

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

December 2018 Newsletter

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

The Christmas Party

Date: Wednesday December 12
Time: 5:30 p.m. for Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
Place: Knox Presbyterian Church
5533 Dickinson Street
Manotick, ON

\$25.00 per person

R.S.V.P. to Dorothy Gray
dorothyhgray@gmail.com

(613) 258-7034

Booking Deadline Dec. 8th



The RTHS Annual General Meeting Notice

For your information, the AGM will precede the January *Bring & Brag* presentations. It is traditionally short but it is important because we elect our executive for the coming year, and may consider changes to the constitution.

The nominating committee will present a report listing a slate of candidates for the various positions as recruited by the present executive. At this point there will be a request for additional nominations from the floor for any position.

Dickinson House 2018 Wrap Up

Our traditional craft project for 2018 took place on Saturday and Sunday, December 1 and 2. Over 100 visitors each day either toured the house or sat in the foyer and made an ornament to hang on the Christmas tree. Most of the ornament makers were children and a star with a picture in the centre was the most *popular* project this year.

The final program for the year is "*A Dickinson Christmas*" to be held on Sunday, 09 December. The afternoon will feature three readings and carol singing at the house followed by a traditional 19th Century turkey dinner at the Miller's Oven. As this was being written, some 30 tickets had been sold.

All-in-all, it was a very successful year for the museum. During the winter it is planned to replace the office fluorescent lights with more contemporary fixtures as well as painting the ceilings.

I would like to thank the dedicated members of the Dickinson House Committee for their support and advice over the year as well as thank the volunteers who gave so much of their time to make visitors welcome. Special thanks to Maureen McPhee, our Curator and to Doug Culham who also gave much of his time to setting up and

tearing down the exhibits. It has been an honour and a privilege to be Chair of the Dickinson House Committee. I am looking forward to an exciting and interesting 2019 season. To all who have been associated with Dickinson House I wish a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous and healthy 2019.

Sincerely, Brian Earl

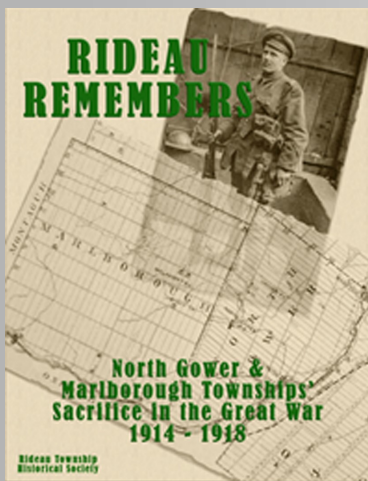


Once again the Victorian Teas were hugely popular events

Official Book Launch Presentation

“Rideau Remembers: North Gower & Marlborough Townships’ Sacrifice in the Great War 1914 – 1918.”

Article and Pictures by Rod Brazier

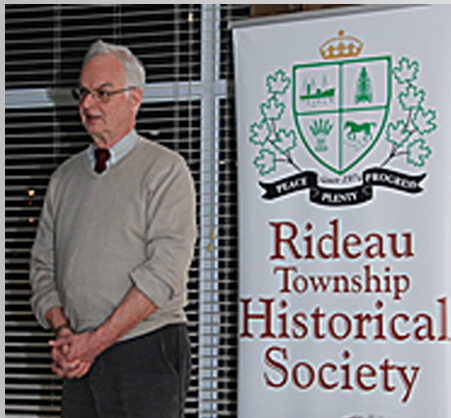


November's monthly RTHS gathering was a special evening, in that it provided the backdrop for the official launch of the Society's latest publishing project: **“Rideau Remembers: North Gower & Marlborough Townships’ Sacrifice in the Great War – 1914 – 1918.”**

The team responsible for “Rideau Remembers” was on hand to provide background and insights

into the project as well as the subject matter of the book, that being the 45 servicemen and one nursing sister with connections to the former Rideau Township who made the supreme sacrifice in the first World War.

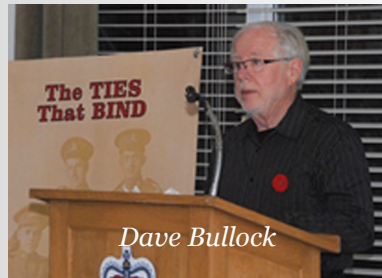
Owen Cooke, who served as Master of Ceremonies for the presentation portion of the evening, began by introducing the team members who contributed to the final product: Dave Bullock, Stuart Clarkson, Owen Cooke, Susan McKellar, Georgie Tupper, Ruth Wright and Rod Brazier. He also



acknowledged the support (financial and otherwise) provided by the Ontario Genealogical Society, City Archivist Paul Henry, proof readers Bill Tupper, Dave Tupper and Bonnie Symons, as well as the groundwork and inspiration provided by Audrey Renton, who was instrumental in getting the project started.

Owen also spoke to some of the valuable sources researched for the project, including military personnel file records (Attestation Papers and Casualty Forms in particular), as well as Commonwealth War Graves records, and published Regimental and Battalion histories.

Dave Bullock followed Owen, and provided insights regarding some of the more local sources of information that informed the research, including Canadian Census data, land assessments, and voters' lists, as well as newspapers (the Kemptville Advance and Ottawa papers especially.)



Dave made particular mention – and gave examples – of the value of commemorations found in local cemeteries, churches and war memorials.

Stuart Clarkson addressed some aspects and impacts of war on the home front. He mentioned that for most Canadians, their awareness and knowledge of the war came through newspapers which, while reporting on developments related to the conflict, also published questionable advertisements that endeavoured to “leverage” the state of war for purely retail gain.



The predominant characteristic of the war locally was sacrifice. On the personal front, the sacrifice of loved ones departing to serve, while those who remained took on added – and sometimes unfamiliar – responsibilities, but also coping with severe restrictions and rationing. Economically, pleas to donate money were persistent, and increased as the war progressed. Organizations such as the Women's Institutes and the Ottawa Women's Canadian Club were instrumental in gathering and distributing donations of food, clothing and money to address the challenges such as civilian displacement and suffering in Europe, as well as the welfare of Prisoners of War. The sale of War (or “Victory”) Bonds became the principal means of raising funds for the war effort, and here too North Gower and Marlborough Townships were at the forefront of fundraising.

Ruth Wright spoke to the value and poignancy of letters home written by servicemen. The content of the correspondence, when considered in conjunction with other information we have about the fam-



ilies paints a valuable picture of the events and challenges of the times. By way of example, Ruth read excerpts from letters from two local servicemen.

Clayton Bradley, who served with the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, was the youngest of 8 children. He died in 1916, one month after his father passed away at home. Caldwell Scobie, who was an airman, died on May 21, 1918, two days after he wrote his letter home!

Susan McKellar introduced us to the only woman included in the book. Nursing Sister Jessie Mabel McDiarmid, who was lost on the sinking of the medical ship Llandoverly Castle on June 27, 1918. Ms. McDiarmid, who had an older sister living in North Gower, was almost 35 years old and living in Vancouver when she enlisted. She served in England and later Europe. On the trip back to England, the Llandoverly Castle was attacked and sunk by a German submarine. Ms. McDiarmid's life boat was caught in the whirlpool created by the sinking ship. It was also reported that, on realizing that he had sunk a hospital ship, the German commander had his submarine surface and fire upon survivors in an effort to eliminate witnesses to the atrocity.



Owen "book-ended" the presentation segment by discussing the history and significance of the Commonwealth (formerly "Imperial") War Graves Commission, and its founder, Sir Fabian Ware, who first became concerned

about the marking and recording of war graves during the First World War. Ware founded the Graves Registration Commission, and by October, 1915 had over 31,000 graves registered. However, the the task facing the Commission was enormous: of the 768,000 total graves existing by 1918, 181,000 were unidentified, and an additional 516,000 servicemen were known to be missing!

The Imperial War Graves Commission was created by Royal charter in May, 1917. In pursuing its work, it established the principles that there would be no distinctions of headstones by rank (equality of treatment for equality of sacrifice,) there would be no repatriation of bodies, and there would be permanent headstones and memorials.



A War Grave: Private David McMillan, Merrickville Union Cemetery



A Veteran's Grave: Captain George Hambly, Holy Trinity Anglican Cemetery, North Gower

The volunteers do an excellent Job of decorating the Dickinson House



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.

Cheer in a Time of Scarcity

"Well, here it is Christmas again just around the corner. I never did bother about Christmas but still it's a great time to renew acquaintances and we have to take time to write anyway. Its really nice to do just that and pass a good word along for we go this way but once and its not just a time for eating and drinking ..." So wrote Orpha Nixon to Annie Monahan of North Gower one Advent season in the 1960s.

Today the annual writing of Christmas cards may be on the decline, but the Archives still has many examples among its collections of this Victorian invention of the 1840s. Some give a sense of the changes in Christmas card style resulting from the Great Depression.

The year 1933 was the bottom of the Depression, and all things printed – from cards to stamps and magazines – showed some of the same austerity measures. While still artistic, the cards that year clearly announced that Christmas 1933 was not a time for eating and drinking. Plain silhouettes now appeared where people had been depicted previously by elaborately detailed images. Often the silhouettes resembled characters from the novels of

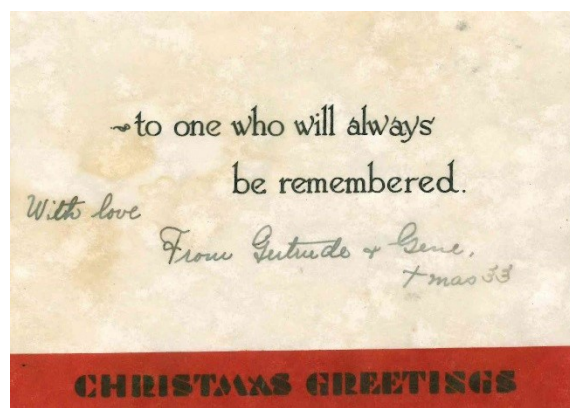
Charles Dickens, a name synonymous for many with Victorian dearth.

Instead of sumptuous feasts, the cards showed carolling, tree-cutting, and other less consumptive hallmarks of the season. The expensive and robustly colourful lithography of times not too distant were replaced with cheap four-, three-, or even two-colour printing processes, such as block prints or linocuts, dominated by a festive red, sometimes accompanied by green or gold. The lettering remained calligraphic, for the most part, but lacked the flourish of better times. The cards themselves were sometimes printed on a tough, thin parchment paper with intricate folds rather than the large-format, luxurious, and soft card stock of other years.

"This was the best we could afford this year" was the not altogether satisfied sentiment inscribed in another card in Annie Monahan's collection. But, as Orpha Nixon reminds us, the card, whether rather plain or incredibly ornate, is chiefly the vehicle for the good wishes -- so please accept the good wishes of the City of Ottawa Archives staff and volunteers for the holiday season and for the year to come.

Stuart Clarkson, Community Archivist

*Christmas card by Gertrude Stevens to her mother-in-law Alberta Stevens of Truro, NS, 1933
[Rideau Branch, MGR011 Annie Monahan collection]*



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