



The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

April 2012 Newsletter

Newsletter Editor: Ron Wilson (rideauarchives@ottawa.ca)

Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, April 18, 2012
Time: 7:30 pm
Place: Rideau Branch of the Ottawa Archives,
6581 Fourth Line Road (Main St.),
North Gower

This Month

1. The March Presentation
2. Dickinson house, help wanted.
3. From the Pen of the President
4. News from the Rideau Archives
5. Coming Events
6. Minutes of the March meeting

Bring a Friend, Light Refreshments

Topic: *Behind the Scenes,
"With Only a Suitcase"*

Speaker: *Ellen Adamsons*

Local author, Ellen Adamsons will be presenting a behind-the-scenes account of her new book "With Only A Suitcase" which chronicles the trials and tribulations of the Adamsons family who, following World War II, were displaced from their native Latvia and eventually settled in Kars, Ontario.

Ellen, with the aid of a slide show, will take us on a historical journey through Latvia, and discuss how she used various research materials and photographs to compile a family history and eventually edit and publish her book.

All are welcome.

From the Pen of the President

Jean Casselman Wadds, O. C., B. A., LL.D., was a female icon in Canadian Public Life. Do you remember her or have you ever heard of her? She was the Member of Parliament for Dundas-Grenville which included part of Rideau Township from 1958 to 1968.

Jean achieved many firsts in Canadian Public Life as a female politician. She was the third woman to be elected to the House of Commons. She succeeded her husband who was the Member of Parliament for Dundas-Grenville from 1921 - 1958. Wadds joined her father in the House of Commons, the Hon. Earl Rowe, making them the first father and daughter team in Canadian politics. She was also the first female Parliamentary Secretary, serving as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and Welfare. In 1961 she became the first woman appointed to the United Nations by the Canadian Government.

Jean was appointed in 1979 the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, the first woman to be so appointed. It was in this role that she achieved perhaps, her greatest accomplishments. She led the Canadian team that negotiated the terms and conditions of the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was to say of her: "I always said it was thanks to three women that we were eventually able to reform our Constitution. The Queen who was favourable,

Margaret Thatcher, who undertook to do everything our Parliament asked of her, and Jean Wadds who represented the interests of Canada so well in London."

In 1981 Wadds was given the Freedom of the City of London and a year later in 1982 she received the Order of Canada. She later served as a Member of the Royal Commission on Economic Union and Development Prospect for Canada.

Jean Casselman Wadds died in Prescott, Ontario on November 25th, 2011, at the age of 91.

The Grenville part of the Dundas-Grenville Federal Riding was moved in 1968 to a new Riding known as Carleton-Grenville. Jean was a candidate in the new Riding. She was defeated by the late Hon. Gordon Blair.

We are Looking for New Members

One recommendation of our strategic planning exercise was to work at increasing our membership. One way to do so is to turn members of the society into recruiters. So please think about your friends who might have an interest in local history or in the sort of subjects our speakers cover and invite them to a meeting. This will give them a chance to see what we do and perhaps think of joining up.

Presentation, March Meeting
Challenging the Myths Surrounding 1492
Article and pictures by Lucy Martin

North America was clearly found and settled by its aboriginal peoples. The topic of which other persons, or cultures, 'discovered' the continent as well continues to provoke debate.

Thirty-four members and guests gathered at North Gower's lovely, historic Holy Trinity Anglican Church on March 21st. to hear Stu Rogers speak about "Challenging the Myths Surrounding 1492".

Public interest is easily attracted by exciting claims, such as Gavin Menzies' recent best-seller 1421: The Year China Discovered the World. As they should, new theories generate scrutiny: Did this happen, or not? When? Where? What's the proof? Supporters of the new concept are bound to have their credentials critiqued as well.



Marg and Stu Rogers have devoted many years and many miles to study of the early inhabitants of North America.

Our culture's fixation on superlatives like 'biggest' or 'first' is a curious quirk. After all, even if the Vikings 'beat' Columbus (chronologically speaking) his voyages unleashed European Colonialism, which changed the whole world, for better and worse. So let's just say it's all worth understanding.

Early cultures and cross-contacts have long fascinated retired teacher and RTHS member Stu Rogers. He and his wife, Marguerite Rogers, make a point of seeking archaeological sites, old monuments and various museums on their extensive travels across North America.

Stu Rogers began his talk with a wish that scholars and educators would frame this subject more broadly than single European figures, like Columbus. Rogers suggests a span of roughly 2,000 B.C. to the present would present a better picture. Rogers believes there was "deep and prolonged penetration of exploration into North America prior to what orthodoxy would lead us to believe."

After putting in a plug for Indian mounds as another fascinating topic of study, Rogers reviewed a list of possible North American explorers either accepted or debated today:

- 980 Vikings at L'Anse Aux Meadows
- 1098 Prince Madoc
- 1250 Vikings (Lennape Epic)
- 1307 Knights Templar
- 1398 Prince Henry Sinclair (who some say explored Nova Scotia)
- 1421 Chinese
- 14th-15th cent. Basques
- 1432 Portuguese
- 1492-7 Columbus and Cabot

Rogers brought along a number of books that broadened the topic even further, including Barry Fell's Bronze Age America which postulates that Celts, Basques, Phoenicians, Egyptians and perhaps other cultures, had early trade with North America. Rogers shared slides of boats from different cultures that may have been utilized to conduct such travel.



Some of the books Stu brought along related to early cultures in North America

Stu and Marguerite's travels have taken them to carved rune stones, native images, structures and symbology here in North America that appear to share similarities

with equivalent writing and symbols from pre-1492 European cultures. (I won't list them all, but Rogers shared slides and drawings to illustrate his points.)

Is there commonality? If so, does that prove contact? Interpretations and explanations vary. On some items Rogers is defending unconventional views, or ones that have alternative explanations. In each case, though, it would be most interesting to learn exactly who made the item and why!

A sidebar: I hail from Hawaii, where there's interest in exploration of the Pacific basin. As a schoolchild in the 1960's there was still much discussion about the theories of Thor Heyerdahl. He believed Pacific Islands could have been settled by out-migration from South America, something Heyerdahl supposedly proved possible by building and sailing a balsa boat from Peru to the Tuamotu Islands in 1947. Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki expedition generated a widely-read book and an award-winning movie.

Jump ahead to the 1970's when the Polynesian Voyaging Society was founded to research, preserve and teach the skills that allowed pre-contact Polynesians to successfully traverse vast ocean expanses. Those efforts, and multiple expeditions by the double-hulled voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a, have been tremendously successful in enhancing cultural rejuvenation and traditional seafaring knowledge. This demonstration of tangible capacity sealed support for Polynesian settlement by canoe. But that wouldn't necessarily rule out other/additional exploration. In Hawaii's case, for example, largely unproven (but persistent) speculation maintains that some contact with Spanish ships may have occurred prior to the first arrival of explorer Captain James Cook in 1778.

My point is simple: fresh evidence can change accepted views, and some evidence has perhaps been lost forever. Not every idea holds up – and it can be hard to know ahead of time which ones will. Heyerdahl's notions are no longer in vogue. Yet Viking encampments in North America – presented as scarcely-proven theory in my childhood – are no longer doubted.

When sorting through a jumble of accepted, disputed and even whimsical concepts, a certain degree of caution, and



Stu and Bill Adams chatting after the presentation. The presentation generated considerable discussion after the meeting, a sure sign it was an interesting one.

humility may be appropriate. After all, our understanding of history evolves too.

Post-talk audience feedback included a question about contagion: if inter-continental contact usually spreads diseases (for which the previously isolated side has no immunity) wouldn't there have been earlier epidemics, prior to Columbus and all who followed him? Or, if natives were exposed but not wiped out, shouldn't there have been more resistance to those diseases by the time Columbus came?

That lead to a comment about how there may have been very little chance to pass on any information about pre-Columbus encounters, because of severe cultural fragmentation (depending on the level of violence, disease or death arising from any earlier contact between explorers and the native inhabitants).

There was also a question on how so many competing theories should be evaluated? That lead to a discussion of potential disputes between professional scholars and amateurs – and the difficulty of challenging entrenched views.

Agree or disagree, Rogers' talk left his audience with much to ponder.

Dickinson House Help Wanted

We are once again approaching the summer season at the Dickinson House, which will be our fifth. Hard to believe isn't it?

In previous years we have opened the house Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. This year we have submitted a request for a grant to hire 2 summer students. If we are successful in obtaining this grant we will be open Wednesday through Sunday plus holidays. Unfortunately we will not know until early May whether we will be successful or not so we have to plan for both eventualities.

In either case we need volunteer help at the house for the summer. Help is required in three areas.

- Spring Clean Up
- Assistant Curator
- Costumed Interpreters

Spring Cleanup.

The spring cleanup this year will be on the morning of April 21 from 9am until around noon. Any help we can get will be much appreciated.

Assistant Curator

Coral Lindsay has agreed to act as Curator this season, but will need assistance. The curators duties are as follows.

1. *Supervise the documenting, cataloguing and valuation of all artifacts, and the maintenance of complete records of the museum's collection.*
2. *Oversee coordinated implementation the RTHS policy on acquisitions, loans and de-accessions.*
3. *Working with the Dickinson House Committee, play a lead role in the planning, handling and display of permanent and temporary exhibits and the holding of events at Dickinson House.*
4. *Working in conjunction with experienced Dickinson House volunteers, oversee recruitment, scheduling and supervision of summer staff and volunteers, ensuring that they are provided with training and mentoring on the history of the house and the exhibited artifacts.*
5. *Carry out, coordinate or direct documentary research and the writing of scripts explaining the history of the Dickinson family and daily life in Dickinson House from 1860 to the present day.*
6. *Assist the Chair of the Dickinson House Committee in liaising, networking and cooperating with other museums, historical societies, outside agencies, volunteer groups, organizations, schools, etc.,*

with the goal of developing programming and partnerships to build new audiences for Dickinson House.

7. *Communicate the goals, policies and strategies laid out by the RTHS Executive and the Dickinson House Committee, while protecting the interests of the collection, programming and volunteers/staff.*
8. *Participate in fundraising and budgeting.*
9. *Carry out general administrative duties arising from the foregoing responsibilities.*

If you can help Coral with any of these curator duties please give us a call at the number below.

Costumed Interpreters

Each season the Dickinson House sees about 4000 visitors from far and wide as well as local, many of whom have chosen to visit Ottawa and then added Manotick to their itinerary.

You can become a Dickinson House volunteer and help the RTHS provide tours for these very interesting people.

If would like to volunteer or explore the possibility please give us a call. We can help with costumes and instruction on the rooms and artifacts you will be explaining.

To volunteer call Brian Earl at (613) 692-2371

Watson's Mill Events

The Mill is located at 5525 Dickinson Street, Dickinson Square, Manotick. Free parking on-site.

Web Site: www.watsonsmill.com

Upcoming events include: Storytelling Workshop: April 14th; Spring Cleaning Bee: April 21st; "Raise the Roof" Concert: April 21st; Manotick Night at the Races: April 27th. Join the Mill E-List for regular news updates and volunteer opportunities: watsonsmillmanotick@rogers.com or visit us on Facebook: Watson's Mill Manotick. New members and tour groups welcome.



The Annual General Meeting for Watson's Mill was held on April 1 this year. The picture on the left is of the board and staff who were in attendance at the meeting. The board members who were up for re-election were acclaimed.

Names left to right:

Cam Trueman (Education and Programming Officer), Kris Schulz, Bill Schaub (President), Sonja Vanek, Karlis Adamsons (Treasurer), Melanie Parker (Administrative Assistant), Terry McGovern, Diane Wastle (Secretary), Isabelle Geoffrion (Manager), Winston Spratt, Gerry Reasbeck (Vice President).

News from the Rideau Branch, Ottawa Archives

Hours: *The Rideau Archives is open every Tuesday from 9:30 am to 4:30 p.m., and at other times by appointment. (613-489-2926).*

If you have had problems finding the Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives, then we have done you a favour. The City of Ottawa has placed signs directing you to our building. The signs have been erected on Prince of Wales Drive and on Roger Stevens Drive near the intersection of Fourth Line Road.

The design of these blue signs features the standard shape and colour used elsewhere in the city.



Coming Events:

Manotick Public Library Exhibit on the Titanic, March 28 - April 25, 2012

During April, the Library will host a display depicting the building and sinking of the Royal Mail Ship *Titanic*. The White Star liner, the largest of its time, left Southampton April 10, 1912 and after a glancing blow from an iceberg the huge ship sank on April 15, 1912. The exhibit will be set up on March 28 by Coral Lindsay.

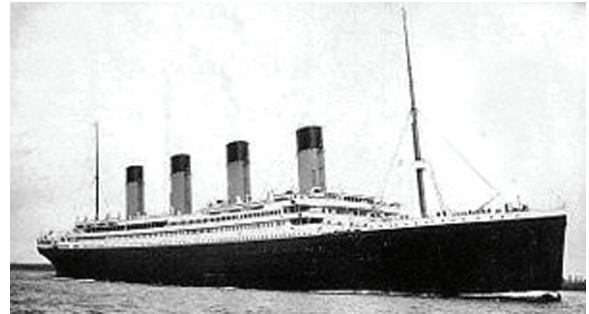


Photo Courtesy Wikipedia

Minutes of the March 21, 2012 Meeting

The meeting at North Gower's Holy Trinity Church was begun with a warm welcome from Robert Craig and the church's incumbent, the Reverend Jan Staniforth, who was also in the audience.

RTHS Vice President Maureen McPhee began the meeting with a question about the row of portraits and photos along one wall. Rev. Staniforth explained that they were the rectors of the parish "from the beginning until the one before me". As the parish was established in 1829, and the current stone church dates from 1879, the site for the meeting was quite historic itself.

Maureen called the meeting to order shortly after 7:30 pm with 34 members and guests in attendance.

Reports

Minutes of the last meeting were approved as published in the Newsletter.

Finance –Treasurer Colin Wright reports \$24,825 in the general ledger through March 15th. A city grant has also been approved in the amount of \$6,000 to be administered for Dickinson House.

Membership – Pat Earl reports RTHS has 12 life members, 1 complimentary member and 81 paid regular members. Reminders have been sent to those who were members last year but have yet to submit dues for 2012.

Communications and Digital Applications – Ron Wilson reminded the meeting of an effort to create a communications sub-committee for the purpose of raising public awareness of RTHS and Dickinson House activities. A sign-up sheet for that sub-committee was passed around. Anyone is welcome. Targeted activities include writing copy, providing advertisements and/or articles to local papers, putting posters up at local bulletin boards.

Publications – Ellen Adamsons reports good progress on this year's project to re-publish *Cheese Factories of Rideau Township* by Iona Joy. She also shared a letter from former Kars-area residents Patricia Pettapiece Snyder (now a resident of Maine) who was extremely happy to receive and read copies of Kars on the Rideau, which mentions many of her ancestors, relatives and friends. Snyder mentions that a family reunion is planned very soon. (Time and location unknown, but Ellen can probably put any interested person in touch with Patricia.)

Ellen also reports that RTHS will attend the AGM of the Region Eight Ontario Genealogical Society on Genealogy Day April 21 at the new City Archives on Tallwood Dr. A sign-up sheet for help with the sale of RTHS publications will be available at the next meeting.

Program – Ruth Wright reminded all that the April 18th meeting will be held at the Rideau Archives in North Gower. Ellen Adamsons will speak about family records and her recent book *With Only a Suitcase*.

May 16: Robert Henderson will talk about the War of 1812 at Pierce's Corners Hall.

June 16:: summer excursion to Fort Wellington in Prescott.

Youth – Cam Trueman is moving forward with the establishment of a scholarship as recommended in the strategic plan. He is negotiating with both South Carleton and St. Mark's high schools.

Dickinson House – Maureen said preparations for the 2012 summer season continue. Funding to hire two students has been applied for, although it is not certain as yet that we will get it. A number of special weekends specializing in heritage crafts are planned.

Additional Announcements - Brian Earl announced a lost & found item: a tote bag with a camera battery charger a copy of Shadow Soldiers and some pens was left at the meeting held at Knox Presbyterian Church.

Brian also reported on attending on behalf of RTHS, a public consultation meeting on March 6th in Manotick related to the Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy Study which is preparing a report (due in September) on how Parks Canada is looking after the canal. This continuing

scrutiny and reporting is a requirement of the UNESCO World Heritage Designation program. Brian says a consultant group in Toronto has done a great study on canal features (geographic, historical). Input on favourite spots, photos or canal-related anecdotes are still welcome.

More info at: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/on/rideau/plan/sacr-rcls.aspx>

Lastly, Brian reported on RTHS efforts to improve the Dickinson family memorial plot at Beechwood Cemetery. Brian and Margot Belanger applied for a grant of \$2,000 from the City of Ottawa, which was approved. DSHMI will match that, so \$4,000 will be earmarked for this project, to be administered by RTHS.

It turns out the stone monument is historic in and of itself, so it will not be re-etched. The fallen pillar will be repaired. A boulder will be added with two plaques: one with genealogical info, the other describing the historic importance of the family, their accomplishments and contributions. A rededication may take place in June, which would be a good occasion to turn out in historic dress.

Side note: a nice article on this effort can be found at:

<http://www.emcmanotick.ca/20120315/news/Historical+society+to+restore+Dickinson+monument>

Evening's Program

Ruth introduced Stu Rogers, who presented a thought-provoking talk entitled "Challenging the Myths Surrounding 1492" which was a discussion of the history and evidence of contacts between native Americans and peoples from outside the western hemisphere that predated Columbus's voyages. Much evidence for these early contacts was presented by photographs taken by the speaker himself at sites that he had visited. This gave the presentation an impact that would be hard to match if the research had been only based on that reported by other authors. Lists of references were distributed for those interested in finding out more about this fascinating area of research.

There was a good discussion after the presentation.

Ruth thanked Stu and adjourned the meeting at about 9:15 pm.

Refreshments were provided which allowed for the discussions to continue informally.

*Minutes prepared by Bill Adams, RTHS Secretary
(with much appreciated help from a member of
the audience who shall remain nameless)*

The RTHS gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the City of Ottawa