

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

April 2017 Newsletter

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

The April Meeting

Date: Wednesday, April 19, 2017
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: Orchard View on the Rideau
1145 Bridge Street
Manotick, ON



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

The Spring Program 2017

May:

In May our speaker will be Jim Witham, former director of the Canadian War Museum, on how to start and run a museum.

June:

Probably on Saturday, 24 June, we will have an excursion to the Wilno Heritage Village to explore our Polish roots, with a lunch at the Polish buffet at Wilno Tavern.

Dickinson House 2017

It's that time of year again.

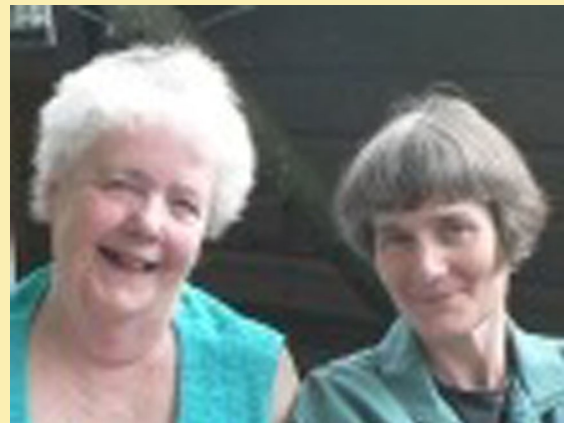
The 3rd floor exhibit by Melanie Hayes, "A Walk Through the Decades", is nearing completion,

ready for opening day.

Once again, please be aware that volunteers are always welcome and much needed.

Subject: The Famous Five

On Wednesday 19 April Ruth and her mother, storytellers, will tell us about the Famous Five and the recognition of women as "persons". The story of The Famous Five has been researched through primary sources: articles, books, correspondence, and letters by the individual women, as well as the newspapers of the time, and through academic texts. Archives in Ottawa and Alberta provide many details, but our tale is heavily influenced by family stories we have heard all our lives!



The Speakers: Ruth Stewart-Verger and her Mother Donna Stewart

Donna Stewart and Ruth Stewart-Verger are storytellers with years of experience recounting tales of Canada's history.

Donna Stewart has told stories on all three of Canada's coasts, and every where in between! Donna was given the title "Elder" by the Storyteller's of Canada/Conteur du Canada's national conference in 2003.

Ruth uses stories daily in her classroom and in her work with new Canadians. She has facilitated workshops, conducted seminars and presented at symposiums and conferences on storytelling and the applications of storytelling. She has traveled across Canada telling stories, and finding new ones! Ruth has had the great good fortune to hear Donna's tales all her life.

Together they held the position "co-past president" of the national association Storyteller's of Canada/Conteur du Canada. Both have studied Canadian history, both are teachers (Donna retired). Both have given performances, workshops and seminars on storytelling, and on conveying our countries history through oral story across Canada.

See poster page 5

The March Presentation on Joseph Currier

Speaker: Hannah Blaine

Article by Owen Cooke

Photos by Maureen McPhee

Hannah Blaine, now a fourth year history and political science student at Queen's University in Kingston, was the Society's research student in the summer of 2016. On a snowy Wednesday night in March she told a hardy group of nineteen members and guests about her project to document the story of Joseph Merrill Currier.



Hannah Blaine presenting on Joseph Merrill Currier

Currier was born in North Troy, Vermont, in 1820, and attended primary school there. In 1837, at age seventeen, he came to Canada with the intention of entering the timber trade. He first settled in Buckingham, Quebec, and worked in the Bigelow Mill. While there he met Christina Wilson, whom he married in 1846. They moved to Bytown about 1849. His first son was born about that time. In Bytown, Currier managed the lumber business of McKay and McKinnon Co., with mills at Rideau Falls. While there, he was introduced to Moss Kent Dickinson, who also worked for the firm. In 1853 the business was leased to Currier and David McLaren, and later operated by Currier alone.

Three of four Currier children died of typhoid in 1858, and Christina died of what the Victorians referred to as a "broken heart". Currier himself was busy in his career. In addition to the mill he was a partner in the Victoria Foundry. In 1859 he served one term as Alderman on the Council of the new City of Ottawa. Recognizing the value of the sawn lumber trade to the United States and of the site at the control dam in Manotick, he joined Dickinson in building mills there, and bought up lots around the dam in 1858-59. The state of the art turbines for the mill were fashioned at the Victoria Foundry. Currier also built a "cottage" on one of his properties on Mill St.

In January 1861 Currier married again, to Anna Crosby, an American from Lake George, New York, and twenty years his junior. Only two months later she died tragical-

ly, her dress caught in the machinery of the grist mill in Manotick. Her husband soon sold his interests in the mills, to concentrate on his businesses in Ottawa. In 1863 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the then Province of Canada (1841-1867), in its last sittings in Quebec City. He was elected as the first Member of Parliament for Ottawa in the new House of Commons in 1867, and continued to represent the city through to 1882. In politics he was a Liberal-Conservative, but was not really attached to a party. He was always concerned about tariffs, and how they impacted his business.

He married for a third time in 1868, to Hannah Wright. For her he constructed "Gorphwysta", or "haven of rest", a mansion at 24 Sussex Drive, designed by his brother and today the official residence of the Prime Ministers. The following year they added a ballroom, where in 1870 they entertained Prince Arthur, later Duke of Connaught and Governor-General of Canada, on his tour of Canada and the United States.

Currier had many other interests in Ottawa. He was the first president of Beechwood Cemetery Co., a director of the Ottawa Agricultural Society, president of the newly-formed Rideau Club, a director of the Ottawa City Passenger Railroad Co., president of the Citizen Printing and Publishing Co., a member of the Board of Trade, as well as holding other positions in the community.

However, changes in the tariffs on timber to the United States, and then a fire destroying his mills in Hull, left him bankrupt by the late 1870s. He took on the position of Postmaster of Ottawa. This was a salaried position, whereas being an M.P. was unpaid in those years. He remained Postmaster until his death.



Brian Earl thanking Hannah for her excellent presentation.

Joseph Currier died in 1884, at a New York inn, returning from a voyage undertaken to Bermuda for his health. He is buried in Beechwood Cemetery, along with his first two wives and the three children who pre-deceased him, and whose bodies he had moved to the new cemetery. Hannah concluded that Joseph Merrill Currier was an im-

portant contributor to public and business life in Ottawa through the latter part of the nineteenth century.

A lively question and answer session on various aspects of his life and influence followed, and a descendent of Currier offered interesting insights on his private life. Refreshments and conversation concluded the evening.



An early picture of the house at 24 Sussex



Joseph Currier's monument at Beechwood Cemetery

Some Events of Interest to History Buffs

Canadian Historic Battlefields : Memorials and Cemeteries: Amsterdam to Paris

Stittsville Library Branch: 1637 Stittsville Main Street, June 6, 7:00- 8:30 p.m. Online registration required at:

www.bibliottawalibrary.ca

Visit some of the most iconic historic locales of the twentieth century, from Amsterdam to Paris to Gllipoli. Al Sangster will focus on WW1 and WW11 battlegrounds and memorial sites, as well as associated historic towns and villages.

WW1 sites include Ypres Salient and the Somme area, including Vimy Ridge and Beaumont Hamel. WW11 sites include Dunkirk; Dieppe and Normandy with Amsterdam, Brussel and Bruges. In addition, Camp Westerbork will be featured. Lest we forget, this talk is particularly poignant as we celebrate Canada 150, because July 1 is not only the 150th anniversary of Confederation, but is also the 101st Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, a defining moment in the history of our nation.

NORTH GRENVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PENNY PERILS

The story of Canada's lowest valuation coin—neglected, then abandoned . . . and other cautionary tales about currency

by Ron Gould, Member of the Board of Directors of the Society

7:00 pm
The Court House
15 Water Street
Kemptville

12 APR

www.northgrenvillehistoricalsociety.ca

On the right, a poster for a talk on the Canadian one penny coin. The talk will take place at The Court House in Kemptville on April 12'. Sounds quite interesting.

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.

Background to a Marlborough Property Transaction

In March 1864, a Merrickville merchant born in Massachusetts sold property in Marlborough Township, relating to his sons' insolvent North Gower company and to their purchases in Montreal. Charles Holden, who had a general store at Merrickville, was the merchant in question.

By 1853, he also had a business in North Gower, taking over Hartwell's store and post office and setting up his son Horatio as postmaster. In the mid-1850s, he sold out to Horatio, and in April 1860 Horatio brought his brother John Henry Holden into the business, along with partner Alexander Lindsay.

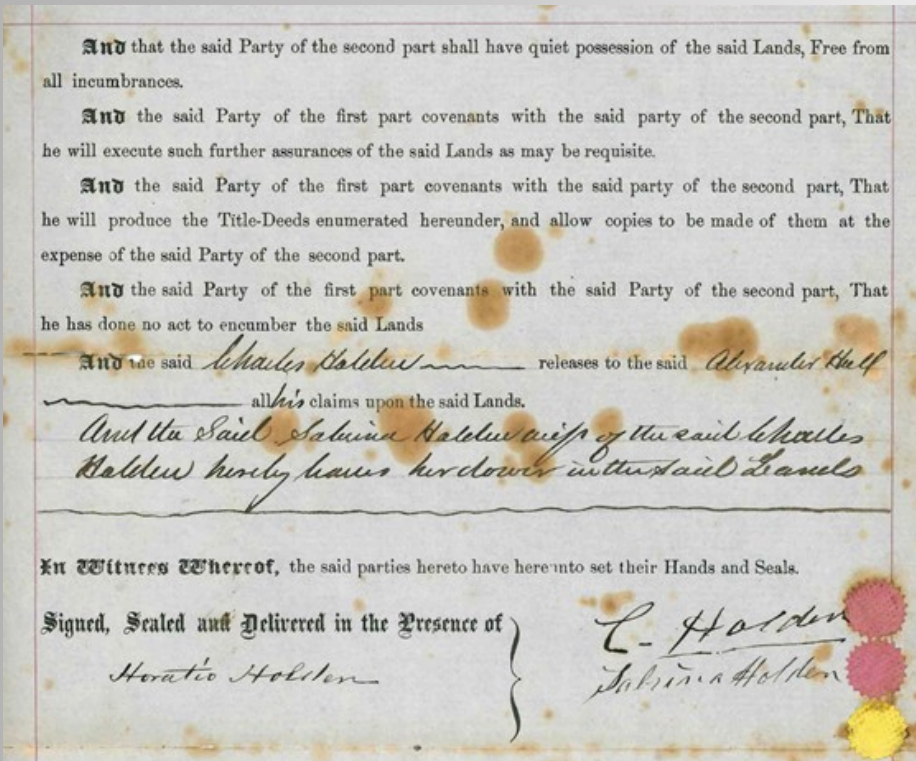
At the same time, John Henry and Horatio bought out their father's Merrickville shop, calling their new firm J.H. Holden & Brother. They still owed their father considerable sums of money, having obtained the businesses on credit - common enough in those days, as cash was scarce. Within two years, J.H. Holden & Brother lost almost \$7000 in a butter transaction, putting the firm's finances well into the red.

Despite this, in June 1863, John Henry went to Montreal and purchased \$840 worth of goods for his company from a variety of suppliers, including Leeming, Winks and Ogilvy. When payment fell through, these suppliers sued J.H. Holden & Brother.

Hearing this, their father Charles then immediately sued his sons as well, to recoup his investment. It stands to reason that, by March 1864, on the heels of this crisis late the previous year, Charles and Sabrina Holden might have wanted to ease their financial situation by selling off their Marlborough property.

The deed for that property is held at Rideau Branch Archives among the MGR008 Bradley papers; a few reference copies of Holden genealogy and one photograph are available in the Branch Reference Library, in the *Family of David Barrows* volume compiled by Evelyn Hicks; and the court cases were written up in Volume I (January 1865) of the New Series of the *Upper Canada Law Journal*.

Stuart Clarkson



Grant by Charles and Sabrina Holden, Merrickville to Alexander Hull, Marlborough Township for north-west half lot 24, second Concession, Marlborough Township for \$150

(MGR008-10 / RV 155.10)

Rideau Township Historical Society

Wednesday, 19 April 2017, at 7:30 p.m.

Orchard View on the Rideau

1145 Bridge Street, Manotick



The “Famous Five” Sculpture by Helen Granger-Young on the Manitoba Legislature Grounds

Photo by MaryLou Driedger

Donna Stewart & Ruth Stewart-Verger

“Personhood”

**The Story of the “Famous Five”
and the decision that women were persons**

Rideau Township Historical Society Minutes

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

City of Ottawa Client Centre, North Gower, ON

President Sandy McNiece opened the meeting by welcoming approximately 19 members and guests, and thanked all present for coming out on such a cold and blustery evening.

It was moved by Brian Wright and seconded by Susan McKellar that we approve the minutes of the February meeting as circulated. Carried.

Finance: In the absence of financial director, Sue Gibson, Sandy McNiece stated that we had approximately \$2700 in operating funds in the bank, and that we have received the City of Ottawa grant for \$12,500.

Membership: Director Patricia Pratt was absent but sent the report that we had a total membership of 44 for the current calendar year. We were all asked to try and encourage and invite new members to join.

Program: Owen Cooke informed us that the April 19th meeting will be held at Orchard View in Manotick, and will feature the mother & daughter story-telling team Ruth Stewart Verger and Donna Verger who will converse on The Famous Five Women. On May 22nd Jim Witham, the retired head of the War Museum, will speak on how to start up and maintain a Museum. Plans are being finalized for the June 24th excursion to the Polish Museum in Wilno. RTHS will cover half the cost of the coach bus, and, if we get 30 people attending, the cost to attendees will be approximately \$20.00. A stop on the way home may include a visit to The Holy Well at St. Patrick.

Publications: No new report at this time.

Communication: Maureen McPhee confirmed that the Website has been updated with information regarding Dickinson House activities for 2017, and a new membership form is now available as well.

Dickinson House: Brian Earl informed us that the 3rd floor exhibit by Melanie Hayes, "A Walk Through the Decades", is nearing completion, ready for opening day. Once again, he reiterated that volunteers are always welcome.

Grants: No report.

Youth: No report.

Owen Cooke then introduced our speaker Hannah Blaine, a 4th year Undergrad at Queen's University in Kingston, who spoke on her summer research project – The Life and Times of Joseph Merrill Currier.

Following a very informative and interesting presentation, Brian Earl thanked Hannah and presented her with a small honorarium and a complimentary membership to RTHS.

A member of the Currier family was introduced and regaled us with some interesting and 'scandalous' tidbits of information about the descendants of J.M. Currier,. He was presented with a copy of Hannah's report.

The meeting was adjourned. Refreshments provided by Melanie Hayes were enjoyed.

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

RIDEAU TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP

Single: \$10.00 _____ Couple: \$15.00 _____ Life Member: \$100.00 _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal code: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

I/We prefer to receive notices and news by: e-mail: _____ hard copy by mail: _____

I/We agree that the Executive Committee may use the above personal information for internal Society use. Members' names will not be made available to individuals or organizations outside the Society.

Signature(s): _____

Please submit this form with your cheque payable to

Rideau Township Historical Society

Membership Director

Box 56

North Gower, ON K0A 2T0