



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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W.C. Edwards Mills at Rideau Falls, New Edinburgh where a disastrous fire started. Many businesses and homes in the area were completely destroyed.
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President’s Report
 By Glenn Clark

As I write this, we are all experiencing difficult living history, the COVID 19 pandemic. I hope you and your family are safe and you have found a way to interact with family and friends despite social distancing requirements.

If there was any time to keep a journal or diary, this is one. Many will have the time, and once this is over, we will be anxious to put it behind us. However, the details of our experiences during this time will be a gift to the future. How many times have you asked yourself? Why did I not ask so and so about an important historic event of the past when I had the opportunity? This is your chance to record an important historic event as it is happening without the distortions and analysis that comes only after the event is over.

Like most organizations, the Gloucester Historical Society has suspended almost all activities. Our annual meeting scheduled for April 26th with speaker Andrew King was postponed until at least September. I hope and expect Andrew to be our speaker once we can reschedule and I think you will enjoy his interesting view on obscure details in Ottawa history. He has recently written a book titled “Ottawa Rewind” and you can find his stories on local history at <https://ottawarewind.com/author/ottawow/> . Some of his stories relate to Gloucester.

I know my personal plans for 2020 have caused some anxiety. I retired from my career on April 17th and I have taken a part-time position at a Gloucester garden centre. This did not proceed as anticipated, but I know it is going to turn out fine. I had looked forward to hosting a Jane’s Walk and welcoming visitors for Doors Open and both are now postponed or cancelled. We will return to some form of normal eventually and I know we are looking forward to that. Try to stay positive.

In the meantime, enjoy our newsletter.

THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 BY APPOINTMENT ONLY DURING THE SPRING MONTHS
 LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)
 FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT Mary Boyd at 613-521-2082 or boydmary172@gmail.com

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 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.



Sussex Drive looking east in the late 1930s featuring the No. 6 Fire Hall rebuilt following the 1907 fire

The 1907 New Edinburgh Fire

By Glenn Clark

July 24th was a normal Ottawa summer day with a high of 25C. Evening brought thunderstorms, a typical feature of summer weather. Watchmen of the W.C. Edwards Company on Sussex Street in New Edinburgh and adjacent to Rideau Falls, made their normal rounds during the overnight hours. At 4:30 a.m, fireman, Tom O'Grady and watchman Napoleon Patrice made a final round. Tom's duty was to start the three boilers at 5:00 a.m.

At 5:15 a.m., what so many Ottawans dreaded, a warning whistle began blowing at the Gilmour and Hughson Mill just across the river in Hull. This was always a sign of trouble, big trouble. Shortly afterwards, Messrs. O'Grady and Patrice were startled by smoke and fire in the planing mill. Immediately, Mr. O'Grady ran to start the mill warning whistle while Mr. Patrice ran to No. 6 fire hall across Sussex Street and yelled for the firemen to assist,

while pulling the fire box in front of the station.

Within minutes, the firemen under Captain Taylor were on the scene at which point they put out a general alarm to the other fire stations for further assistance. The firemen set up three lines of hose and began applying water to the fire, but it spread at incredible speed. With these whistles blowing at such an early hour, while nearby residents were still asleep, one can imagine the panic that occurred. Very quickly hundreds of people were on the streets to watch the commotion.

The Ottawa Journal described the fire as follows:

"The factory of the Library Bureau of Canada soon caught from the blazing particles sent forth from the kiln-dried lumber, and the firemen who had been summoned by the alarm at 5:25 and their attentions diverted over a wide area. As soon as Chief Provost arrived on the scene, a general alarm was sent in and the entire brigade with the three fire

engines were soon working strenuously. One of the engines used water from the Rideau River, and it was the most effective of all.

At 7:15, the electric wires which form such a network on Sussex Street adjacent to the burning area became entangled and a return blow was sounded. and the extra water pressure was turned off. This only lasted for a short time, however, as it was found that the big blaze was yet in progress. Pressure again was placed at 100 pounds, and nothing could be better than the service furnished.

Two engines were located on Stanley avenue, and one on Sussex street outside the fire station. The trolley wires, the electric and telephone connections furnished a great source of danger to the firemen and to the spectators who ably assisted them. However, electricians were soon on the scene, and the current was turned off and other precautions taken.

The steady breeze from the north fanned the blaze, but fortunately for New Edinburgh it changed to the northwest, and this undoubtedly saved many more homes. Fortunately, the breeze never blew toward the big lumber mill, which undoubtedly saved it. The heat became so intense on Sussex street that the firemen had to move the Lafrance engine on to Stanley avenue.

The fire crossed the road to the mica factory, on Sussex street, and in this \$50,000 worth of mica was stored. Then followed the coachhouse near the Blackburn home, and it was only that these buildings were solid that saved them from spreading to the dwellings. Great efforts aided by the change in wind, saved all in the rear of this block. From the large shed of kiln-dried lumber on the hill going down to the ferry, the tremendous heat and flying embers caught the top of the Russell Blackburn mica factory. The flames broke out from the roof of No. 6 fire stations and C.J. Neate's grocery adjoining. Then these spread to the Edwards Co. office on one side, and the Foley hotel on the other. The heat was so intense that only an attack could be made from the lane in the rear.

It was at this time the fire was brought and the tide of disaster was stemmed. The firemen put on big streams of water on the residence of Mr. L.K. McLaurin and Miss J. Gray at the corner of John and Sussex streets, while on the opposite side of the road there was a seething mass of flames from the lumber piles and mica factory and Blackburn stable.

The Foley hotel was also ablaze, but hard work saved the stables in the rear and for the first-time residents in the vicinity began to breath freely. Chief Provost then directed his attention to the burning mass of lumber on the riverbank behind the mill, but so great was the hold that nothing could be done to save it. It was not dangerous as the river was on one side, and the burning debris on the other.

Looking from Stanley Avenue, the scene was one of complete devastation. A wall of flame faced the street. The electric wires, once support on poles, had come to earth. Some were suspended some few feet above the ground. Under this menace to life and limb the firemen had to dodge. The wires were held up by a slender thread. Did that give the firemen would undoubtedly have received a severe shock, and perhaps death.

Likewise persons, the dwellers of Stanley, John and Thomas streets, within several hundred yards of the conflagration, moved their household goods from their dwellings. Tables, chairs, and other such articles reposed on the sidewalk within easy reach of rigs and carts, called for an emergency. Near the corner of John and Thomas street, a family group, forced to abandon their home, made themselves as comfortable as it was possible before the public gaze. One little child, oblivious to the nearby flames, dozed peacefully on an impromptu couch covered with a downy pallsse. The young people of New Edinburgh worked heroically to save the chattels of the surrounding people. In and out the houses they ran.

In the burned section the goods of Mr. Joseph Smith, who resides over the W.C. Edwards office, and those of C. J. Neate, also much of his grocery stock, were quickly hustled out, including a heavy piano, to move which the stairs had to be broken. Michael Foley at the hotel saved most of his furniture. One husky young giant, as he grappled with something bigger than himself, remarked to his companions: 'Good training, boys.' A number of W.C. Edwards' employees, working in the interests of the company, foregathered on the river side of the factory grounds, and seeing that the fire would inevitably spread towards the lumber piles there, they slung huge timbers into the river. There is a drop of some seventy feet from the mill grounds to the Ottawa flowing beneath, and squared timber and planks fell from the height and were gathered into a boom below.

In this way considerable lumber was saved, but how much for certain is not known.

The burned planing mill was a frame building, recently erected, and in it had just been installed two of the very best and latest planers. The factory and the Library Bureau of Canada were stone buildings, and there were five immense sheds of dried lumber, one of which alone is estimated to have been worth \$50,000.

A few minutes suffice to get out the automobile, horses and carriages of Mr. Blackburn before the stables took fire, but the house was not thought to be in danger.

Mr. Gordon Edwards, manager of W.C. Edwards and Co., said this morning that the firm's loss would be over the \$300,000 mark, and that about two-thirds of that amount was covered by insurance. As to the origin of the fire, he could say nothing, except that he thought it probable that the planing mill was struck by lightning during the storm of last night, that the fire smoldered unseen by the watchmen until it burst into sudden life after the last rounds had been made."

Here is what the Ottawa Citizen said of the fire.

"The Edwards company's loss is a heavy one for apart from the buildings and the valuable machinery, there was a large stock of material burned totalling a millions and a half feet of hard woods, a remarkable quantity of lumber and a lot of library and office fixtures, sashes, doors and furnishings, ready for shipment or in process of manufacture. And then a big staff of more or less skilled labour is out of employment.

....

But the fire, however, went on almost as if unopposed. The flames had gotten a firm foothold on the planing mill with its great quantity of lumber, and in a few minutes the building was completely ablaze. The roaring flames were shooting high into the sky, so as to be seen from all parts of the city. There was still hope that this mill alone would be consumed. It was situated at the edge of the river and on the two sides not protected by the river the water was kept playing.

But at this juncture the wind began to rise

quickly and swept about the great yard of lumber, carrying blazing embers in every direction. All the employees of the factory living near were on the scene and with dozens of wooden pails they manned the piles of lumber and kept pouring water on the wood. The flames spread to the Library Bureau at about 6 o'clock. One of the workmen in this building phoned to the foreman previously that this factory was in danger and the foreman phoned back for them to save the men's tools first. Each workman there had a kit which would range in value from \$75 to \$100. They were in chests, scattered throughout the factory. These were almost without exception saved., and the men are grateful to their boss for these instructions. Little else, however, was taken from the fated building. It was a large stone structure situated on the extreme east and with it and the planing mill in flames, all the northern end of the yard above the docks was in conflagration.

The wind was still freshening and the great volumes of smoke, as they poured from each window, came in clouds through the yards and sent the fire fighters back gasping for breath. The hose was stretched through between the library bureau and the kilns, but for a few moments only. The great heat of the burning furniture baked the walls of the kiln and in spite of the water, blaze after blaze started and the firemen were driven out, one narrowly escaping the wall as it crashed down.

The kilns were of wood and situated very closely together, so that with one on fire it was only a matter of seconds until the other succumbed to the terrific heat, and the vigilance of the bucket brigade on the roof only added a few seconds to the life to the doomed building.

The yard was lighted with arc lamps and as the wires melted these fell one after another with a crash which could be heard above the din of shouting men and the roars of the blaze. One fell among the workmen, but fortunately no one was thus injured.

The second kiln was in the shape of an L and stretched almost to Sussex street, forming with the library bureau nearly the entire eastern boundary of the yard. It was filled with hard and soft lumber, and the flames rushed from end to end of the long building almost immediately. The entire yard east of the Rideau river and north of Sussex street was now doomed. The wind carried the fire directly over the piles of lumber which filled up the remainder.

The heat of the thousands of feet of burning lumber was intense beyond description. The fire engine in front of the fire station had to be moved to save it and the well-trained horses reared and jumped in the baking heat as they were hitched to the engine. It was taken to the riverbank.

The hose was drawn out and the yard was left to its fate at about seven o'clock. Sussex street proved not wide enough to protect the houses on the other side, and the crowds of spectators, which were now numbering in the thousands, drew back up the side streets, unable to endure the great heat. Wires fell in all directions and the poles burned as if saturated in oil.

The walls and roofs of the houses facing the burning lumber on Sussex street ignited and from all part of the block smoke and flames burst out. The block was composed of the Edwards company office, a stone building: Charles J. Neate's grocery, the fire station, and Rideau Hotel, owned and occupied by Michael Foley, each built of brick. The Edwards company were able to save the books, etc. in the office, and much of the furniture in the hotel was safely transported. Very little was rescued from the store, and when the flames struck the supply of cartridges there was a series of explosions. The gong and the telephone were rescued from the fire station. In the tower was about twelve lengths of hose, which were all burned.

The residents thought the entire street was to fall victim to the flames, and the road was soon blocked with transport wagons, delivery wagons, carriages and wheelbarrows, hustling furniture here and there from every house.

At the corner of Sussex and John streets, facing the burning mill, the mica factory of Messrs. Blackburn with nearly 100 tons of mica, caught fire and the building was burned down. Of a long stone shed at the rear, only the blackened walls are standing. All the more valuable stuff stored in the shed was removed uninjured.

Meanwhile the fire had worked its way to the lumber on the dock on the Ottawa river. One of the engines was taken from the river and attached to a hydrant on Sussex street and a long line of hose stretched down to the dock. The workmen, however, were more effective in saving the lumber by dumping

the boards into the river within a boom which was hastily constructed. Most of that for which sufficient time was not allowed to be thrown into the river was burned.

The fire was now under control. The blaze was stopped on the south-east with the sheds at the rear of the Rideau Hotel. The shed of the Ottawa Electric company on Stanley avenue, in which stores were kept, was saved. It contained a tank of oil which caused much anxiety for a time. On the east the Blackburn residence (now 24 Sussex) was uninjured and on the west the bridge was only slightly damaged.

There was still a brisk blaze going on in the center of the ruins this afternoon but is being closely watched. There was a double pressure of water kept up during the fire except for a few minutes after 7:15 o'clock. At that time the wires falling sent a return signal to the pump house and for a few minutes the engineer thought that the fire was out.

.....

Of the buildings burned, the library bureau factory was probably the most valuable. The loss there is around \$75,000. In this factory, library, office, bar and other fixtures and equipment were made, and a considerable stock was on hand or in process of manufacture, while valuable woods were carried to a large extent.

On the planing mill, sash and door factory the loss is about \$60,000. Considerable valuable machinery was destroyed there.

The company's offices at the corner of Sussex street and Stanley avenue were beautifully fitted up, while containing a library and recreation room for the men. It is thought that the firm's books and papers are safe in the vaults. The loss on this building will probably be around \$15,000. Joseph Smith, a caretaker, occupied quarters upstairs and lost about \$500.

The loss on the C.J. Neate's grocery and residence above is about \$5,000, and there is said to be no insurance.

No. 6 fire station is a complete loss, as there is no insurance on such property. The loss to the city will be about \$5,000. The station is one of the oldest,

having been erected when New Edinburgh was annexed to the city. It was not a very spacious fire hall but was neatly fitted up.

The Rideau hotel, which was burned was formerly owned by Pierce Mansfield, but the present owner is Michael Foley. Very little was saved, and the total loss is round \$7,000. It is largely covered by insurance.

The loss on the old Blackburn factory in itself was not extensive, but it contained a lot of valuable mica ready for shipment. Probably \$20,000 will cover it. The sheds and stables were valued at \$1,500.

The Edwards' buildings burned were largely old stone ones erected many years ago and brought up to date to meet the requirements of the firm and its growing business.

Mr. Gordon C. Edwards, head of the firm in Ottawa, was early at the fire and to the Citizen reporter placed the loss as "between \$200,000 and \$300,000. It was the general opinion that this estimate is very conservative. Mr. Edwards had little to say."

Two hundred and fifty workmen lost their jobs as a result of the fire. Total damage in 2019 dollars is estimated at \$8,000,000. The W.C. Edwards mill sometimes exceeded the lumber production of the J.R. Booth mill at Chaudiere Falls.

Fire Station No. 6 was rebuilt and opened in 1910. The W.C. Edwards and Co. mill was also rebuilt but the company was purchased by Riordon Pulp and Paper Company and its subsidiary Gatineau Company Limited in 1920, and operations began to be shutdown on February 1, 1922. The contents of the mill were sold in 1926. The building, which included hydro electric turbines, was expropriated by the federal government in 1928 [*Ottawa Journal*, April 9, 1928 p.16, April 30, 1928 p.18, *Ottawa Citizen*, June 11, 1928 p.15].

The Edwards Mill building was used by the National Research Council, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and in its last years by the National Film Board, the Food and Drug Laboratories of the Department of Health and Welfare and the National Research Laboratory aeronautical research tank. Demolition was contracted by J.A Cronier Co. Ltd. in late 1956 [*Ottawa Citizen*, November 9, 1956 p.7].

The Residents of New Edinburgh – 1873

From the Cherrier and Kirwin Directory

Ottawa St = Sussex Drive

Rideau St. = Stanley Avenue

C.H Aird, spinner, Thomas St.

George Allen, carpenter, Alexander St.

James Allen, storekeeper, Ottawa St.

James Andrews, music teacher, Rideau St.

Henry Avery, carpenter, Rideau St.

David Baldwin, laborer, Rideau St.

James Ballantyne, cooper, McKay St.

James Bambrick, laborer, Alexander St.

Dr. W.R. Bell, M.D.

Mrs. Albert Biron, John St.

Blackburn & Co. woolen mills

James Blackburn, corn agent

Robert Blackburn, general store

John Bray, blacksmith

Michael Brennan, carter, Crichton St.

Luke Burns, laborer

Carter A. Burpee, with J.W. Proctor & Co.

Henry O. Burritt (retired woolen manufacturer)

James Carthy, gardener, Rideau St.

Lt. Col. Brown Chamberlain, Queen's Printer,

McKay St.

Robert Clark, plasterer, Rideau St.

Thomas M. Clark, N.E. Brick Works

Mrs. Mary Curran, Crichton St.

J.M. Currier, M.P.

William Curtis, laborer, Crichton St.

Mrs. Patrick Daly, Alexander St.

Thomas Davis, wheelwright, Ottawa St.

Fred Dawson, carpenter, Crichton St.

Michael Dillon, laborer, Crichton St.

Robert Duff, carpenter, Union St.

Charles Esplin, millwright, Crichton St.

Thomas Evans Jr., carpenter, Alexander St.

Thomas Evans Sr., weaver, Alexander St.

Evercy Harris, carpenter, Rideau St.

Captain Thomas Farmer, Rideau St.

John Ferguson, carpenter, Charles St.

John Finlay, laborer, Alexander St.

Alexander Fleming, spinner, Charles St.

Mark Flood, laborer, Alexander St.
 James D. Fraser, telegraph operator
 Albert French, manager N.E. Woolen Mills
 William Graham, bookkeeper, Ottawa St.
 Phil Hartley, laborer, Rideau St.
 John Henderson, manager, Alexander St.
 Rev. G.N. Higginson, Church of England
 William Holmes, contractor, Rideau St.
 George Irvine, laborer, Alexander St.
 Thomas Johnson, laborer, John St.
 Thomas C. Keefer, civil engineer and architect
 Hiram Knapp, grocer, Rideau St.
 Louis Labelle, millwright, Charles St.
 Baron Lisgar, Governor-General, Rideau Hall
 Mrs. John Lumsden, Rideau St.
 William McCandlish, carpenter, Ottawa St.
 James McClaren, flour mill
 Mrs. Andrew McClean, Ottawa St.
 Dougald McCloud, miller, Rideau St.
 William McClymont, flour mill
 John McElroy, carpenter, Union St.
 Alexander McGuiness, laborer, Alexander St.
 James McKenna, contractor, Rideau St.
 Malcolm McNorton, forwarder
 Lt. Col. J.C. McNeill, V.C., military secretary, Rideau Hall
 Mrs. Isaac McTaggart, McKay St.
 Lefebvre Mainguy, draughtsman, Rideau St.
 Philip Mainguy, Ottawa post office, Rideau St.
 W.A. Mainguy, P.O. Dept, Rideau St.
 Pierce Mansfield, hotel-keeper
 Max Marcouiller, carpenter, Alexander St.
 Mrs. William Marriott, Thomas St.
 Mrs. James Maxwell, Rideau St.
 Mrs. William Meyer, Crichton St.
 John Millar, millwright, Crichton St.
 William Murphy, laborer, John St.
 Charles C. Neville, Argi. Dept., Ottawa, St.
 Mich. O'Connell, butler, Rideau Hall
 Jeremiah Osgood, salesman, Charles St.
 Rev. T.D. Phillips (Anglican Church), Crichton St.
 Joseph Picotte, carpenter, Union St.
 Josiah Proctor, storekeeper & postmaster, Ottawa St.
 Hon. A.W. Ponsonby, aide, Rideau Hall
 Patrick Redman, laborer, Thomas St.
 James Regan, storekeeper, Thomas St.
 William Riley, laborer, Thomas St.

John Saul, mason, Crichton St.
 Samuel Savage, clerk, Union St.
 James Scott, school teacher, Rideau St.
 Andre Seguin, laborer, John St.
 John Sherwood, lawyer, Alexander St.
 Henry Sims, gardener, McKay St.
 George Sleaman, laborer, Ottawa St.
 Mrs. Eliza Smith, Ottawa St.
 James Sorley, gardener, Rideau Hall
 Charles Stevens, Asst. P.M., Rideau St.
 Charles Stroulger, Governor-General's orderly, Crichton St.
 Robert Surtees, C.E. and architect, Rideau St.
 I.B. Taylor, Prop. Ottawa Citizen, Pine St.
 Robert Tink, laborer, Thomas St.
 Thomas Tubman, teacher and clerk of village, Crichton St.
 William Tubman, gardener, John St.
 William Urie, storekeeper, Ottawa, St.
 Benjamin Voyer, laborer, Alexander St.
 Herb Weatherston, laborer, John St.
 Mrs. E. Whitworth, boarding house, Thomas St.
 A.C. Wilson, of A. Wilson & Son.
 Dr. William Wilson, M.D., McKay St.
 William Woodbury, carpenter, Ottawa St.

Rockcliffe's Mile Circle

By Glenn Clark

Mile Circle is a park along the Sir Georges-Etienne Cartier Parkway between Hillsdale Road and Birch Avenue just east of Rockcliffe Park. It once was the centre of controversy, but its original purpose is now hidden in the grass. The current parkway actually cuts through the middle of 'Mile Circle' when it was built in 1955 and consequently the 'circle' was officially abandoned at that time [*Ottawa Citizen*, March 22, 1955 p.16, September 7, 1955 p.1]. The area was also known for its bridle paths, which were to be preserved at the time of the construction of the new parkway.

The controversy arose in 1986 when the area was proposed for the new American embassy, to replace its previous location across from Parliament Hill. By 1988, after considerable community activism, the location was moved slightly east, closer to the RCMP barracks and stables [*Ottawa Citizen*. March 3, 1988 p.B3]. The new site was more acceptable to local residents and was approved by the NCC. However, in the end American budgetary restrictions scuttled the plan [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 10, 1989 p.B1].

The whole affair dated back to a 1969 plan by the Canadian government to take over the Wellington Street embassy. In 1983, the American government had planned to purchase the current MacKenzie-Sussex site, however, security concerns substantially increased following a terrorist bombing in Beirut that killed 241 people. In 1985, the Inman Act was passed in the United States which increased the security requirements for a new embassy. Buildings were to be at least 30 meters from a street and underground parking was to be avoided. All designed to reduce the risks from car bombs. This led to the proposal for the more expansive Mile Circle site that was considered more easily secured. By 1993, security was no longer as big an issue and the project made a full circle back to the Sussex Drive site where the new embassy was subsequently built [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 15, 1998 p.A2].

The 'Mile Circle' term makes reference back to the original purpose of the location. The term first appeared in the media in the early 1950s when the area was being used for horse back riding and was popularized when the new parkway was being constructed through the area a few years later. There was an old one-mile track that was still evident at that time. But what was its original purpose?

It all dated back to the early days of the Ottawa Improvement Commission that was founded in 1899 to beautify Ottawa. The commission had a grand scheme to improve the Rockcliffe area as far east as the Rifle Range at the north end of today's St. Laurent Boulevard.

Many ideas were presented including: "The idea was to have a speedway a mile long, not of course for races, but for fast horses, riding and automobiles." [*Ottawa Journal*, August 23, 1903 p.1]. More definite plans emerged in 1905 when a speedway was to be constructed in Rockcliffe Park with a children's playground in the centre [*Ottawa Journal*, March 2, 1905 p.7]. Further elaboration was made that the speedway was to be built on land once owned by the Bank of Ottawa with bridle paths nearby on land that was formerly swamp which was being filled in [*Ottawa Citizen*, February 3, 1905 p.10]. In an *Ottawa Citizen* article dated July 16, 1906 (Page 9), it was noted that amongst all the latest developments in Rockcliffe, that the

speedway construction was half finished.

However, despite previous promises, permission was granted to use the "Rockcliffe Speedway" for auto racing. The Ottawa Valley Motor Car Association scheduled races on July 14, 1910 [*Ottawa Journal*, July 14, 1910 p.8]. The newspaper account read: "Ottawa's first attempt at real automobile racing nearly ended in a fatality at Rockcliffe Speedway Saturday, Mr. G. P. Harris' car being smashed, while the two occupants had a miraculous escape from instant death. The accident happened in the second heat of the five-mile open event, and Harris' car, showing a registered speed of fifty-five miles per hour, was passing the McQuaig entry when the latter car skidded. To avoid a terrific collision, Harris turned his machine into the embankment, the big machine bringing up against a curb with a jolt and throwing its occupants high over the obstacle. Neither men were seriously injured, scratches and bruises comprising the wounds. There was a large crowd on hand, and as the accident happened in plain view of the spectators, it was thought for a time that both men were killed." [*Ottawa Journal*, July 18, 1910 p.10].

There is no indication that automobile racing ever took place again. Shortly afterwards, there was a desire to have a municipally operated golf course and one location suggested was the centre of the speedway. They believed that area was big enough for a 9-hole golf course. Other ideas included an athletic track and a stadium for spectators. None of these ideas became a reality [*Ottawa Journal*, June 6, 1911 p.4].

Following the end of Great War, the speedway was used extensively for an entirely different type of racing, this time bicycle racing. Throughout the 1920s, this was a common activity on the track, but this all came to a sudden end with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929. From then on, its only use was for occasional joy riding and in one case to find a quiet place to commit suicide. The track lay abandoned when it was decided to sever it to build the new parkway in 1955. Any vestiges of the old track gradually faded away or were removed. Yet the 'Mile Circle' name remains and still reminds us of a grand plan and big ideas that all faded away. Below is an air photo from 1928.





In our last edition of Historic Gloucester (Vol 20, NO. 4, Winter 2019) we had a very interesting article entitled *The Enemy Living Amongst Us in Gloucester — Prisoners of War and Farm Policy during World War II*. Unfortunately at the time of the publication of that article we did not have any photos of prisoners of war. We have now located a photo of a German prisoner of war who was working on the farm of Peter Budd during some of the war years. He looks quite happy to be in Canada.

German Prisoner of War on the farm of Peter Budd, Blackburn Hamlet

(with thanks to Don Budd)

To renew or become a new member, please complete this form and return it to the address below with your cheque. Memberships may also be purchased on our website.

Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester
(Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31.)

Please note that we are adding a new category of long term (10 year) membership and discontinuing life memberships. Current life members will continue to be honoured. Details are below.

Annual Membership/ - \$20.00 for one year..... 10 year Membership \$150.00

NAME: _____ Email Address: _____

ADDRESS: _____ Telephone # _____

CITY: _____ PROV _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Donations are always welcome. We are a registered charitable organization and provide tax receipts.

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