



H50G 10/32

# THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU LA SOCIÉTÉ HISTORIQUE DE LA GATINEAU

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## Newsletter

No. 97-8: December 1997 - January 1998

*"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to fulfil it." - George Santayana*

### **Coming Events**

### **REMEMBRANCE DAY IN CHELSEA - Historical Society Hosts Ceremony**

Monday, December 1

#### **CAROL SINGING AT THE GRANGE**

The squire of the Grange, Bob Phillips, has invited members of the Historical Society to an evening of carol singing and conviviality. Time: 7:00 p.m.  
Location: the foot of Summer Road in Cantley.

Those wishing to attend are asked to please confirm by calling our Secretary, Eileen Castleman, at 827-4432.



Monday, January 19

#### **"Gatineau River Photographs - Before the Dams and Now"**

**Speaker: Duncan Marshall**

A licensed pilot and aerial photographer, Duncan Marshall has assembled a fascinating collection of comparative views of the Gatineau River.

Monday, February 16

**Speaker: Brian Anthony**  
Executive Director, Heritage Canada

**Annual General Meeting**

Regular meetings start at 8:00 (refreshments at 7:30).  
Chelsea Community Centre, Old Chelsea Road.

On Remembrance Day, November 11, the Historical Society hosted the annual service in honour of fallen veterans and, in particular, Private Richard Rowland Thompson, only Canadian recipient of the Queen's Scarf, presented for valour during the South African War. The ceremonies took place in the Pioneer Cemetery, just off Highway 105 on the northern outskirts of the village of Chelsea. Officers and members of the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Canadian Forces Medical Services participated.

Just prior to the service, the Officer Commanding Leadership Company, Major L.D.W. Haisell presented medals and decorations to personnel who had served on the United Nations force in Somalia.

Wreaths were laid by representatives of the Government of Canada, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal Canadian Regimental Association, Canadian Forces Medical Services, the South African High Commission, the Municipality of Chelsea, Chelsea Elementary School, École du Grand-boisé, the Historical Society of the Gatineau, and Mayor Judith Grant of Chelsea in honour of Bertha Alexander Thompson.

A special feature this year was the display of an official replica of the Queen's Scarf of Honour presented to Private Thompson, on loan from the Canadian War Museum. A fly-past by three armed forces jet aircraft (on their way to Parliament Hill) again highlighted the proceedings.

Thanks to George Gould for his leadership in organizing the ceremony.





## ***"Private Richard Rowland Thompson and the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery"***

The following is a talk to residents of the New Edinburgh Retirement Apartments, given November 4, 1997, by Carol Martin, President of the Historical Society. Those present included Col. Strome Galloway (former colonel of the Royal Canadian Regiment), Lt. Col. Gordon Way (long-time staff member of the Department of Veterans' Affairs), Peter Curd (executive assistant to the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, 1963-1968), and Hon. Roger Teillet, P.C. (former Minister of National Defence).

The story of a hero who had lapsed into obscurity is also the story of a small cemetery which had also sunk into near-oblivion. It makes me pause to think how the collective memory lapses during half a century! And this is a challenge for everyone concerned about local history, and its preservation.

Located on a hill and set back from the road, the burial area known as the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery is officially located on "part of Lot 11D, Range 9" in the Municipality of Chelsea. Records of the cemetery itself are sketchy: land records in the National Archives of Canada show that John Maxwell applied for this land on September 21, 1827; later records show that the cemetery site was in the hands of the Church family by 1872, but do not indicate just when they obtained the land. The Churches were Americans from New England who had arrived in this part of Quebec in the 1820s (their original lots in the late 1820s were to the east and west of this site).

Clearly, this was a private cemetery for the Churches and their relatives at first. However, several Protestant religious institutions (the generic kind of churches) became established near the site in the 1860s and 1870s, and a mill complex on the Gatineau River nearby gave importance to the little village growing up near a crossroads of what is now Route 105 and the Old Chelsea Road.

There are only 14 monuments now in this cemetery; the ones that commemorate Private Thompson and his wife, Bertha Alexander, were both erected in the 1960s. However, the discovery of Private Thompson's burial site gave impetus to the then recently-formed Historical Society of the Gatineau (founded in 1972) to become legally incorporated in order to take over ownership of the small cemetery, which had seen only depletion of its monuments since the 1920s, as survivors of the Brooks, Church, and Benedict families had the remains (and monuments) of family members transferred to Beechwood Cemetery - which of course had space for subsequent relatives as well as ongoing maintenance and care.

If there are other heroes to connect with Private Richard Rowland Thompson, one of them must be Bombardier Kenneth Richardson of the Historical Section at National Defence, who, in the 1960s conducted the search that led to the re-discovery of Thompson's burial site, and who worked with various government and private sources, along with the Historical Society of the Gatineau, to mark and preserve this site.

According to HSG files, a Canadian journalist in western Canada raised the question of the whereabouts of the Canadian recipient of the Queen's Scarf. Apparently the publisher of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* also became interested in the location of the "Canadian scarf" after reading a newspaper article during a visit to England; he raised the matter with the Department of National Defence upon his return. What we do know is that after Bombardier Richardson became interested in tracing the scarf, he traced Thompson's family in Cork by following the clue that the family had been in the catering or candy business in Ireland. The family was still in business, and Thompson's nephew, had the scarf displayed in a case in the front office. The Thompson family responded to the interest of the Canadian government, agreeing to offer the scarf on a "permanent loan" to the people of Canada. In return, the expenses of Samuel Thompson, his wife, and sister Dorcas were to be paid for their trip to Canada to present the scarf, and the Canadian government agreed to preserve it permanently and make it accessible to the public. It also had a replica of the scarf made for the Thompson family.

On Victoria Day (Monday, May 24) in 1965, at an impressive ceremony on Parliament Hill, the Queen's Scarf was presented to Canada. Mr. Teillet and others of you here, I am delighted to note, were among the Canadian officials participating at that occasion.

The scarf was one thing; the grave, another. Following publication about Thompson and the scarf in the local press, Douglas Cowden, a relative of the Alexander family, contacted the press and Richardson; he was able to indicate exactly where the (then unmarked) Thompson grave was. The Historical Society of the Gatineau, which had been founded in 1962, undertook to deal with a whole series of questions connected with the preservation of the grave site. This resolution resulted in the Society obtaining its provincial charter, since the way they decided to resolve care and maintenance of Thompson's grave site was to become owners of the cemetery. The charter was a requirement for their ownership. Bombardier Richardson's notes (March 2, 1965) show that the cost for application for a charter was \$25, in addition to the legal fees of the notary public who had to sign it (charter Letters Patent signed 8 July 1965, registered 6 August same year).



Although the then owner of the cemetery, Cecil Meredith (a descendent of the Church family) was willing to donate the cemetery itself to the Historical Society, some kind of access link would be necessary to reach it from the (now Route 105). A right-of-way (some 29 feet by 240 feet) was needed. The Society appealed to its membership and the local public for funds for this purpose; the final transaction delivered the cemetery land and the access route to the Historical Society of the Gatineau (President at that time: Arthur Davison) on December 19, 1966 for the total sum of \$1,000.

The Government of Canada erected a stone cairn with an appropriate bronze plaque in the cemetery, and the Thompson family gave stone markers (also with plaques) to flank the entrance. The grave itself needed a marker; Veterans' Affairs provided a simple but fine military stone, while the Alexander family provided a stone to mark Bertha Alexander's grave along with those of her parents, James and Mary Alexander.

Over the ensuing period of some twenty years, Arthur Davison worked with other volunteers from the Society to trim brush and help care for this little cemetery. Over the years, this work became an increasingly physical burden to him. Beyond this, few people other than the Executive of the Society seemed to be aware of the cemetery and its importance. In 1984 the Society faced options for the future, and mounted a campaign for funds to improve the cemetery. It approached the National Capital Commission for funds; Jean Pigott, who had become its Chairman a year earlier, was a valuable ally with a keen sense of history - and it may have helped that one of her ancestors (a member of the Chamberlin family) was buried there! Judith Grant, the Mayor of Chelsea, was another ally; she later supported the HSG's request for the cemetery to be designated a historic site.

A "Cultural Property Committee" of the Municipality, whose membership came from a subset of the HSG (in a move that some historians, including myself, would now debate), recommended that the cemetery be given the name of "Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery," "in recognition of all those buried there."

The NCC gave a one-time grant of \$8,500, and the Society continued to raise funds in addition to the original \$1,000 and a subsequent \$2,000 raised. This was put towards repair of monuments and putting the site in order, as well as purchasing cedars for a hedge to line the entrance. A *rededication* ceremony was held 21 years to the day after the ceremony of Presentation of the Queen's Scarf to the people of Canada, on May 24, 1986.

Since that date the Historical Society has continued to maintain the Pioneer Cemetery through voluntary work parties, who trim and tidy the site and make it attractive to visitors. The Society also ensures that the public is aware of the site and its importance by holding an annual Remembrance Day service there and publishing this event in the media. The Royal Canadian regiment Battle School, along with representatives of the Canadian Forces Medical Services in Petawawa, receives an annual invitation to participate in this service, along with the local school children, and municipal and church representatives.

Robert (Bob) Phillips, the 1986 President of the HSG, began the custom of offering "The Grange," his beautifully-sited home created from early Canadian log buildings as a site for a reception held by the Society after the event. This year will mark the 12th year of the annual remembrance Day Ceremony at the grave of Private Richard Rowland Thompson. In every year but one (1992, when, following a fire at "The Grange," the nearby St. Mary Magdalene Church offered its site for such a gathering), Bob Phillips has continued to offer his home as the location for the informal gathering following the ceremony.

The HSG is now preparing an illustrated booklet to inform visitors about the history of this small but important cemetery, as well to continue telling the story of Private Thompson and the other persons buried there. We also plan to raise funds for a plaque listing those others who so quietly rest in this beautiful site.

This year we have mounted a display at the Chelsea Library of a replica of the Queen's Scarf, the burial record of Private Thompson, and some general information about him. ... I am particularly delighted that several groups of school children, from École du Grand-boisé (the francophone primary school) and Chelsea Elementary School have visited it; to them the Historical Society offered a short talk to them about Private Thompson, the significance of the Queen's Scarf, and his burial site in Chelsea.

- Carol Martin, November 4, 1967





## **SOCIETY ACQUIRES OWN REPLICA OF QUEEN'S SCARF**

The Historical Society has acquired its own replica of the **Queen's Scarf** awarded to Private Richard Thompson by Queen Victoria. Mrs. **Shirley Weese** of Ottawa crocheted the copy of the scarf, striving for authenticity and as faithful a copy as possible, and presented it to Allan Richens at the end of October.

Coincidentally, Mrs. Weese's father, **Bert Killick**, was a messenger for Queen Victoria herself. A connection with the past! The replica of the scarf will be on view at future Historical Society events and will certainly have an important role to play in future Remembrance Day ceremonies at the Pioneer Cemetery. Thanks to Mrs. Weese for her work on our behalf.

## **English-language Edition of HISTORY OF THE OUTAOUAIS Now Available**

Members will be pleased to hear that the English-language edition of *History of the Outaouais*, by Dr. Chad Gaffield and his colleagues, has now appeared and is available in local book stores. It was well worth the wait - even at a price of fifty dollars for a paper-bound edition. It is balanced, comprehensive, well-written, and amply illustrated (black and white illustrations only). Not just a reference book (although it certainly could fall into this category), the work provides fascinating leisurely reading for anyone interested in the development of our region.

The large book (over 800 pages, including notes and index) is divided into four parts: (1) "The Amerindians and Their Presence over the Millennia: From the Beginnings to 1791"; (2) "A Territory Transformed, 1791-1886"; (3) "People and Places" (industries, the rural economy, social life, etc.); and (4) "In Search of an Identity: 1940 to the Present."

Bibliographic reference: Chad Gaffield, director, *History of the Outaouais* (translation of *Histoire de l'Outaouais*), Institut québécoise de recherche sur la culture (les Presses de l'Université Laval), 1997.

List price is \$50. A limited number of copies is being made available to the Historical Society for sale to its members on a first come, first serve basis, for \$40. For information, call Duncan or Gudula Marshall (827-2077).

## **Other Local Authors**

Several other local authors (members of the Historical Society) have published books with an historical theme that would be of interest at this time of year. All are available in local book stores:

Gunda Lambton and Venetia Crawford, *The Wildest Rivers - the Oldest Hills: Tales of the Gatineau and Pontiac*, with illustrations by Gunda Lambton (\$14.95)

Katharine Fletcher, *Historical Walks: The Gatineau Park Story*, Second Edition (\$12.95)

Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time* [life history of an acre of land in LeBreton Flats, Ottawa] (\$29.95)

## **List of Centennial Plaques in Chelsea**

Our last *Newsletter* listed the heritage properties recently recognized by the Municipality of LaPêche. As a complement to that record, Patrick Evans has supplied us with a listing of the buildings which have so far qualified for "century plaques" in the Municipality of Chelsea. Each of the buildings listed is at least one hundred years old. The current guise of each of the properties is shown in square brackets.

- Gatehouse to Gilmour's Mills (Gatineau River)  
[L'Agaric Restaurant]
- Sweeney's Hotel [Parkway General Store]
- Dean's Hotel [Chelsea Restaurant]
- Edmond's house and post office [private home, east of Dunn Hotel (Dawn House Bed & Breakfast)]
- Sully House [Lagacé home on Padden Road]
- Brigham/Chamberlin House [private home on Padden Road]
- Chamberlin Big House [Gerry & Isobel's Country Pleasures, Scott Road]
- Chamberlin Little House [private residence, corner Scott and Padden Roads]
- O'Meara House [squared log home, corner Scott and Padden Roads]
- St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church
- Sheffield House [private home of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Ryan, Kingsmere Road]
- Grogan's Home [Dunnderosa Golf Clubhouse, Notch Road]
- Hanratty House [Art Gallery, Scott Road]
- Link/Hendrick farm house [Vincent Hendrick home]
- O'Neil House [Harold Cook's home (in summer)]



- Prentiss house, store, and post office [known as "the homestead, near corner 105 and Chelsea Road]
- Lottie Prentiss house [Mrs. Arthur's home]
- Seldon Church's home [Mrs. Yuill's home, highway 105 north of Chelsea Road]
- Dewar/O'Meara house [2nd house on south side of Chelsea Road, west of 105]
- Brownrigg/McCluskey house [3rd house on south side of Chelsea Road]
- Brooks/Fleury farm house [Arthur Fleury's home, on Fleury Road, off 105]
- "Garryhinch," the Gilmours' home [the Major's family home, east of highway 105, south of Chelsea village]
- "Laurentian Lodge" [first house on 105 south of corner Chelsea Road]
- Wright/Hendrick farm house (site of home of Christopher Columbus Wright, youngest son of Philemon Wright) [home of Mrs. Hendricks, top of "mile hill" on highway 105]
- School building, Mill Road, Chelsea [apartments]
- Currie/United Church Manse, Mill Road
- Anglican Rectory, Highway 105
- Campbell/Nankin home [private residence, highway 105 opposite east end of Scott Road]
- Rev. Asa Meech House, near Meech Lake [now owned by the NCC]
- White church, Cascades [private residence]
- Dunn Hotel, Old Chelsea (private residence, rebuilt after fire, in 1901 [Dawn House Bed & Breakfast - plaque to be displayed beginning in 2001])

Interesting information on many of these properties may be found in *Touring the Two Chelseas*, available from the Historical Society for \$5.00.

### ***Thanks, Winnie!***

Some members may have noted that Winnifred Johnston did not stand for re-election to her seat on the Council for LaPêche in the recent election. As the first chair of the LaPêche Heritage Committee, Winnie played an important role in promoting interest in and appreciation for the history of her municipality.

From all of us, Winnie, thanks for your hard work and good humour. You will be missed.

-JA

### ***ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR HERITAGE DAY, FEBRUARY 16***

The annual general meeting of the Historical Society is scheduled for the third Monday in February (Heritage Day). Featured speaker will be the Executive Director of Heritage Canada, Brian Anthony.

The annual meeting will feature the presentation of awards, the approval of a new constitution, and the election of officers. Ernie Mahoney is chairing the Awards Committee, and Jay Atherton is looking after the nominations committee. The proposed revised constitution will be sent to all members with the February/March newsletter.

**Reminder to all committee chairs: please get your reports to Jay Atherton as soon as you can, so that they can be included in the annual report (to be printed in the next newsletter).**

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### ***The Wakefield Bridge Story - A New Video*** **HOW THE COMMUNITY RE-BUILT ITS BRIDGE**

The 1915 Gendron covered bridge at Wakefield, Quebec, was the link that bound the community together. It was a famous landmark and a symbol of the rich heritage of the beautiful Gatineau Valley. When it was destroyed by arsonists in 1984, residents mourned as if they had suffered the death of a dear friend.

At first, they were shocked and angry at the senseless act, but soon began to talk about re-building their bridge. In 1987 a group of volunteers formed the Wakefield Covered Bridge Committee and undertook the enormous task of rallying support and raising funds to make it happen. They decided that the new bridge would be for pedestrians and cyclists - not cars - and that it would be true to the original in size and design. The cost was estimated at \$600,000 - a large sum for a small community to raise!

With the help and encouragement of hundreds of volunteer workers and financial supporters, the "bridge people" toiled on against all odds for almost a decade. In the summer of 1997 their dream came true. Sheer determination and persistence had brought the project to a successful conclusion!

Now the Wakefield bridge is back in all its splendour. It sits high on the concrete foundations of the old bridge, and is built of wood milled from recycled boom logs that survived from the days of the log drive on the Gatineau River.

This video tells some of the story of how the Wakefield covered bridge was re-born, and captures the vision and determination of a community in restoring its historic landmark.

*Produced by Rooney Productions / Vivian Hanwell Productions (October 1997)*

Distributed by the Wakefield Covered Bridge Committee, Historical Society of the Gatineau.

Proceeds from sales to help pay bridge expenses. TO ORDER, PLEASE USE THE COUPON ON REVERSE.



### About the Newsletter

The timetable for appearance of issues of the Historical Society *Newsletter* is every two months, on the even-numbered months, that is, February-March, April-May, June-July, August-September, October-November, and December-January. Deadline for submission of items for each newsletter is the middle of the preceding month (e.g. January 15 for the upcoming February-March issue).

Contributions and comments are always welcome. Editor/compiler is Jay Atherton (phone/fax: 827-1703; e-mail: James.Atherton@Sympatico.ca. Pat Lavergne keeps our mailing list up to date. Distribution is handled, very ably, by Rae Moore, Marjorie Evis, and Charis Palmer.

### ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS

Please check your mailing label. A yellow mark indicates that your membership is expiring on December 31. Please renew now.

Annual membership still costs only \$15 for one year, \$25 for two years. *Please send a cheque now to the Historical Society at the address shown on the first page of this newsletter.* That way we will not have to pester you individually later!

Thanks.

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### *The Wakefield Bridge Story - A New Video*

Yes, I want to order \_\_\_\_\_ copy(ies) of the new video "*The Wakefield Bridge Story*" at \$20.00 plus \$2.25 each for handling and mailing charges in Canada. (The charge for mailing to the United States is \$5.25.)

Enclosed find my cheque or money order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to **HSG - Covered Bridge Project**. Please mail the video to:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Mail coupon and cheque to: Wakefield Bridge Video  
Historical Society of the Gatineau  
Box 485, Chelsea, QC J0X 1N0