

The Association of Friends  
of the Billings Estate Museum



L'association des amis  
du Musée du domaine Billings

c/o 2100 Cabot Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. K1H 6K1 (613) 723-3170

City of Ottawa  
**Billings Estate Museum - Fact Sheet**



RICK STRONG

**L**ocated at 2100 Cabot Street, the Billings Estate Museum interprets the social history of the Billings family from 1812 to 1975, the evolution of the Billings' lands from 1812 to present, and the settlement and development of the community of Billings Bridge prior to its annexation by the City of Ottawa from the Township of Gloucester in 1950. Braddish Billings was the first permanent settler in Gloucester Township. The nearly 3.4-hectare site includes the 1829 main house, which is **Ottawa's oldest frame house**, a gatehouse, ice house, smoke house and one of the city's oldest cemeteries.

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### Hours of Operation

Open from Wednesday to Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m., May 15<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>.

### Legal Obligations

The Billings Estate received National Historic Site status in 1974. It was also designated as a heritage property in 1974 under the Ontario Heritage Act by the former City of Ottawa. Both designations publicly recognize the property's historical value and significance. The municipal designation requires the City to apply to Council for approval when making changes that may affect the property's heritage integrity.

When the City purchased Billings Estate in 1976, funding was provided by the federal government under the condition that the City preserve and restore the house, outbuildings and property, and establish a museum with historical displays and small conference facilities to be open to the public not less than 120 days each year for the next 35 years.

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Portions of the Billings Estate collection have been designated as having outstanding significance and national importance by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board. This designation requires the City to maintain this heritage in accordance with high standards of collections management and preservation.

Under Section 44 of the Cemeteries Act, the City is required to maintain the cemetery at Billings Estate and ensure public safety. This historic cemetery contains at least 238 graves from 1820 to 1969. Many of Ottawa's pioneers are buried here including members of the Billings, Dow, LeBreton, Somerset, Preston, Rathwell, and Cummings families.

### Descriptions of the Collection

The Billings Estate Museum preserves approximately 12,246 primary artifacts and 1,438 secondary artifacts, which are used for educational purposes.

The importance of this collection lies in its size, variety and scope, and in the fact that the lives of five generations of an early settler family have been represented so thoroughly by the objects in this collection.

Over the last six years, the artifact collection has grown by approximately 3.4%.



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Some of the treasures found in the collection include:

- A 1959 metallic navy blue Cadillac Sedan DeVille owned by Maria Harriet Billings.
- A wooden piano stool with a unique seat that is covered by quills in a geometric design. The seat seems to be of the Micmac variety.
- A field bed believed to be the original bed or a similar bed that Braddish and Lamira Billings brought with them during their 4-day journey in a bark canoe from Merrickville to Gloucester. The bed has  $\frac{3}{4}$  length posts with an arched canopy frame. This type of bed was in use around 1780 to 1840.

### Description of Programming and Bookings

Through lectures, workshops, demonstrations and guided tours the Museum communicates to the public the social, economic and cultural history of the Billings family from 1812 to 1975, the Billings community, and within a broader context, Ottawa.

The Museum is committed to providing students, Pathfinders, Guides, and Scouts with an exciting local history program that meets the standards on the Ontario's Curriculum Guidelines. The educational programs are excellent vehicles to connect students and teachers to our unique artifact collection.

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The Museum organizes, hosts and promotes special events that focus on topics and issues relevant to the Billings Estate and surrounding community.

The Tea-on-the-Lawn programme is an integral part of the Museum's operation and public persona. The tea service helps profile the museum in the community and greater Ottawa and contributes to raise public attendance. Tours and tea are packaged together to offer a quality experience at the Billings Estate. The service of tea and refreshments also contribute to the success of outdoor events and programs.

The rental program consists of outdoor bookings as well as two meeting rooms (tent, kitchen, washrooms, tables and chairs provided).

### Why is the Museum Important to the Community?

The Billings Estate Museum draws on over 175 years of history to bring Ottawa's unique story to life for local residents, schools, community groups, and tourists. The preservation, presentation, and promotion of local heritage promote identity, civic pride, and citizen engagement, and contribute to Ottawa being a livable, sustainable and vibrant city.

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The Museum is actively supported by a number of community organizations including:

- The Association of Friends of the Billings Estate Museum
- A team of 25 volunteers (Tour Guides, Collections Assistants, Library Assistants, Special Events Volunteers)
- Algonquin College – Applied Museum Studies Program
- Co-operative Education Program of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Alta Vista Community Association
- Antique Automobile Club of Ottawa
- International Social Services
- Young Shakespeare Company
- Volunteer Ottawa
- International Academy of Design Technology