the intersection of McArthur and Lecasse Avenues.

The park plan expanded to a \$500,000 eight hectare project extending as far south as the Rideau Tennis Club when further announced on November 28<sup>th</sup>. The plan included a picnic area, band shell, various playgrounds and swimming adjacent to Cummings Island [*Ottawa Journal*, November 29, 1967 p.3].

The Eastview arterial plan was referred to the provincial government but the request to cover the cost of designing and building the road was turned down as it did not meet the requirements for an urban expressway [*Ottawa Journal*, June 1, 1967 p.5]. Eastview Council subsequently approved its share of a functional study for the road [*Ottawa Journal*, October 19, 1967 p.3]. We now know this as the **Vanier Parkway** which opened in 1975.

Rockcliffe Park's centennial project was a 0.6 hectare park named Village Green located at the corner of Mariposa and Springfield Roads. It was officially opened on May 17, 1967 by Governor General Roland Michener. Other important guests were Prime Minister and Mrs. Lester B. Pearson and Mr. and Mrs. John Diefenbaker. The park featured flower beds, trees, benches and light standards donated by various residents. The park was centred by what was referred to as 'The





Humphrey Stone' which was named to honour the designer of the park, Humphrey Carver. The official opening was followed by a street dance, barbecue and fireworks [*Ottawa Journal*, May 19, 1967 p.17].

## Memories of 1967 Gloucester's New Suburbs

Centennial year brought great optimism of rapid growth in Gloucester Township. The Beacon Hill and Blackburn Hamlet subdivisions were approved in 1966 and housing construction was beginning in earnest during Centennial year. This was a major transformative project that would change Gloucester into a suburban municipality with many new services and facilities soon to come.



*Village Green, Rockcliffe*

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the 1967/68  
8 1/4%... not

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A limited number of homes are NOW available in Campeau's Beacon Hill at 6 1/4%, 7% and 7 1/4% mortgages... interest as much as 1 1/2% lower than the prevailing rate!

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For the convenience of Campeau homebuyers in Beacon Hill, a private bus service links Campeau's Beacon Hill to Shoppers City and St. Laurent Centre. Through Friday at no cost to passengers. The service also provides convenient connection to these GTC centres at St. Laurent Centre.

The Henry Murray Public School is the first of seven schools planned to provide complete educational facilities for the entire community. Fine large parks... and playing fields. For football, hockey and baseball. Minutes from the 18-hole Preview Golf and Country Club. Boating and fishing facilities are also at hand in the nearby Ottawa River.

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"See The Setting"

Blackburn Hamlet is a quiet, self-contained home community, completely self-contained and planned around a central greenbelt. All the facilities and amenities are there, are being built, or are being planned - everything is within walking distance. A major park is planned in the heart of the GTC (Greenbelt Transit Centre) in Blackburn Hamlet. It will include a swimming pool, a tennis court, a playground and a picnic area. Blackburn Hamlet is a planned community, a planned environment.

"What's Happening at Blackburn Hamlet?"

Good things. Homes are being built - homes that have respect for the land and the people who live on it. But not only homes are being built. All the facilities and amenities are there, are being built, or are being planned - everything is within walking distance. A major park is planned in the heart of the GTC (Greenbelt Transit Centre) in Blackburn Hamlet. It will include a swimming pool, a tennis court, a playground and a picnic area. Blackburn Hamlet is a planned community, a planned environment.

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- Gas: London (London)
- Electricity: London (London)
- Telecommunications: London (London)
- Transport: London (London)
- Power: London (London)
- Water: London (London)
- Sewerage: London (London)
- Gas: London (London)
- Electricity: London (London)
- Telecommunications: London (London)

OPEN 10:00 A.M. TO 8:00 P.M. DAILY - PHONE 740-4174

## Eastview Man of the Year

In Eastview, the Chamber of Commerce named Bishop elect Gerard Deschamps as 'Eastview Man of the Year' on January 6<sup>th</sup>. An award banquet was held on January 23<sup>rd</sup> [*Ottawa Journal*, January 7, 1967 p.17].

With a degree of controversy, Eastview council decided to allow restaurants to open 24 hours a day and defer the banishment of chip wagons from Eastview streets until December 31, 1967. During the 1960s, chip wagons were not allowed in neighbouring Gloucester or Ottawa [*Ottawa Journal*, January 19, 1967 p.3]. I fondly remember M. Poisson's chip wagon in front of the Loblaws store on Montreal Road and was saddened when Eastview's chip wagon ban came into effect. Some of the best French fries anywhere were no more.

## Public Libraries Come to Gloucester

The start of the year also brought news that the Township of Gloucester had come to an agreement with the Ottawa Public Library to provide library services into Gloucester Township for the first time through a Bookmobile. The service had begun in late 1966. As part of this agreement, Gloucester residents were also entitled to receive an Ottawa Public Library card [*Ottawa Journal*, January 16, 1967 p.37]. Later, the first permanent public library opened in the Gauthier Building on St. Joseph Boulevard in Orléans. The official opening took place on November 17<sup>th</sup>. Reflecting the dominant language of Orleans residents, three quarter of the books on the shelves were in French [*Ottawa Journal*, November 18, 1967 p.50].

## Television of the Future

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, it was announced that Skyline Cablevision would provide Cable television service to the area east of Bank Street and all of Gloucester Township. The 'exciting' new service would offer a choice of six television stations and nine FM radio stations. It was expected that service would begin in the Summer of 1967 in Eastview and by June 1968 in Gloucester [*Ottawa Journal*, January 18, 1967 p.31]. Can you imag-

ine that much choice? By November, Rockcliffe Park Council had approved the wiring of their village with service expected to commence in the spring of 1968 [*Ottawa Journal*, November 15, 1967 p.19].

## Metro Ottawa

Municipal administration was also being re-imagined. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, Ontario Municipal Affairs Minister Wilfred Spooner presented the concept of 'Metro Government' and a 'Super Council'. This was to be similar to Metro government in Toronto with certain responsibilities given over to this new level, while others would remain with the local municipality. At that point, the distribution of power was still fluid, however, it was proposed that each municipality would remain responsible for fire and police protection, public transit, hospitals, local streets, bridges, and neighbourhood water and sewer lines. Metro government was to be responsible for property assessment, the administration of justice, welfare services, major roads, sewer work and water supply [*Ottawa Journal*, February 2, 1967 p.25].

The Proposed Metro Super Council was to consist of 27 councillors including, a chairman, 16 councillors from Ottawa, 2 from Nepean, 2 from Eastview, 1 from each of Gloucester, Cumberland, Rockcliffe Park, Fitzroy-Torbolton-Huntley, March-Goulbourn-Stittsville-Richmond, and North Gower-Marlborough-Osgoode [*Ottawa Journal*, February 2, 1967 p.5].

This proposal eventually evolved into the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, which came into effect on January 1, 1969.

## Eastview Winter Carnival

Eastview celebrated the winter of 1967 with a winter carnival, which was highlighted by a parade on February 12<sup>th</sup> that began at the Eastview Shopping Centre adjacent to Cummings Bridge and followed Montreal Road and Olmstead Street where it ended at Eastview High School. Bonhomme Carnival from Quebec City was the special guest [*Ottawa Journal*, February 10, 1967 p.3].



A February 28<sup>th</sup> decision by the Gloucester Public School Board brought exciting news that all Grade 7 and 8 students would be eligible to go on a field trip to Expo 67 for the price of \$6.50. The author of this article was one of those students who went to see the amazing World's Fair in May as a result of this decision [*Ottawa Journal*, March 1, 1967 p.3].

### Gloucester Finally Goes Wet

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Gloucester council went behind closed doors to discuss whether to hold a plebiscite on having the township allow restaurants and taverns sell alcohol. At the time, only one hotel in the police village of Orléans permitted the sale of alcohol. Even Rideau-Carleton Raceway required special banquet permits [*Ottawa Journal*, April 4, 1967 p.23]. Gloucester had prohibited the sale of liquor and was considered 'dry' since the Ontario Temperance Act came into effect on September 18, 1916 introducing province-wide prohibition. Although Gloucester residents had voted twice previously to go 'wet' in 1921 and 1924, both votes were dependant on province wide majorities that were not achieved. Just in time for Dominion Day celebrations, Gloucester ratepayers voted in favour of going 'wet' on June 28<sup>th</sup> [*Ottawa Journal*, June 29, 1967 p.2]. Almost coincidentally, it was discovered that Gloucester territories that had been annexed by the City of Ottawa in 1950 were still subject to Gloucester's prior 'dry' status. Each municipality under the Ontario Liquor Control Act was required to pass a plebiscite vote and this had not happened in that territory. This became apparent when the Marco Polo Restaurant on Bank Street near Heron Road could not renew its liquor license and a license had been refused for the restaurant in the new Ottawa Railway Station on Tremblay Road. The City of Ottawa considered whether a liquor plebiscite would be necessary [*Ottawa Journal*, April 20, 1967 p.25, July 12, 1967 p.8]

On the same day, Ottawa City Council approved the widening of Cummings Bridge by pushing the sidewalks out beyond the main structure of the bridge. The cost was \$100,000. Some concerns were expressed that more importantly the approaches to the bridge needed to be im-

proved especially from Rideau Street [*Ottawa Journal*, April 4, 1967 p.34].

### Spring Cleaning

The month of May brought about a 'Happening' in New Edinburgh when the public was invited on May 6<sup>th</sup> to help clean-up and begin a refurbishment of the Beechwood shopping area that had become quite seedy. At the time, the street still featured an unsightly scrap yard on the Eastview side of the street [*Ottawa Journal*, April 29, 1967 p.43]. A similar event took place in Eastview that was called 'Eastview Clean-Up Week' which began on May 8<sup>th</sup>. It asked all residents to clean-up the streets and backyards of the city and 200 trees were to be planted. The city arranged for a special garbage pickup to remove the expected extra garbage and debris [*Ottawa Journal*, May 9, 1967 p.37].

### Rockcliffe Centennial Military Shows

Later in the month on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Ottawa hosted for the first time the National Air Rally at Rockcliffe Airport. This featured the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Governor General's Cup [*Ottawa Journal*, May 24, 1967 p.18]. This was followed by an even bigger event at the same location on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Armed Forces Day was attended by an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 spectators. It featured aircraft dating back to the First World War and the show climaxed with the RCAF aerobatic team aptly named the Golden Centennaires performing with their nine Tutor jet trainers [*Ottawa Journal*, June 10, 1967 p.33].



(This article will be continued in next issue.)

## Alta Vista Drive – How it Began – Correction to Winter 2015 Article Historic Gloucester Volume 16 Number 4

By Glenn Clark

To the right is an excerpt from a 1945 air photograph that shows the southern extent of Alta Vista Drive (then Churchill Drive) at that time. The photo shows Kilborn Avenue running east-west at the bottom of the photo and the earliest homes built on Alta Vista Drive. The very top of the photo shows the beginnings of Mountbatten Avenue running to the east and in the middle, Cunningham Avenue running to the west. It also shows the beginnings of Braeside Avenue running north and south off of Kilborn and just to the east of Alta Vista Drive.

What is most important is that although a little work had begun on Alta Vista Drive south of Kilborn, this photo proves that it was not completed as far as Randall Avenue in 1940 as previously reported.



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

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

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

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