

# The Rideau Township Historical Society

*Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township*

## April 2015 Newsletter

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

### **The April Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday, April 15, 2015  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Manotick United Church**  
**5567 Manotick Main St**  
**Manotick, Ontario**



### **The Speaker: Charlotte Gray**

Charlotte Gray is a British born Canadian historian and author. The Winnipeg Free Press has called her "one of Canada's best-loved writers of popular history and literary biography." She has received the Order of Canada.

### **Topic: The Massey Murder**

Charlotte will speak on her book "*The Massey Murder: A Maid, Her Master and the Trial that Shocked a Nation*".

In February, 1915, six months into the world's greatest conflict, Toronto became gripped with a local drama: a British maid, Carrie Davies, shot and killed her employer, a member of the prominent Massey family. Reported on the front pages of the city's six newspapers, the case quickly became a national story eclipsing war coverage. The trial and its extraordinary outcome are chronicled in Charlotte Gray's engaging book.

All are welcome to come and hear Charlotte talk about this compelling event

**Bring a Friend.**  
**To arrange a ride call**  
**Brian Earl at (613) 692 2371.**

### **This Month**

1. The March Presentation
2. The April Programme
3. Dickinson House 2015
4. Memberships now due.
5. Minutes of the February meeting.
6. News from the Rideau Archives

### **Dickinson House Program for 2015**

The Dickinson House program for special events this summer is now complete. Please find below the program for this season.

May 16..... Opening Day, Tableware in Times Past Exhibit  
May 18, 2 pm ... Queen Victoria's Birthday Celebration  
May 23, 1 pm .... Victorian Tea  
Jun 6..... Dickinson Day & Doors Open Ottawa  
Jun 7..... Doors Open Ottawa  
Jun 14, 2 pm .... Musical Thoughts Studio Recital  
Jun 21, 2 pm .... Keyboard Concert: Rowena Pearl  
Jul 4-5..... The Village Blacksmith  
Jul 12, 2 pm ..... Visit by Sir John A. Macdonald

Jul 18-19..... Heritage Garden Tours  
Aug 2, 1:30 pm Concert & Lawn Social: Manotick Brass  
Aug 15-16 ..... Domestic Skills: Spinning & Weaving;  
Wash Day  
Sep 4, 7:30 pm . Heritage Country Fair: Barn Dance  
Sep 5, 10 am .... Heritage Country Fair  
Oct 10, 11 am ... Harvest Festival  
Nov 7, 1 pm ..... Women's Day Victorian Tea  
Nov 11, 14-15 ... Exhibit: Local Heroes in Times of War  
Dec 5-6..... Heritage Christmas Crafts

It will be a busy and enjoyable season. Come out often and have fun.

# *Spinning Wheels and More*

## *Presentation by Gordon Moat*

*Article and photos by Lucy Martin*

For our March meeting 26 members and guests gathered at the Client Services Centre on Roger Stevens Drive to hear Gordon Moat talk about spinning wheels, with a focus on what are called great wheels, for their considerable wheel size.

Prior to Moat's presentation, Susan McKellar shared slides about early Kars resident Stephen Martin, who built the spinning wheel that is on display at Dickinson House, as well as a wooden desk still used at the Rideau Archives.

Martin hailed from a large family in near-by Osgood. He bought a lot in Kars at the corner of Washington and Waterloo, very near the village wharf on the Rideau River. There he built a sizable house and attached factory in 1858. The present-day address is 6732 Waterloo St. Martin married Susannah Lindsay. (One of their daughters, Annie, went on to be mother-in-law to a RTHS founder, Coral Lindsay.) Martin bought and ran a near-by saw mill and built a grist mill. Part of 6732 Waterloo was later home to the village library for about 30 years.



*The Martin house and factory still stands in Kars.*

After the last adult Martin child moved away the property was sold to Mr & Mrs Monkman as a summer home. Cameron and Kathryn Minor bought 6732 Waterloo in 1969 and have restored the building into very fine condition. They found a great many old tools and parts left behind, including pieces of old spinning wheels. Some may recall that Cameron Minor was an early president of the RTHS.

In introducing Gordon Moat, Brian Earl told us Moat is passionate about most everything to do with spinning and weaving - especially the "big wheels".

Moat began by observing the meeting date was the 159 anniversary of a U.S. patent from 1856 for Lyman

Wright's invention of a new type of spinning wheel he called "the Pendulum Spinner". (You can read all about such wheels and more in the specialty publication "The Spinning Wheel Sleuth")

Moat spend some time talking about the Stephen Martin wheel displayed at Dickinson House. That wheel is missing pieces, including its foot pedal. Moat has made pedals of the right shape for that type of wheel using elm wood from trees that had to come down on his property. He graciously donated one such pedal to Dickinson House to help restore that wheel.



*Gordon brought along 2 large spinning wheels for the demonstration.*

The advantage of the pendulum spinner was that the space and energy needed for the older walking wheel – in which the spinner literally stood and could walk back and forth for miles while spinning - could be compressed into a smaller area and be done sitting down. Moat kindly demonstrated the different mechanisms of the walking wheel and the pendulum (sitting) wheel.

Of the two wheels Moat brought along, the pendulum wheel was purchased in good shape from a seller in Cumberland who had had it for about 20 years. The other walking wheel, presented an adventure in research and discovery. It was found, in poor condition, at a farm auction near Pierces Corners. What at first looked like a footprint mark on the inside of the wheel turned out to be a maker's stencil for "H. Row, Kemptville".

Horton Row (b. 1832 d. 1915) was a Kemptville-area farmer and wheelwright who spent part of each year making spinning wheels. Various wheels known to be made by Row have been found and restored in this general region and it's quite likely more are still floating around, undetected. Thanks to his research, Moat could tell us that



in 1871 one of Row's great wheels would have cost \$2.50, a sum roughly equal to a half-week's wage.

In period clothing and with his restored Row great wheel, Moat sometimes gives demonstrations as "Horton Row" at Upper Canada Village and other historical events such as Kemptville's Dandelion Festival. Moat wrote in depth about Row and his great wheels for the Spinning Wheel Sleuth, issue #81, July 2013, which he shared as a handout at our meeting.

Moat's talk reminded the listeners how much has changed in terms of how we get our cloth and clothing. Speaking in generalizations, before the 1860s or so, in most Canadian households clothes, bedsheets, blankets, curtains, etc. all would have been made of "homespun" fabric. Wool or linen that was grown, harvested, spun, loomed and made by hand. Cotton cloth from the mills of England and New England was surging into that picture too. But the 100 years between 1830 and 1930 (more or less) represented a steady shift away from making fabric and clothes at home.

Even as factory goods increasingly supplanted home-made items, the marvels of mechanization also changed domestic production. This was the time period of improved spinning wheels and early sewing machines, a great boon for harried homemakers

Here I would add that spinning wheels and the process of spinning wool looks relatively simple. But the technology that went into advances like the pendulum wheel was remarkable. Consumers of those upgrades were probably as excited about greater ease and speed as we of today are about faster, smaller computers and such.

Moat stated he wasn't an especially skillful spinner since he doesn't devote enough time to actual production to be that good at it. Watching hanks of combed wool flow smoothly into spun yarn, his claim struck me as overly modest.

Audience questions were varied. There was curiosity about the types of wood used for such wheels (Row was using ash. Oak would have been common too.) Great wheels must have taken up considerable space in the home, but Moat pointed out they could be stored fairly flat along a wall when not in use.

There was some discussion about the different qualities of wool (i.e., wool off sheep bred for meat tends to be a rough fibre, merino wool was one of the better ones) which prompted a listener's comment that it's even possible to spin using dog hair.

A question came up about what source of power would have been used to make wheels of that era. Moat thinks Stephen Martin was using a steam-powered lathe in Kars. At his Kemptville workshop, Row could have been using a



*Gordon Moat at one of wheels demonstrating to Barbara Humphreys how they actually worked.*

treadle, or a horse powered drive shaft and pulleys. Those power sources were common at that time, but it's hard to be sure what would have been used.

The audience seemed quite taken with the scope of Moat's presentation, which encompassed the tracking of



*Gordon was also called upon to restore spinning wheels that were not found in good condition as can be seen from the one in the picture.*

historical information, what can be learned about the lives of our fore-bearers, the contrast between endless and necessary home-production of yesteryear and how easy we have it today, the amazing ingenuity of such simple-looking devices and the meticulous attention that goes into restoration work. A very interesting evening!

[The RTHS gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the City of Ottawa](#)

## **News from the Rideau Branch, Ottawa Archives**

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

**Resources and Services of the Rideau Township Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives:** a monthly feature in this newsletter, celebrating the services and holdings preserved in your community's archives resource centre.

### **Connections with Rouleau, Saskatchewan – pt. 1**

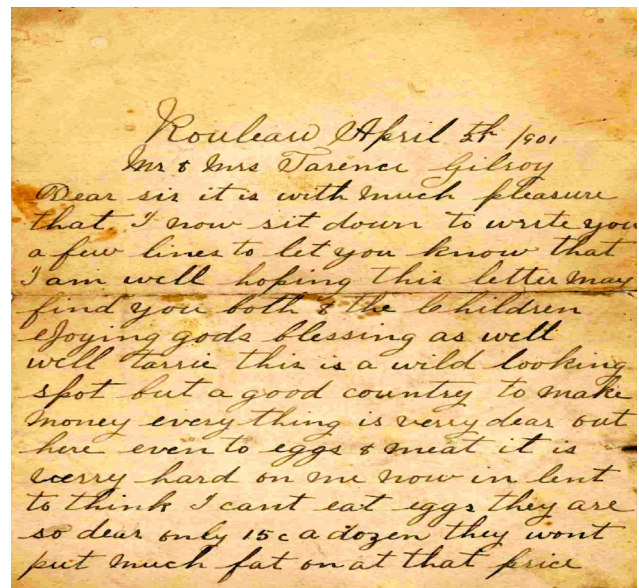
On 18 November 1916, David Mansel Ross of North Gower stepped into the Canadian Expeditionary Force's recruiting office at Rouleau, Saskatchewan, 50 kilometres southeast of Moose Jaw, to enlist. The office was housed in the 42-room Arlington Hotel, built in 1905 during the rapid rise of Rouleau to its brief importance as either the final destination or the temporary home of homesteaders making their way westward. Today the hotel may be vaguely familiar to some residents of North Gower and Marlborough as the Dog River Hotel, since Rouleau was the location for the CTV comedy "Corner Gas", but a hundred years ago this small prairie town had surprisingly deep roots with the Rideau Township area.

Alf Pettapiece must have been among the first to travel out west to settle at Rouleau, probably arriving around the time its post office was established in 1895. Samuel Hanna, who made a trip in 1898 on a harvest excursion train to scout out the land, settled there with his wife Margaret Jane Brown and their large family a few years later, on property said to have been bought from Pettapiece. James H. Brownlee and his wife Mary Ann Pratt settled at Rouleau too. George Robert Davis of Marlborough arrived in 1901, writing from Rouleau on 21 April to his Marlborough neighbor Terry Gilroy, in a letter held at the Rideau Branch (MGR121, RV 111.03), comparing this new territory to the land back home: "well Tarrie you can talk about them clay flats off Jimie Haffies where I randed last spring but I have been over a thousand off acres & never seen a stone." His mode of travel there was not exactly orthodox: "I beat my way out here the whole 17 hundred miles it never cost me one cent that is \$28.60 in my pocket we had a good time on the road out off course I kept hid at the stations but I seen a good deal off the country ...". Gilroy did not join Davis at Rouleau, but the family

of Davis' wife Agnes Reddick did: in the end, four Reddick brothers and their sister Susan had moved there by the time Rouleau became a village in 1903.

More on the Rouleau connection next month, but drop by the Rideau Archives to read more about Davis' time out west. And soon to come also will be more information on the Rideau Township Archives Memorial Project, which is working to identify and commemorate the war dead from Rideau Township, including D.M. Ross and others who had left the Rideau area to settle the West.

Stuart Clarkson



George Robert Davis of Marlborough arrived in 1901, writing from Rouleau on 21 April to his Marlborough neighbor Terry Gilroy.

### **A Sad Loss**

Bill Leach, a long time member of the RTHS, passed away suddenly on April 1. Bill was a Lieutenant General (retired). He had a distinguished career in the military and had won many awards such as the Canadian Order of Military Merit (Commander) and the United States Legion of Merit (Commander). He also was involved in a wide variety of volunteer and other activities including chairing the Board of the Canadian Museum of History and the Canadian War Museum.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this difficult time.

### **2015 Memberships Now Due**

A reminder: Very reasonable annual dues for 2015 are now being collected. (\$10 individual; \$15 family) See Membership Director Patricia Pratt at any meeting.

### **The May Program**

- Wednesday 15 May, 2015.
- St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kars.
- Jordan Smith will speak on "The Wilbur Mine" on the Kingston — Pembroke Railway.

## ***Minutes of the Rideau Township Historical Society March Meeting***

March 18, 2015, Client Service Centre, North Gower, Ont.

**Opening:** President Brian Sawyer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and welcomed the 26 people present.

**Previous Minutes:** Moved by Brandon Kassis, seconded by Ruth Wright, that the October 2014 minutes be approved; carried. Note: due to an oversight these minutes had not been approved previously, although they were published in the November 2014 newsletter.

Minutes: Moved by Lucy Martin, seconded by Linda Reasbeck, that the February 2015 minutes as contained in the March newsletter be approved; carried.

**Finance:** The financial reviewer, Philip Dudgeon, reported that he has met with the treasurer, Sandy McNiece, and reviewed the RTHS financial records. He found everything to be in good order, and said that Sandy's record-keeping is excellent. He has a couple of minor recommendations regarding book-keeping practices that he is making to Sandy. Moved by Ron Wilson, seconded by Val Lister, that the report be accepted; carried. Philip thanked the society for offering him a complimentary membership, but explained that he can't accept remuneration for this work. He has joined the society and purchased a family membership. He later noted that he was previously treasurer of Rideau Township, and met our past president Bill Tupper at that time.

**Membership:** Patricia Pratt, membership director, reported that four new members had joined that evening, bringing the total membership to 66.

**Publications:** Ron Wilson reported in the absence of Jane Anderson, chair, that the committee is proceeding with the oral history project.

**Communications:** Ron Wilson, communications director, reported that the web site is up to date and the March newsletter has been distributed.

**Dickinson House:** Brian Earl reported in the absence of Maureen McPhee, chair, that plans are underway for the 2015 season at Dickinson House.

**Grants:** In the absence of the grants director, Angela Beking, there was no report. There has been no response as yet to the application for a grant from the City of Ottawa, however Karl Adamsons, chair of the Watson's Mill board, noted that they had received an interim payment.

**Youth:** Brandon Kassis, youth director, talked about the two scholarships for local high school history students; these awards will be \$250 each this year. He hopes to be able to donate the remaining \$500 to local schools for appropriate outings.

**Program:** Owen Cooke, co-chair, briefly described plans for future meetings, with author Charlotte Gray scheduled for the April meeting speaking on her book, The Massey Murder. Jordan Smith from Lanark will speak on the Wilbur mine in May, and the June excursion will probably be to the home of Sir John A. MacDonald in Kingston.

**Evening Program:** Brian Earl introduced Susan McKellar who showed a picture of "Coral's Corner", the used book sale at the North Gower library, then gave a brief description of the life of Stephen Martin. Brian then introduced the main speaker for the evening, Gordon Moat, who demonstrated and spoke on spinning wheels.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned about 9:00, followed by a social time with refreshments courtesy of Sandy Wilson.