

Rideau Township Historical Society

February 2021

Newsletter



Preserving and Promoting Local History for the Former Rideau Township

February Meeting Details

Do you ever wonder why **Viola Desmond** is on the \$10 bill, and how *anyone* gets on our currency?



Join us on the Zoom February 18, 7:30 p.m.

Lise Cronier-Gabel and Boyd Laanstra, both from the currency department, of the Bank of Canada, will share with us how individuals get chosen to be on our currency, including the public consultation for the upcoming \$5 bill.

You may wonder what this has to do with our local history - come and find out! And bring a friend!

Please RSVP to Susan McKellar at susanmckellar68@gmail.com so she can send you the zoom link.

Bring your friends; money is always an interesting topic!

Non-members interested in attending this event are asked to register with Susan McKellar (susanmckellar68@gmail.com) in order to receive the login instructions prior to the meeting

Facelift for Dickinson House

Anyone who has looked carefully at the exterior of Dickinson House will realize that the wood siding and trim has suffered from the wind, rain and snow over these many years. The City of Ottawa, which owns the house, has awarded a contract to Madison Construction Limited to give the venerable building a facelift. The work will include the remediation of the existing wood siding and wood trim, painting, and repairs to doors, storm windows, windows and window shutters.

Work has already started, with the removal of the shutters and storm windows. These will be taken to the Madison Workshops for refurbishment over the winter. The erection of scaffolding and subsequent repair work will start as soon as possible in the Spring and will continue over the summer of 2021. Dickinson House will remain open during the project to allow visitors to tour the exhibits. A safe front entrance will be maintained as part of the scaffolding.



Photos by Maureen McPhee

Oral Histories

The RTHS has collected oral histories from older residents at different times. Georgie Tupper, in the 1970s, interviewed between 40 and 50 residents and recorded the interviews (audio only); Ron Wilson copied these onto disks and they are stored at Rideau Archives.

Some years ago (starting around 2015?) Jane Anderson worked with Brandon Kassis and others, and these interviews were taped (visual and audio). They also are stored at Rideau Archives. A standard set of questions formed the framework of the interviews, then various aspects were pursued as appropriate. She passed on a box of equipment and working files to Susan McKellar for storage, when Susan took over from Jane as Publications Director in 2018. No further interviews have been done.

The RTHS Publications Committee would like to continue the Oral History project, and is looking for volunteers to help. If anyone would like to participate in the next phase, please contact Susan McKellar or another member of the committee. These interviews are all a valuable source of information on the history of our area.

RTHS “Bring & Brag”

This year marked RTHS’s first (and hopefully last!) Zoom AGM, and 22 participants logged in from the comfort of their homes to be welcomed by President Susan McKellar, and to be brought up-to-date of our Society’s activities during the past unprecedented year segment, when members can show off a unique and remarkable item from their household goods.

Bring and Brag

The AGM formalities having been concluded, the best part of the evening could begin, namely the annual “Bring and Brag” Often an item has deep personal meaning, such as the charming antique doll that **Susan McKellar** presented. The beautifully preserved toy named Isabelle, with its china head and cloth body, belonged to her beloved Grandma Lettie. Some of its clothing may have been original, particularly its leather gloves and boots. Years of children’s play has taken a bit of a toll, and Susan has had to perform a few repairs with needle and thread, but Isabelle is still prepared to become the loving companion of someone in Susan’s extended family.



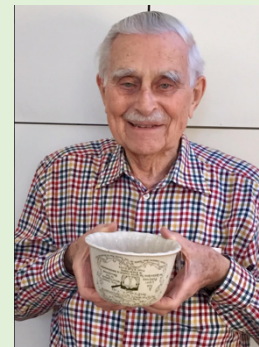
Some items are a bit more of a mystery. **Sandy McNiece** displayed a small carved wooden box, ornamented with a rather odd combination of cherubs and Viking heads. It dates back to the early 1800s, he believes, and comes from England. It could very well be a small tea caddy, as tea was a much dearer commodity back in those days. Or, Sandy speculated, might it have been a container for a more stimulating product – opium? Hard to say, but it is an unusual ornament, no matter what its origin!

Owen Cooke held up an example of a 25-cent bank note issued by the Canadian Bank Note Company in July 1923. The production of this particular type of paper money, nicknamed a shinplaster, dates back to the 1880s, when there was a shortage of circulating metal coinage; people hoarded and melted coins down when the intrinsic value of the metal rose above the value of the coin itself. The value of a shinplaster today? Depending upon its condition, it could fetch between \$5.00 and \$100.00! Maybe it’s time to cash it in, Owen!



1923 sample from coinsandcanada.com

Dennis Osmond produced a rare item from wife Anne’s grandmother’s kitchen back in England – a fluted glazed earthenware blancmange/jelly mold made by Grimwades Potteries of England. What particularly distinguishes this piece of cookware is the advertising imprinted on its side, which promotes the *Patent Quick Cooker* which claims to cook stews of all kinds in half the time. What’s even more remarkable is the endorsement of the product by Queen Mary, who apparently claimed that it was indispensable in every home. However, it is unclear whether it was used in Buckingham Palace itself.



The carbide mining lamp with wick that **Bill Tupper** brought forward made us all realize how grim and hazardous the life of a miner was back in the early 1900s. It replaced more primitive lamps that initially burned candles, and then lamps with wicks and filled with whale oil or, eventually, kerosene, and it produced a bright white light that could last for up to five hours. While it was considered a breakthrough in its time, there was still the danger of coming in contact with open flames. Altogether, not a desirable work environment.

Ruth Mills is a retired milliner and, not surprisingly, enjoys collecting historic hats. But the ladies watching this Zoom presentation were really left wondering if the style of hat which Ruth displayed would have been a fashion statement they would have cared to make! The “calash” bonnet was a triumph of function over glamour, designed to shelter in place the oversized, elaborate hairdos of the mid-to-late 1700s. Stiffened material was stretched over hoops made of whale bone, or bamboo canes, with ribbons to control the raising and lowering of this millinery dome; it operated upon the same principle as the collapsible tops of carriages of the same name. Small wonder that, however practical it was for the wearer, this fashion was lampooned by the media of the time. Later on, the brim of this hat was expanded forward to shade the delicate complexion of its wearer; not surprisingly, this version was dubbed “The Ugly” ... and that it was!

2020 marked the 90th anniversary of the Manotick Horticultural Society and former President **Margot Belanger** showed off the original minutes’ ledger of the Society. Begun at the first planning meeting in 1930, its hand-written contents take you through the history of this very active organization which has never ceased to take as much pride in its service to the community of Manotick as it does in the gardens of its membership.

Our last Bring and Bragger was **Mary Armstrong**, and she shared a very personal memento, a cloth badge of approximately 3”x4” bearing the words “Maple Leaf Forever”, which her dear father, Albert Edward Armstrong, carried in his pocket into the battlefield throughout World War One, together with his Bible. Mr. Armstrong served with the PPCLI Regiment and, happily, came safely home to his family in North Gower at war’s end.

This year’s “Bring and Brag” held up the tradition of inspiring RTHS members to hunt through their treasures and come up with some amazing items!

A Music Phenomenon Walkin' in North Gower

On a sunny day in April 1957, a Desoto Firedome station wagon marked "Imperial Records" pulled to a stop on Highway 16 beside the Ashwood House in North Gower. Telephone operator and amateur photographer Elsie Hyland, working in the telephone exchange office next door, must have seen it stop. As someone got out of the vehicle, she quickly ran out to her own car parked across the street to grab her camera in time to snap a hurried shot – before even getting out of her car – of a bemused Antoine 'Fats' Domino, ready to walk up Main Street.

From the photographs, it seems Domino and crew were headed south in the late morning of Thursday 18 April, having performed at the "Biggest Show of Stars of 1957" show in Ottawa the night before. Fats was the headliner, with a line-up of performers including Chuck Berry, Clyde McPhatter, and Paul Williams Orchestra, performing 45 shows across the continent. Domino's hit single "I'm Walking" was reaching the top of the charts, and the movie "Shake Rattle and Rock" in which he starred had just passed through Ottawa the week before, so the Ottawa crowd had been primed and ready for his arrival. Domino and the other acts did not disappoint, but Ottawa was perhaps lucky. Weeks earlier, Domino had missed several tour dates due to illness, and one of the band cars had caught fire near Washington DC.



Antoine 'Fats' Domino beside Imperial Records tour car on Main Street, North Gower near Ashwood House, April 1957. – Rideau Archives, Elsie Hyland collection. – Photographer: Elsie Hyland

In Ottawa, things had been tame. Out on the Auditorium floor, police had kept an eye on things and twice had had to threaten cancelling the show if the audience couldn't stop dancing and remain seated. But there was no racial and drunken tension that newspapers claimed was fueling violence at some American venues. There had been riots at four Domino shows in 1956, with a Connecticut date being cancelled simply due to the fear of fifth. When the fall version of the 1957 Biggest Show of Stars (which again featured Domino and also Ottawa's own Paul Anka, arriving in Ottawa in November) was getting ready to go on the road, it happened again – a tour stop in Washington DC was cancelled due to riot fears.



Antoine 'Fats' Domino and band/crew member on Main Street, North Gower near Bide-A-Wee, April 1957. – Rideau Archives, Elsie Hyland collection. – Photographer: Elsie Hyland

Despite these tensions, Domino saw his music making people happy, and indeed it brought them together, in some instances physically, in a way that had never happened before. At that time, some cities in the American South still forced entertainment shows to segregate their audiences, with separate afternoon and evening shows, though a few cities took their spring 1957 Biggest Show date to allow integrated audiences for the first time. Similarly, Domino and other Black musicians wouldn't necessarily be served in all restaurants across the United States. During the fall edition of the 1957 Biggest Show, Buddy Holly famously stormed out of a place that was prepared to serve him but not the Black musicians with him. Bringing a greater consciousness of Black culture was not Domino's chief aim in playing music, but it clearly was one of its results. Things were different in Canada, of course, but nevertheless by the time that Domino was walking up Main Street in North Gower in April 1957 and posing for Elsie Hyland there was little to no history of any presence of people of African descent in the vicinity. Unlike nearby communities like Ottawa, Hull and Perth, North Gower and Marlborough Townships remained largely uninvolved in the African diaspora until immigration from the Caribbean in the 1960s.

Domino's enormous popularity may have been a factor in bridging the segregation gap, yet the importance of this rock 'n' roll legend is perhaps not well remembered today, even if only judged in terms of his impact in the music industry. By the time of his second appearance in Ottawa that year, in November 1957 at the fall version of the Biggest Show of Stars, Fats Domino had already sold 25 million records in a career spanning less than a decade. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame credits Domino with more hit records than Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Buddy Holly combined. Domino's music was formative for the careers of Ernest Evans (whose stage name Chubby Checker was a direct pun on Fats Domino's name) and the Beatles, among many others, as well as influencing Jamaican artists developing ska. A prolific artist, Domino left his estate the rights to over 1000 tracks. But even in the 1950s, the real money (for musicians, at any rate) was to be made in touring, not in record sales or royalties. At the time, it has

been estimated that Domino was earning the current value of \$4.5 million a year playing live shows.

Ironically, Hyland's photographs catch Domino not performing the music that he loved but on the road to the next gig, posing for a fan's camera, which presented tougher challenges for the star. According to a 2007 Rolling Stone interview, "eating food he hasn't cooked and talking to people he doesn't know rank near the top of his list of least-favorite activities." It is said that Domino stopped playing live shows because he couldn't handle the food anymore. As a Forbes 2017 obituary article put it, "... New Orleans was the only place where he liked the food. He would take his own pots and pans on tour with him."

Perhaps the Ashwood, or the Bide-A-Wee next door, made the cut that Thursday morning, or maybe Fats was simply grabbing a coffee before heading back out on the road.

Stuart Clarkson

Sources: *Ottawa Journal*; A Rock 'n' Roll Historian (blog); The Pop History Dig (blog); "Fats Domino Concerts: Riots and Rock N' Roll" *American Masters* (KET.org); Rick Coleman, "Fats Domino: Timeline of His Life, Hits and Career Highlights" *American Masters* (PBS.org); Charles M. Young, "Fats Domino, Big Easy Legend, Hits New York" *Rolling Stone* 2007; Mark Beech, "Rock Legend Fats Domino Dies At 89: A Look At His Career" *Forbes* 2017.

2021 Membership Fees Now Due

It's that time of year again ... time to renew your RTHS membership!

Because Covid is keeping us physically apart, we have made it easier to pay, through e-transfer. Details are on the membership form which you will find at the end of the newsletter. You can also submit donations to RTHS by the same method. Receipts for paid memberships will be issued when we are able to meet face-to-face. Tax receipts for donations will be issued annually.

How to Connect with RTHS



www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory



rideautwphistory@gmail.com



<https://twitter.com/RideauTphs>

Dickinson House Museum



www.facebook.com/Dickinsonhousemuseum



dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com

Dickinson House Volunteer Recruitment



Volunteer Opportunities Dickinson House Museum in Manotick

The organizing committee for Dickinson House is planning for when the museum will once again be able to open its doors to visitors.

The committee welcomes volunteers to join them via Zoom, to work behind the scenes in developing plans for the future.

Fresh ideas are always welcome, and it is a wonderful way to get involved with a jewel in Dickinson Square historic site in the heart of Manotick.

To become a member of our team, email us at dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com.

Sign me up as a member of RTHS



Members of the Society enjoy:

- Monthly meetings featuring engaging presentations, followed by refreshments
- Group excursions to historical points of interest in Eastern ON
- Local books published by the Society, and a monthly newsletter
- Opportunities to participate and contribute as volunteers

For more information visit <https://rideautownshiphistory.org> and [facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory](https://www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory).

Please **mail** this form with a cheque for membership dues payable to: Rideau Township Historical Society, Box 56, North Gower, ON, KOA 2T0, **OR** pay by e-transfer to rideautwphistory@gmail.com and email a scanned copy of the form to the same email address.

Name:

Address:

City & Postal Code:

Telephone:

Email:

Date:

Are you a new RTHS member? Yes _____ No _____

Individual Membership \$15 _____ Life Membership \$100 _____

Family Membership (2 adults & school-age children) \$20 _____

Donation \$50 _____

Other Donation \$ _____

Receipts for paid memberships will be issued when we are able to meet face-to-face, but tax receipts for donations will be issued at the end of the year.

Thank you for supporting RTHS!