

ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE YEARS AT KITCHÉ BADJIWAN
(KAZABAZUA)

Forty-eight miles north of Hull, on the Gatineau highway, lies the village of Kazabazua, astride the road for the better part of half a mile, at the eastern edge of a rolling plain about 50 square miles in extent. This plain, once well wooded with red and white pine, was created by the deposition of a heavy overburden of sand during the last ice age. Through it meanders the Kazabazua River which originates in a series of small lakes and streams to the west. In the last century the river was used for the floating of logs to the Gatineau River, three miles to the east.

At the southern edge of the village the river divides into two short branches which cascade down from the escarpment to rejoin a short distance below and continue on to flow into the Gatineau about three miles to the east. Over the many centuries of erosion deep troughs were created in the rock, and in one particular site on the south fork the water flowed underground in a cave-like tunnel. This feature gave rise to the local Algonquins naming the location 'Kitché Badjiwan', which translates to 'water under the mountain,' for the reason that a rocky prominence flanks the rapids immediately to the south.

Family documents show that over the years many spellings of the name of the locality were used in the 19th century. The spelling now used replaced the former one, Kazabazua, when the railway station, two miles to the west, was repainted, and in error the lettering on the depot emerged as Kazabazua.

In 1860 Andrew Pritchard had the property surveyed surrounding the site from which the name of the village is derived, and the following year purchased from the Gilmour family contiguous portions of four lots on which to construct a sawmill, flour and gristmill and a general store. The price paid was three shillings per acre. The project was completed and operative by 1861. In 1869 the mills were destroyed by fire but rebuilt with the addition of a carding mill. The mills were owned by him until his death in 1879 when they passed into the hands of his son, Andrew, who continued until the early 1930's when the property passed out of the control of the family.

In 1879 the general store complex was purchased by Church Kenney of Aylmer, brother-in-law of Andrew, Jr. who carried on until the business failed about 1883. To a considerable degree the failure resulted from the depression which followed the American Civil War with the resultant decrease in timber trade with the United States. The Ottawa and Gatineau Railway was not to reach Kazabazua until ten years later and community remained isolated except for winter traffic by sleigh. However the business had flourished up to that time and the building complex eventually consisted of more than a dozen buildings; two residences; a large two-story warehouse; two homes; barns and stables; a roadside scalehouse; an isolated building for fox-breeding; a bunker for the storage of explosives, et cetera. The local post-office and telegraph were based there as well. Together with the mills it was an impressive conglomeration of which in 1981 only the two homes and the store remain.

In 1883 the general store passed into the hands of Andrew Pritchard, Jr., in whose custody it remained until 1910 when William Andrew Kenney, his nephew, who had managed the family business at North Wakefield, took over the management of the Kazabazua establishment. This he continued to operate, first as a partner, then as owner, until his death in 1946.

On the death of William Andrew his son, William Andrew Jr., acquired ownership of the general store complex and continued to operate it with his brother-in-law, Garman Johnson, until 1966 when the business failed.

The final collapse of the venture was probably inevitable because of several factors; its location away from the centre of the village; the disappearance of the wood and logging business on which it relied to a great degree; more open communications with the city. However it sustained a livelihood for five members of the family, spanning four generations, each of whom earned a reputation for honesty and hard work.