

## The History of Cantley's ("sculpted rocks") Quarry

by Hubert McClelland

Ever wonder how the Cantley Quarry came to be?

This site was part my family's original McClelland homestead located on the west side of route 307. The actual pit area was our pasture for our dairy herd until 1954. As a ten-year-old boy, it was my job in summer to get the dairy herd back to the barn for evening milking. The site of "today's quarry", as some call it, was a very high gravel hill bound on the east side by the Cantley road. Beginning just after St. Andrew's United Church on the west of route 307, there is a small gravel mound followed by a wooded depression that is known to long time Cantley citizens as 'The Killpot'. Proceeding north from the Killpot along the west side of the road, one came to the gravel formation just opposite the spring on the east side (montée de la Source).

In 1934 my grandfather Hubert McClelland sold 4 acres of the gravel hill adjacent to the Killpot to Ottawa's Harry Hailey Company who required gravel to manufacture cinder blocks. Before the use of oil, large buildings in Ottawa used coal for fuel and all Ottawa's large government buildings were heated with coal. Harry Hailey's company recycled the spent coal clinkers to manufacture a bluish grey block or cinder block, similar to a cement block, as a building material.

After the Second World War the production of cinder blocks stopped and the use of the Harry Hailey pit ceased.

In 1954, my father, Trevellyn McClelland, sold the remainder of the gravel hill west of the road to J.P Chenier Co. Ltd to develop the present pit. J.P Chenier also acquired the Harry Hailey pit. At that time, my father reserved the cut of white pine, spruce and balsam on the gravel hill & harvested it before the topsoil was removed to access the quality gravel beneath. I helped him cut and harvest loads and loads of wood and saw logs from the gravel hill. The gravel mound was as high on the pit site as is the hill opposite on the east side now operated by DJL, about 180 meters above sea level. At that time the Cantley road passed through the narrow passage between the west side hill and the pit being developed on the east of the road by Vipond concrete products (located on Boulevard St. Raymond in Hull). It is difficult to visual the volume of the hill that has been removed to create the pit, but the road was very a narrow passage between the hills as compared to the width of the highway 307 today.

Between 1954 and 1970, many trucks operated from this pit 52 weeks per year transporting many loads of gravel to Hull for cement and for construction purposes. A rock crusher and screening system operated to produce various qualities of gravels. The term 'Quarry' is a misnomer since no stone was quarried from the site. After the gravel was exhausted, in 1979, a Gatineau company operated by Mr. Pageau staked a claim on the dolomite (white crystalline rock) seen in the pit. Mr. Pageau exploited the dolomite for a short period in 1979 and 1980 and then abandoned the dolomite exploitation.

Gravel pits and quarries are sometimes seen as unsightly aspects of our environment. However, prior to the gravel being removed, the only evidence of glacial rock of the area to be seen was the outcrop of rock just north of the corral in my pasture land on St. Andrew's road that has become more and more tree-covered since we stopped grazing it in the early 1960s.

### 'The Killpot'

For all long-time Cantley residents, a wooded depression was known as the Killpot. As a 10-year-old boy, one day I ventured into the Killpot's edge only to become stuck in the muck thigh deep. I quickly retreated to solid ground. The Killpot had no drainage outlet for any surface water. It had a muskeg bottom filled with moss and muck, an excellent habitat for some of the only Tamarack (American larch) found in Cantley.

The Killpot is really a kettle like the Kettle Lakes found in northern Ontario and also the 3 small lakes just south of Edelweiss ski hill on route 366. Geologists believe it was created by a large block of ice carried within a retreating glacier. When the ice melted in the hole where the ice block had been, it left a deep depression located next to the gravel mound, called a kettle.

In my estimation, the bottom of the Killpot is now just a little higher than the Blackburn creek bed. Since the gravel north of the Killpot was removed, the nature of the Killpot has changed. It's now more of a mixed forest because its drainage has been improved. While Tamarack are still evident, many of the older stems have died and replaced by other softwoods such as balsam, spruce, cedar and yellow birch.