

OVERBROOK • CASTLE HEIGHTS • FORBES • CUMMINGS • VANIER SOUTH

May 24, 2025

the Corridor magazine

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST HURDMAN'S BRIDGE

LAUNCH OF THE
COMMEMORATIVE
KIOSK



Partially funded by the
Government of Canada

Canada



NAK 
design strategies

This month's cover is a beautiful rendering of the kiosk site. It is the work of landscape architect Ben Barocsi. (ben.barocsi@gmail.com)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was initiated in 2019 by dedicated community volunteers.

We want to thank the many organizations, professionals and companies who donated time, goods or expertise to our cause.

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We are dedicated to disseminating quality news, current events, and feature writing with a goal to promote communication and understanding between people of different ethnic origins, cultural traditions, languages, faiths and ideologies who reside in the communities of Overbrook, Castle Heights, Cummings, Forbes and Vanier South.

The Corridor is currently a sole proprietorship organization, working towards becoming a non-profit. It is available online, and aimed at the approximately 100,000 residents and 22,000 businesses, organizations and institutions in the Eastern Ottawa communities of Overbrook, Castle Heights, Forbes, Cummings and Vanier South.

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HURDMAN'S BRIDGE 150TH ANNIVERSARY AND THE KIOSK PROJECT

In 2022, the Overbrook community celebrated the 100th anniversary of becoming a police Village (see sidebar, page 5), and in commemoration of that event the *Overbrook Community Association* initiated the **Rideau River Kiosk Project**, situated on National Capital Commission land along the Rideau River, south of the Adawe Crossing.

The six kiosk panels present information in both English and French about the Rideau River and Overbrook, with a focus on First Nations and Overbrook history and heritage, the natural environment of the river, and planning and protection of the waterway.



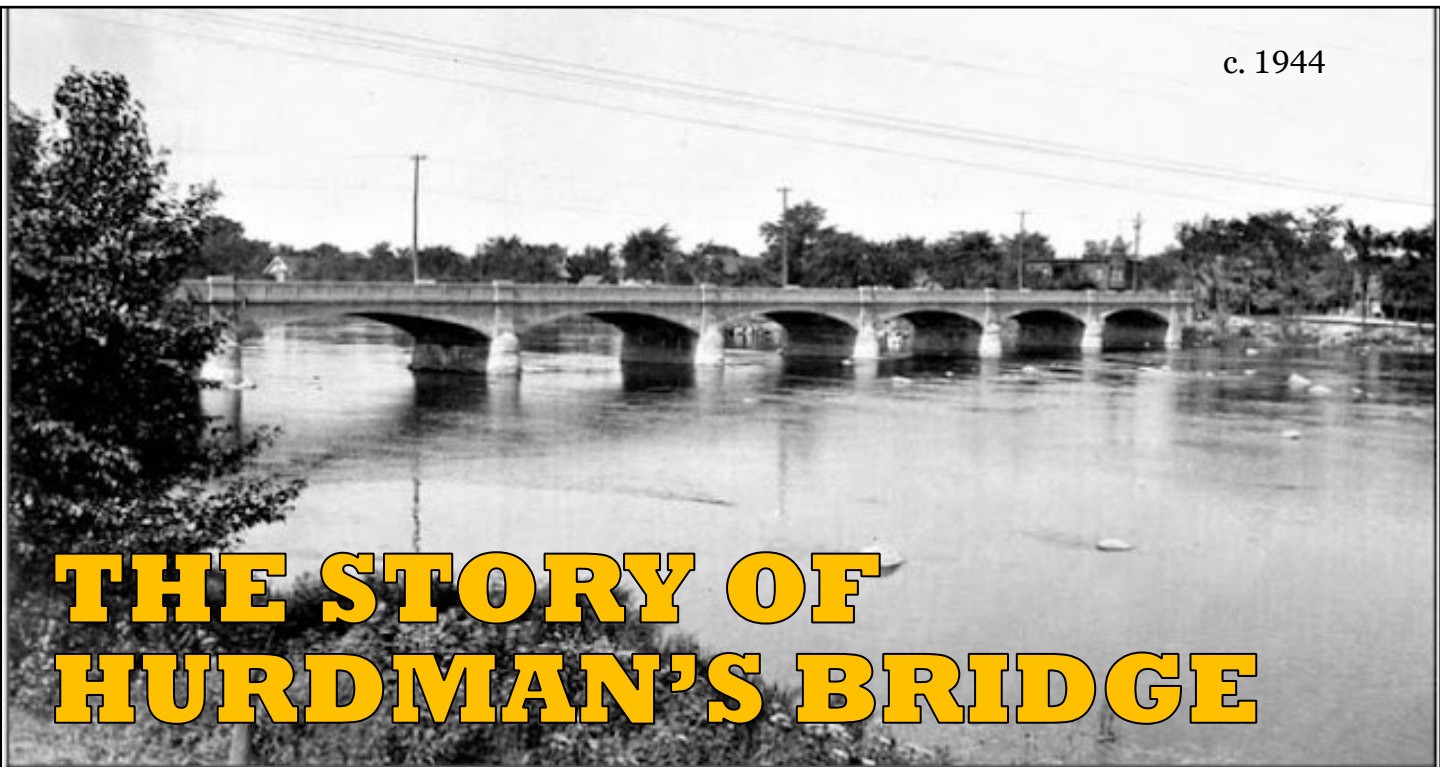
This year was the 150th anniversary of the construction of Hurdman's Bridge (1875), the first bridge link across the Rideau River to Overbrook.

The bridge was integral in developing the Overbrook community including: establishing several small businesses near the bridge, increased trade, construction of subdivisions, and the construction of the Overbrook school in 1906.

These important historic anniversary events are recognized in the Rideau River Kiosk and are celebrated by the community today.



c. 1944



THE STORY OF HURDMAN'S BRIDGE

Before the first Hurdman's Bridge was built in 1875, the Overbrook area was almost exclusively farmland, generally divided into large lots of 80 hectares (or 200 acres), most of which was owned by the Sparks Family and the Whillans family. At least 40 hectares (100 acres) was owned by the Sharp Family.

The bridge was built by brothers William and Robert Hurdman.

According to extensive research done by the *Gloucester Historical Society*, Hurdman's Bridge was opened on January 29, 1875. It was the first of many bridges at that location, including four railway bridges that connected Overbrook to the growing Ottawa city core.

The 1875 connection across the Rideau River led to the establishment of several small businesses near the bridge, including the **Rideau Hotel**, built in 1888; **Beauchamp's Blacksmith Shop** in 1891 which later became

a carriage maker and then an auto body shop; **Bouchard's Butcher Shop** (1892), and **Bouchard's Tannery** (1904); and **La-doucer's Grocery Store** in 1905.

Hurdman's Bridge enabled the transportation of lumber and trade products and opened the Overbrook farmlands to urban development.

The bridge's construction led to Overbrook's registration as a police village in 1922 (see sidebar below).

The bridge was so significant to the community that it was rebuilt twice, from a wood structure to a metal version to a concrete structure.

What's in a Name?

Anyone who thinks they know where Hurdman's Bridge is situated is wrong. But you can be forgiven your ignorance because Hurdman's or Hurdman Bridge no longer exists.

That is, portions of its pier still pop out of the Rideau, but there is no functioning bridge known as "Hurdman's" or Hurdman.

Fear not, gentle reader, until recently I was also mired in confusion about this elusive structure.

The articles and photographs throughout this publication refer to "Hurdman's Bridge" (with an apostrophe), the name of the first bridge across the Rideau River. It came about because in July 1874, residents, led by the Hurdman brothers and Thomas Keely, owner of the property on the west side of the river, petitioned for permission and support of a bridge over the Rideau River. It was located just north of where the current "Queensway Bridge" stands today. The original pylons for the old bridge remain in that spot.

The bridge was built by "voluntary private subscription" which meant that surrounding councils, including Gloucester council, would waive any rights to the bridge. The township agreed that its ownership rights be transferred to the Russell



ABOVE: The first Hurdman's Bridge, c 1875

Road Company, the company that would build a macadamized road (packed stone) leading from Hurdman Road to Mann Avenue. Remnants of that original road exist today.

Council committed \$400 to the project, but it was ultimately built by statute labour, a program where area residents work for their municipality in lieu of taxation.

In January 1875, 150 years ago, William and Robert Hurdman opened the first timber bridge that spanned the Rideau River, linking present day Overbrook with present day Sandy Hill, although at the time Overbrook was a part of Gloucester Township and Sandy Hill was a part of the Township of Nepean.

The Hurdman's primary motivation for building the bridge was to make it

easier to transport wood products from their mill in Lebreton Flats to Gloucester, and their pork products from their farms in Gloucester to Ottawa and beyond.

Because it was owned by the Hurdman brothers, it became known as Hurdman's Bridge, even though the family was obligated to allow the general public to use it.

In 1900 a fire decimated Hull, Quebec and large swaths of Ottawa, including the Hurdman family's mill. They ultimately decided not to rebuild and instead concentrate on farming.

After the brothers' death (William in 1901 and Robert in 1904), the family withdrew their obligations to the bridge, and it was put under the auspices of Council.

The then 30-year-old bridge required extensive renovation, so a project to fortify the timber bridge with metal was begun. Council also decided to maintain the name Hurdman's Bridge to honour the family.

Citation: LAC3358923 Dept of Interior Collection

Continued on page 6

The Police Village

The police village is a category of local governing body in Ontario that predates Confederation.

Its original purpose was to establish a local body in a hamlet, or village, to maintain public order through policing, and deliver a limited number of services to rural township dwellers.

The police village bylaw was created by the county council. The amended *Municipal Act of 1965* prevented the creation of new police villages. Those that continued, taxed residents and provided for services such as street lights, fire protection and garbage collection.

Approximately 50 police villages remain in Ontario, as most of them disappeared as a result of municipal restructuring. The status of these remaining police villages is under review by the provincial government.



Mona Fortier, MP



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**PISTE
D'HIVER
RIDEAU
WINTER
TRAIL**

Continued on page 6



ABOVE The second Hurdman's Bridge, shown here in or around 1922, was reinforced with metal.

The photograph above, although not very clear, shows a herd of cattle bathing in around the bridge.

Another new rebuild version of the Hurman's Bridge was done but in concrete, one of the first examples of such a material used for a road bridge in this region (it was demolished in 1986).

Several decades later, a new, bigger and wider bridge, immediately to the

south of the existing one, was opened in 1955, also named Hurdman's Bridge! This is the bridge that was incorporated by the province of Ontario into the new Highway 417 "Queensway Bridge".

Although it is popularly referred to as "Hurdman Bridge", with no apostrophe, its official name is the Provincial Constable J. Robert Maki Bridge.

To further complicate the nomenclature, the former CN bridge, located south of Highway 417 and which crosses the river to Lees Avenue, inherited the name "Hurdman Pedestrian Bridge", "Hurdman Train Bridge", or Hurdman Rail Bridge", depending on who you ask, although it has no historic association with the Hurdman Family. There is a separate article on the Train Bridge.

The family farm did, at one time, extend as far as the current Ottawa train station, why the bus/train depot at Hurdman is named as such is anybody's guess.

Clear as mud.



ABOVE: An aerial view (1955) of Highway 417, later christened "the Queensway" by HRH Elizabeth II, with Hurdman's Bridge directly north.

To the right of the photo, take note of how the traffic is stopped for a crossing train.

Gloucester Historical Society's Significant Historical Research

Our partner, the Gloucester Historical Society identified records about the first Hurdman's Bridge, dating from 1884 to 1885.

These records revealed that this all-season bridge allowed for ease of transport of the family's lumber products, but made it easier for people going to school, work or shop, and for local delivery of home and farm merchandise.

The Hurdman's Bridge was rebuilt twice, and the most recent was opened in 1955.

Between 1911 and 1949, a seasonal footbridge was erected each year.

In August 1906, Overbrook's earliest

subdivision was registered and in the six years to follow, several more subdivision plans were registered.

The population growth led to the opening of Overbrook Public School in 1916, and to Overbrook's registration as a police village in 1922. The Overbrook Community Hall opened in 1923.

Today, the growing population exceeds 10,000 residents in more than 5,000 addresses, and an estimated 350 businesses.

The second Hurdman's Bridge from 1906, was demolished in 1986, but the pier stubs are still visible when water levels are low.

Our kiosk will help address that knowledge gap.



These two plaques shown above once identified the significance of the Hurdman's Bridge.

The plaque at left commemorates the Hurdman Family and acknowledges its dedication by HRH Princess Mary, The Princess Royal. Its current location is unknown.

The second plaque was unveiled at the opening of the Hurdman's Bridge in December 1955 by Mayor Charlotte Whitton.



The Hurdman Brothers: Farmers, Entrepreneurs and Politicians

The Hurdman Connection

William and Robert Hurdman, the Hurdman brothers, were pioneers in industrial and agricultural development along the Rideau River.

Their father, Charles Hurdman, was one of the first European arrivals in the Ottawa Valley. With his wife, Margaret Graham, they immigrated from Ireland, and joined Philemon Wright's settlement in Hull. After six years, they left Wright's employ to farm their own property on the Aylmer Road.

His first son, William H. Hurdman, was born in Hull Township, Quebec, on October 9, 1818, and was the first child born of old country parentage in Hull.

Under the name 'Hurdman Brothers,' William started the family lumber business in LeBreton Flats in 1841 with his brothers, Robert and Charles Jr. It became one of the largest timber operations in Quebec.

In 1861, William married Sarah Sophia Smyth and about four years later, he moved his family to the Junction Gore area of Gloucester Township c. 1865, and his brother Robert followed shortly thereafter where they branched out into large-scale farming.

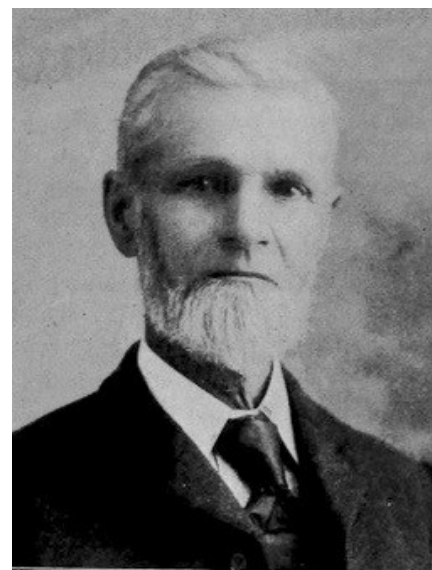
Eventually, both brothers were farming 200 to 300 acres each, using the most progressive methods of the day. William became director of two district agricultural societies, and they won international awards for horse breeding at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876.

William also thrived as an entrepreneur and community leader. From 1877 until 1879, he served as Reeve of Gloucester Township.

The brothers continued to work in the lumber industry and built the first Hurdman's Bridge, across the Rideau River in 1875, 150 years



William Hurdman
B.1818, d.1901



Robert Hurdman
B.1820, d.1904

ago. Its original purpose was to connect their lumber and storage yards, but they allowed travellers and the municipality to use it.

The Great Fire of 1900 wiped out the family's lumber mills at the Chaudière/Lebreton Flats. The fire decimated Hull, Quebec, and when it crossed the river, it wiped out a huge swath of Ottawa and destroyed the Hurdman Brothers' operations in the LeBreton Flats area.

The family decided not to rebuild and instead, they concentrated their efforts on farming.

Ultimately, they established the earliest and largest piggery in Gloucester Township.

The area around their farms became known as Hurdman's Bridge, a populous area of farmers and railway workers, including many German immigrants. It is now the site of the Ottawa railway terminal.

William Hurdman died on February 20, 1901, Robert Hurdman died on May 4, 1904 and Charles in 1906.



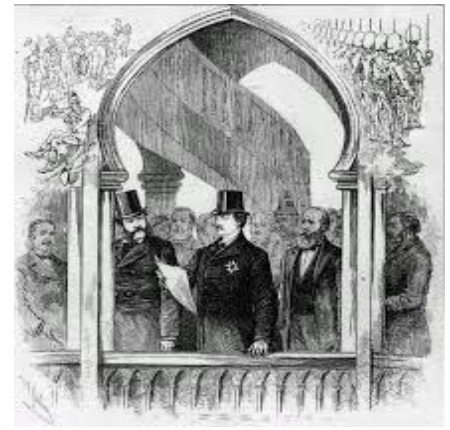
The present contracting firm of Hurdman Brothers (T. Fraser and Walter) was hired to remove the railway tracks from the downtown core of Ottawa in the late 1950s. Today, the firm specializes in moving heavy machinery and equipment.

In the 1950's, the surrounding neighbourhoods evolved to establish homes for the post-war baby boom era, and Hurdman's Bridge would be eventually demolished to

make way for rail land and the new Queensway freeway that cut a scar through the centre of Ottawa.

Today, the family name is preserved in the **Hurdman Bridge** and the **Hurdman Transitway Station**.

Today's Hurdman Bridge spans 159 metres and is a shadow of its former self, after being rebuilt in 1984 to accommodate the Transitway.



On the morning of Tuesday, December 20, 1955, the lead story of the Ottawa Citizen cried, "*Ottawa's hardened and congested traffic arteries received some relief Monday with the opening of two new bridges across the Rideau River, one between Hurdman's Road and Riverside Drive and the other at the south end of the city at Bronson Avenue.*"



ABOVE: Hurdman's Bridge to the right (north) of the "new", large Queensway Bridge, 1958

Hurdman's Train Bridge:

The arrival of a railway brought further growth to the area, and local businesses prospered.

Many industries moved took advantage of the cheap rapid transportation the new railway provided.

But the railway also had some negative effects on the community.

There was the noise, the smoke and the dangers of having trains moving and shunting in the community.

The name Hurdman Pedestrian Bridge (or Train Bridge or Rail Bridge) is also the name given to the former railway bridge, south of Highway 417, that is today used by pedestrians and cyclists.



LEFT: A broken span on Hurdman's Bridge, July 29, 1902.

At the top, left hand side of the bridge, a boy and his dog surveille the damage.

Programme, May 24, 2025

MC Marjolaine Provost

13:00	Captivate attention	Oto-Wa Taiko Drummers
13:25	Arrival of Speakers	Bagpiper Jonathan Shephard
13:30	Singing of 'O Canada'	Anna Stefanovici
13:35	Land Acknowledgement Ceremony	Spiritual advisor Albert Dumont Thunderbird Circle Drummers
13:50	Historical Context of this 150th Anniversary Celebration	Member of Parliament Mona Fortier
14:00	Proclamation	Mayor Marc Sutcliffe
14:00	Ribbon Cutting for the Kiosk	All Speakers, led by Bagpiper
14:20	Cake Cutting and Acknowledgement	Councillor Rawlson King
14:30	Celebrate Overbrook	Thunderbird Circle Shaza Drums



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