



The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

December 2019 Newsletter

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

The RTHS Christmas Dinner

Date: Wednesday, December 11, 2019

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: St. James Anglican Church,
1138 Bridge Street
Manotick, ON

The RTHS Annual General Meeting Notice

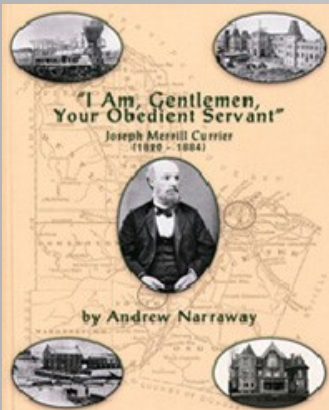
For your information, the AGM will precede the January *Bring & Brag* presentations. It is traditionally short but it is important because we elect our executive for the coming year.

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.

Need one more Christmas Gift?

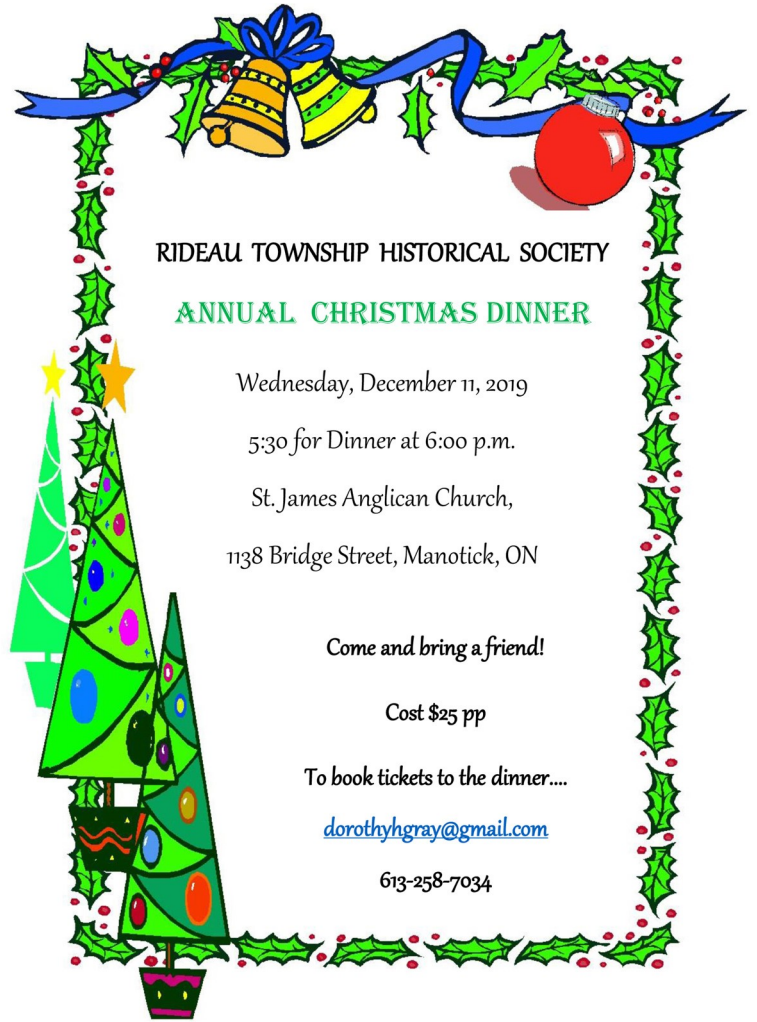
Don't forget our latest book on Joseph Currier.

Joseph has long been known as the builder of 24 Sussex Drive, the home of Canadian Prime Ministers since 1954. More fundamentally, this research revealed the depth of Currier's involvement as a builder of the City of Ottawa. That journey began as an Ottawa school trustee and ended as a Member of Parliament, from being a member of the Ottawa Association of Lumber Manufacturers to being President of the Rideau Club and owner of the Ottawa Citizen



The Currier book would be an excellent Christmas gift or for any other occasion.

Available at Manotick Office Pro, Rideau Branch Ottawa Archives, Tuesdays 9:30am - 4:30pm, Dickinson House when open.



RIDEAU TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

5:30 for Dinner at 6:00 p.m.

St. James Anglican Church,
1138 Bridge Street, Manotick, ON

Come and bring a friend!

Cost \$25 pp

To book tickets to the dinner...

dorothyhgray@gmail.com

613-258-7034

Request to Members

Looking for RTHS members to give presentations at the May 20, 2020 monthly meeting. Each presentation would be 20 minutes in length. That's a lot of 20s,

I know that many of you have information to share with the rest of the members. Please let me know if you would like to participate.

dorothyhgray@gmail.com or 613-258-7034

Lost some gloves???

A pair of women's brown leather gloves was found after the meeting on November 20 at the Client Service Centre.

Please call Dorothy Gray 613-258-7034.

November 2019 Presentation
Forgotten Railways of Eastern Ontario
Presentation by D'von Wallace
Article by Owen Cooke, Photos by Rod Brazier

On the evening of 20 November 2019, some 45 members of the Rideau Township Historical Society, guests and friends, railway enthusiasts all, gathered at the North Gower Client Service Centre to hear D'von Wallace.



D'von presenting

Sandy McNiece introduced D'von, founder and head of Eleuthville Media, a documentary filmmaker with an ongoing passion for little-known railway lines. D'von showed us two online videos. The first centred on the Bedell crossing and station south of Kemptville. After an introduction from David Shanahan from the North Grenville Historical Society on local railway history, Sam Gaw discussed Bedell, his father's career working 52 years for Canadian Pacific (CPR), as night operator then agent at Bedell, and his own 42 year career with CPR. The railways were important locally as they provided employment, education (children rode the trains to school), local economic opportunities and improved communications. Development of the highway network, however, made the railways extinct.

The video continued with the story of the Bytown and Prescott Railway which ran north and south through Kemptville from 1854. In the 1880s the federal government gave funding and land to CPR in order to construct a transcontinental rail line. That line crossed the Prescott to Ottawa line at Bedell, over a "diamond" supported by sidings, a station, an operations tower and a water tower. Bedell was always a lonely place to work, at night staffed only by the operator and a single section worker who cleaned snow and ice from the switches. During the Depression a hobo jungle grew up near the crossing and Sam told the story of four hoboes who pooled their money, a total of ten cents. One rode the train to Merrickville and returned with a loaf of bread, their only dinner.

Sam also told the story of Franz von Werra, the German prisoner of war fighter pilot who escaped from the train near Smiths Falls, made his way to Johnstown on the St. Lawrence and across to the still-neutral United States, to New York City and subsequently back to Germany.

Nothing remains at Bedell, but the roadbed through North Grenville has been re-made into a multi-use trail system, with interpretive signage about the railway.

As well as diagrams of the track setup at Bedell, the film also included some excellent vintage footage of steam engines at the crossing.

The second video featured the Prescott to Bytown Railway, with discussion by Fraser Lachinger, Councillor for the town of Prescott and Douglas Smith, railway historian. Fraser noted the early importance of the forwarding trade at Prescott, carrying goods around the St. Lawrence rapids. A canal system bypassed the rapids by 1848 and Prescott looked for different economic opportunities. Lumber from Bytown needed an outlet to the United States. A Bytown to Prescott railway proposal received a government charter in 1853, and a rail link was completed the next year, using six locomotives and 127 rail cars, including six passenger cars, all made in Boston. But at the end of a decade it was basically bankrupt. Reorganized in 1867 as the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway, it acquired a ferry carrying railway cars across the St. Lawrence to New England.

After a vigorous question period, Brian Earl thanked D'von and the meeting broke up for refreshments and more railway discussions.



The meeting was well attended

Dickinson House

Annual Women's Day Tea

Dickinson House held its annual Women's Day Tea on Nov. 2. The picture below is from that event. The two volunteers shown are from left to right, Darlene Price and Melanie Hayes. The table settings at this tea featured jewel tones, to coordinate with some of the latest additions to our tea time collection.



The tables for the Woman's Day day tea were set with dinnerware from the Dickinson House collection.

The Remembrance Day Exhibit

The 2019 Remembrance exhibit at Dickinson House featured the First World War Service and sacrifices of members of Rideau Township's Scobie family. Also on display were wartime artifacts from both the military and home fronts. The Dickinson House Committee wishes to thank the Rideau Archives, Owen Cooke and Doug Culham for their contributions to the exhibit.

The pictures below and to the right are from the exhibit.



See the posters on pages 4 and 5 for details on two of the remaining events at the Dickinson House for this season.

Dickinson House Museum and the Miller's Oven present

A Dickinson Christmas

December 14, 2019

A Storytelling & Dining Event

Featuring the re-telling of a seasonal classic:

The Victorian charm of Dickinson House provides the ambiance for the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge's journey through darkness to light and new beginnings.

followed by a...

*Festive
Roast Beef
Dinner*

lovingly prepared by our friends
at the Miller's Oven

Tickets - \$40 (reserved seating only)

Available at Office Pro, Miller's Oven,
or by calling Brian Earl
(613-692-2371)



Charles Dickens'
*A
Christmas
Carol*

Storytelling at
Dickinson House
1127 Mill St, Manotick
4:30 pm

Dinner at
the Miller's Oven
1137 Mill St, Manotick
6:30 pm



CHRISTMAS CRAFT MAKING

AT DICKINSON HOUSE

FREE

make
your own
heritage
ornament

craft
supplies
provided

NOV 30 & DEC 1, AND DEC 7&8
11 am - 4 pm each day

1127 MILL St., Manotick

for more information: (613-692-2371)



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.

A Christmas Day to be Remembered

Jennie (Craig) Hughes, many years later, recalled her experiences on Christmas Day 1916, when she was nearly five years old. Her father William James Craig and mother Annie Beatrice Craig had moved their family across the river to Osgoode Township not too many months before, and Jennie remembered travelling back for Christmas dinner to the home of her maternal grandparents John Craig and Margaret Moses. But both had died before 1916. Likely, then, her recollection was actually of a Christmas visit to the Carsonby home of her father's father, William Craig the elder. In any event, it proved to be an event both typical of holiday times a century ago and also unexpectedly and uniquely memorable for her.

The Christmas day I speak of dawned cold, bright and beautiful. Freshly fallen snow glistened in the sunshine as my father prepared the sleigh for the five-mile drive. He placed hay on the floor and covered that with blankets or buffalo robes. Sticks of wood or bricks had been heating in the oven, and when everyone was well bundled up against the cold, these warmed sticks or bricks were placed in the sleigh and then we climbed in, to be covered by more blankets [and] buffalo robes. Our parents sat on the seat at the front of the sleigh, my mother holding the youngest child [three-month-old Aileen Beatrice Craig] on her knee. And away we went, to the lovely Christmas sound of bells.

The horses trotted along, making the bells ring out loudly, the runners of the sleigh squeaked in the frost, while we children chattered about the coming festivities. Suddenly I fell off the sleigh, and was buried in the deep, soft snow along the roadside. Bundled up as I was, I was unable to get up, and I was terrified that no one would see my plight, and the family would drive on without me. But someone raised the alarm, the horses were stopped and my father came to my rescue. He picked me up, brushed the snow off, and returned me to my place in the sleigh, no doubt with the admonition that I should not fall out again. There was not necessity for such a command, for I had learned my lesson.

When we had had our fill [of the dinner], an aunt opened the parlour door, and there, in all its splendour, stood the most beautiful tree I had ever seen. It had been decorated with long strings of pop-corn, tissue-paper chains, and even tissue-paper roses. I think there were candles, already lit, on the tree, and underneath it was a modest pile of white-wrapped gifts. We children took our places on the floor around the tree, the adults followed, and in no time at all, there was a loud thumping and a jingling of bells at the front door. Someone welcomed that genial "ho-ho" man, and he bounced into the parlour. I thought that the coon-skin coat he was wearing was suspiciously like my father's, but I did not express my doubts [her sister Lois remarking later in her own memoir that "in the magic of Christmas we never analysed the familiarity of that person"].

He distributed a few gifts, then excused himself, saying he had other calls to make. Each of us received one or two small gifts such as mitts, scarves, toques, or long stockings, and for some of the older girls and the women, a hand-made apron. There was an occasional teddy bear, or a simple toy.

Someone requested a piano solo of my aunt, who sat down at the old, high piano and rendered 'The Robin's Return,' which had a good many trills and runs in it, and I thought it was beautiful. We had a sing-song of familiar Christmas hymns, and then my father announced that it was time to go home. I know that I took particular care not to fall out of the sleigh again.

Both Jennie and her sister Lois left short memoirs now preserved among the Craig family papers at Rideau Branch Archives.

Over the page is a description of the log home of the Craig family. It is difficult to read and for that we apologize but we couldn't enlarge it further without breaking it into sections.

From all of the Rideau Branch staff and volunteers, our very best wishes for the 2019 holiday season.

The house itself, made of logs which had been covered with clapboards, had apparently been added to, as the family grew, for the dining room floor was at a slightly lower level than the kitchen. This kitchen was likely the first part of this pioneer home to be built. It was very large, and had a partition across one side of it. The resulting room was divided to make two very small bedrooms, each of which always accommodated one double bed puffed up high with a feather mattress, and covered with one of my grandmother's hand-made quilts. An interesting feature of the kitchen was a trap-door in the floor which led to the basement where supplies such as fruit, vegetables, honey, butter, maple syrup and maple sugar, were stored. An outside entrance was used in the summer, to bring in the fruits and vegetables. When anyone prepared to use this trap door to the cellar, as it was called, our children were admonished not to come near the opening. Such a command often tempted us to at least peer into the darkness below, but we must have resisted, for no one fell in.

Description of log home of Craig family. Extracted from memoir of Jennie (Craig) Hughes.

Rideau Branch Archives 2009.0441.1 / RV 299.15