

## Blakeney Then and Now

[*Photos of the rapids and island today-include "welcome to Balkeney" sign*] Those who happen upon Blakeney -- a small residential hamlet, a few kilometers north of Almonte—are captivated by the picturesque rapids and waterfall formed as the Mississippi River is suddenly channeled between a delightful picnic ground and what appears to be a rough outcrop of land.

It was the sound of those same rapids that drew James Snedden and his son Alexander [*sketch*] to the spot more than 180 years ago, as they followed a rough trail of blazed trees [*phony photos of forest or trails?*] from Almonte (then known as Sheperd's Falls) along what is now County Road 29. To Lanark County's early settlers rapids meant water power for a mill, and the Sneddens soon claimed the land at the place known as Norway Pine Falls, and in 1825 Alexander built a grist mill.

Taking advantage of his location on the rough track that led to logging camps up in Renfrew, Alexander soon opened a hotel, and Snedden's Stopping Place [*photo*] soon became known as a good place for a meal, a sleep, and rest for your horses. The original structure was destroyed by fire in 1853 and rebuilt. The settlement became known as Snedden's Mills.

[*Toshack photo of lumbermen*] In 1829 Alexander, joined the lucrative timber trade in Renfrew County. His father James had been awarded 200 acres there for serving with the British in the American Revolutionary War [*photo?*]. Here he cut squared timber [*photo of squared-log raft/ ship loading?*] that was floated down to the Ottawa River, ultimately reaching Quebec City to be shipped to Britain. Alexander soon recognized the need for a timber slide at Snedden's Mills to bypass the damaging and dangerous rapids. [*Timber slide photo 1*] The slide, which was similar to this one, was built at the base of the hill where a tunnel between the river and what was known as "the Bay" had been dug years before to power the gristmill. For many years, tolls for its use brought the family a considerable income, [*timber slide photo 2*] although Snedden family lore recalls that J.R. Booth would try to run his logs through unobserved and would then refuse to pay! The slide is believed to have operated until the 1880s. [*Photo of hill from bridge?*] Very few who drive up the hill after crossing the Blakeney bridge are aware that there is a solid 20 foot high dam of stone laid in cement lining the river bank for 20 yards. [*Photo of house over slide*] Indeed, the current owners of the house built over the site of the slide have occasionally uncovered some of these stones.

By 1834, a sawmill had been built, [*photo of stone house*] and the Snedden's first cabin had been replaced by a substantial stone house and barn on the riverbank. The settlement began to grow.

[*Bring up map and indicate the following sites as mentioned*] This stylized aerial view of Blakeney shows the Bay, the Island, and what was known as the "Bytown Road," which led into the village from what is now the highway at the same point as the road does today. It also shows the location of the bridge, which has always been the same.