



**THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE GATINEAU
BOX 485, CHELSEA, QUE, J0X 1N0**

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

**NEXT MEETING; MONDAY,
OCTOBER 20, AT 8.00 P.M. IN THE
OLD CHELSEA COMMUNITY
CENTRE.**

Dr. R.H. Hubbard is well known for his long years in the National Gallery of Canada, for his service as cultural adviser to governors-general and for his extensive writing. He will talk about one of his favourite subjects, and the title of one of his books: "Rideau Hall". Entrancing to visitors, reviled by some occupants, it is certainly one of the most historically rich structures in Canada, and its grounds still have power to arouse public emotions. A timely topic by a distinguished authority.

LAST MEETING

Anne Joyce really gave us a different perspective on local history. Going back 15,000 years she traced the story of this land from the time it was crushed under three kms. of ice through the stages of its emergence from the Champlain Sea to the shape we know. It was a fascinating story which will give new dimensions to our drives or walks through the National Capital Region. Now we can see how our surroundings came to be, and we may even be lucky enough to spot the alien plants or stickleback fish which are throwbacks to our maritime days.

Only a little surreptitious chair-stealing prevented this from being a standing-room only audience. They were well rewarded.

HISTORIC TOURS

As we go to press, the first Historic Tour is just in the offing. A report will come next month. Our thanks go to Outaouais Alliance for its friendly help in promotion.

FOUR CHEERS FOR WEST HULL!

One of the Society's new projects is approaches to Gatineau municipalities about marking historic buildings so that all can see better where our history has been made. Before we moved on this, the Council of West Hull sprang into action with a commitment to place plaques on all buildings more than a century old. This initiative, suggested to the Council by **Pat Evans**, is one more indication of the growing support to the Society by **Mayor Doug Minnes** and his colleagues on Council. It will also make it easier to make the same suggestion to other municipalities. We offer the Council our appreciation, and we look forward to working with them on this project.

WITH DEEP REGRET....

we record the deaths of two of our most valued and respected members.

In August, after a long and heroic fight in which he never abandoned his concern for the Society or his cheerfulness with the human race, **Dennis Evans** lost to overwhelming odds. Even when too ill to attend executive meetings he insisted on being an active and selfless worker. We shall most vividly remember him for the spirit he added to the opening of the Museum on July 5, and we think of the emptiness he has left.

Judy Crawley was more than a great film-maker whose art will be treasured by future generations. She was a founding member of the Society whose wonderfully active mind and social concern became our lasting assets. Despite ill health, she had become an active participant again, urging us to set our sights higher to preserve the best of the past in the villages of the Gatineau. We shall try to honour her vision.

It was one of Judy Crawley's last wishes that, in place of flowers, donations might be made to the Historical Society. This was, as far as we know, the first occasion on which this thoughtful gesture has been made, and we are deeply grateful for it.

THE CEMETERY

Aren't historians gardeners? The response to our requests in spring and autumn for surplus plants for the Cemetery has hardly been whelming. We have replanted in the new garden plots the tulips donated a year ago. Visitors who admired the flowers in the rockery this summer have Mary Brough to thank for this pleasure, and we also appreciate recent donations from Carol Martin. The wet summer encourages us in our search for the silver lining in every dark cloud, for the cedar hedges have emerged from their drought-induced malaise to show a re-assuring confidence. Why not drop by the cemetery to see how it has improved, even since the rededication? You may have suggestions for future improvements.

THE MUSEUM

On August 29, we were honoured by the visit of Jean Pigott, André Bonin and June Creelman who took tea in the parlour. Stuart Geggie poured. It was a first tour for Mrs. Pigott and M. Bonin who were complimentary in their remarks. We took the liberty of making a number of suggestions to our distinguished landlords, the theme of which was our willingness to expand and improve significantly our exhibit space and displays on assurance of continued tenure beyond the expiration of our two-year lease. Our ideas seemed to have had a sympathetic reception, and we are to meet later this year to make plans for next summer.

THE CHAPEL

The restoration of the Rideau Street Chapel is the most ambitious, and probably most important, current conservation campaign in the National Capital Region. Members will recall that the Chapel was saved by a hair's

breadth 15 years ago by intrepid conservationists when the surrounding building was demolished to make a parking lot. The first structure in Canada ever declared to be of national *architectural* importance, it was planned to store it for use as the reading room of the new National Gallery, then a distant dream.

In the intervening years, reminders were regularly sent to the federal government about the future of the chapel in the National Gallery, but the architect simply ignored the plan, and designed the Gallery so that it could not physically accommodate the Chapel--without, of course, saying anything to the public. Apparently a generous benefactor then came forward to remedy this error with a gift reputedly of \$1 million, which presumably means a large contribution of public funds through income tax remission. Oddly enough, though the press took years to tire of a private benefaction for a swimming pool at the PM's residence (because there would be a public cost through income tax remission), not a line has been written about this episode when, on a far larger scale, a charitable donation seems to have been needed to remedy a bureaucratic bungle. (Remember, you heard it first in the *Newsletter...*)

The federal government then made it known that it would put the Chapel in the Gallery only if the public paid for the installation by private donations. Whatever one thinks of that unprecedented decision, it is clear that the only way to save this extraordinary monument now is to contribute.

The happy side to the story is that the Friends of the National Gallery have taken up the cause with the enthusiasm and efficiency for which the Friends are known. In their excellent *Bulletin*, they have told the story of the Chapel in detail. At a Society meeting last year, a representative offered hasti-notes for sale, with a minimum response from us. Now the Friends have printed a superb poster which they are selling for \$5, as well as handsome colour cards suitable for Christmas, and a stained glass "suncatcher" on display on the cafeteria floor of the Gallery. This cause

deserves our warm support. Why not drop in to the Chapel Office, Suite 12, 53 Queen Street (just west of Elgin)? You can play your part in saving a truly important part of Canada's history in the setting it deserves.

HERITAGE CANADA FOUNDATION

The thirteenth Annual Conference, held in Ottawa in late September, was particularly relevant to our Society which must soon decide whether to keep its formal links with the Foundation. (Readers will remember that we extended our membership after Governor Charles Lynch told our members that, although things were bad, the Board knew the problems and hoped to act on them this year.) The widespread complaints about the gulf between the Foundation and local groups led last year's Annual Conference to create a Task Force to which our Society contributed at some length. Its report, published this summer, made many recommendations to improve relations between Ottawa and member societies, and the theme of the recent conference was the volunteer.

It was a well-organized and lively conference (with the possible exception of the Business Meeting at the end). There was much uplift and enthusiasm about what volunteers do and could do in the cause of history and heritage, but hardly any of the presentations or workshops touched on the vital issue of how the national organization should support the volunteers in a local society. We heard nothing on that crucial issue of whether a national organization should support local efforts to save history. For some years the stance of the Board has been that it will not involve itself in local causes (like the Mackenzie King Estate!), while the view of local societies seems to be that virtually all visible manifestations of our history are local; that we often need collective strength to be effective in saving history; and that Heritage Canada was founded in larger part to give that unity to the community of Canadians who feel strongly about our history and heritage. That issue was not resolved.

The Board was criticized for a defensive response to the Task Force recommendations, but none of them were disputed. Perhaps there will be a re-alignment of priorities which will produce a more sympathetic relationship between the Foundation headquarters and member groups, but for the present the main steps are hiring more staff for liaison and producing more publications.

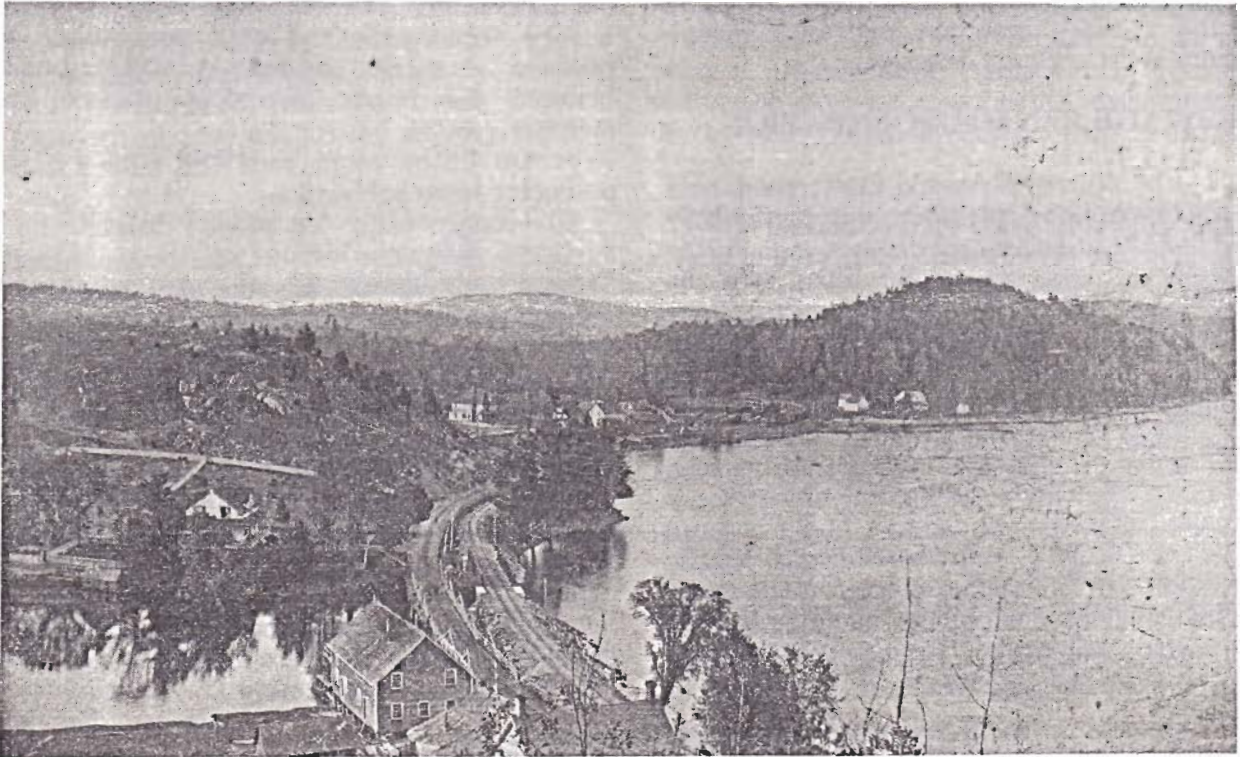
An indication of the gulf between our Society and Ottawa was the day spent on regional reports by representatives "chosen by member groups". No one ever asked us to choose a representative. The Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec, apparently representing us, produced a long report on activities across Québec, without a single mention of the Gatineau. In fact, Québec City is apparently unaware of any history west of Montreal.

We have a long way to go, friends. Patience!

GLITCHES

We sympathize with the management of *The News* which recently editorialized on its travails with a computer. We offer our apologies for the *Newsletter's* typing errors which are solely the fault of the author, our previously announced arrangement for remote proofreading not having materialized. We will try to do better, but we probably won't.

R.A.J.P.



The future Gatineau Memorial Hospital, photographed between 1890 and 1900.
Picture courtesy of Elizabeth Bate