

# The Rideau Township Historical Society

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

## June 2015 Newsletter

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

### The June Excursion

**Date:** Saturday, June 20, 2015  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Place** Meet at the Client Centre,  
2155 Roger Stevens Dr.  
North Gower, ON



*Bellevue House in Kingston*

### The Excursion

Our June meeting will be a field trip to Kingston, Ont. on Saturday, 20 June. The focus of the day will be on Sir John A. Macdonald. We shall gather at the North Gower Client Service Centre, 2155 Roger Stevens Drive in North Gower, at 9 a.m. for the Howard's Bus Service coach (not a school bus).

We shall arrive at Bellevue House National Historic Site by 11 a.m. for a guided tour of Macdonald's residence 1948-49, and its delightful grounds. This will be followed by lunch at the Kingston Brewing Co. on Clarence Street, and a quick peek at other sites associated with Macdonald in the downtown area. Last, we shall pay a visit to Macdonald's grave in Cataract Cemetery before returning home.

The cost will be \$30 per person, payable to Owen Cooke on the bus. If you have not already signed up for the trip, please contact Owen Cooke at (613) 489-3962, or e-mail: [oacooke@gmail.com](mailto:oacooke@gmail.com).

Please feel free to bring a friend.

### **Bring a Friend.**

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

### This Month

1. The May Presentation
2. The June Excursion
3. Dickinson House 2015
4. Minutes, May meeting.
5. News from the Rideau Archives
6. Mayor's Rural Expo

### ***Dickinson House News***

Doors Open Ottawa and Dickinson Days proved to be a busy time for Dickinson House. We welcomed close to one thousand visitors over the two days. It was gratifying to have so many guests.

June continues to be an active month at the House. We would be pleased to receive you and your friends throughout the season. The House is open from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm each day; of special interest this year is the exhibit "Tableware in Times Past", an interesting collection of antique tableware arranged by Melanie Hayes and Stephanie Cameron. There are two special events this month. On Sunday June 14 at 2:00 pm we will be entertained on the lawns of Dickinson House with a recital by the young students of Musical Thoughts Studio while on the following Sunday, June 21 at 2:00 pm, Rowena

Pearl will entertain us on the lawn with a keyboard concert of old time tunes. We hope that you will bring your lawn chairs and join us. We look forward to seeing you !



*The Dickinson Days' parade on the Friday night.*

***The Wilbur Mine, Lanark County, Ontario***  
***Presentation by Jordan Smith, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015***  
***Article by Bill Tupper, photos by Susan McKellar***

Jordan Smith is a science writer for a financial services company. Away from the office he is an energetic explorer of an array of "Lost Mines" in Lanark County. One such mine is the Wilbur Mine. Smith laid the foundation for a description of the history of the Wilbur Mine with an overview of the financing and construction of the Kingston and Pembroke Railway between 1871 and 1884, and how the construction of the Kingston and Pembroke Line opened up a vast terrain for mineral exploration along its right of way in the complex Grenville Geological Province south of Calabogie. Many potential mineral prospects were found. At least six warranted some level of exploration and development work. Most were iron prospects although one (Clyde Forks) contained barite and minor amounts of copper, gold and silver.

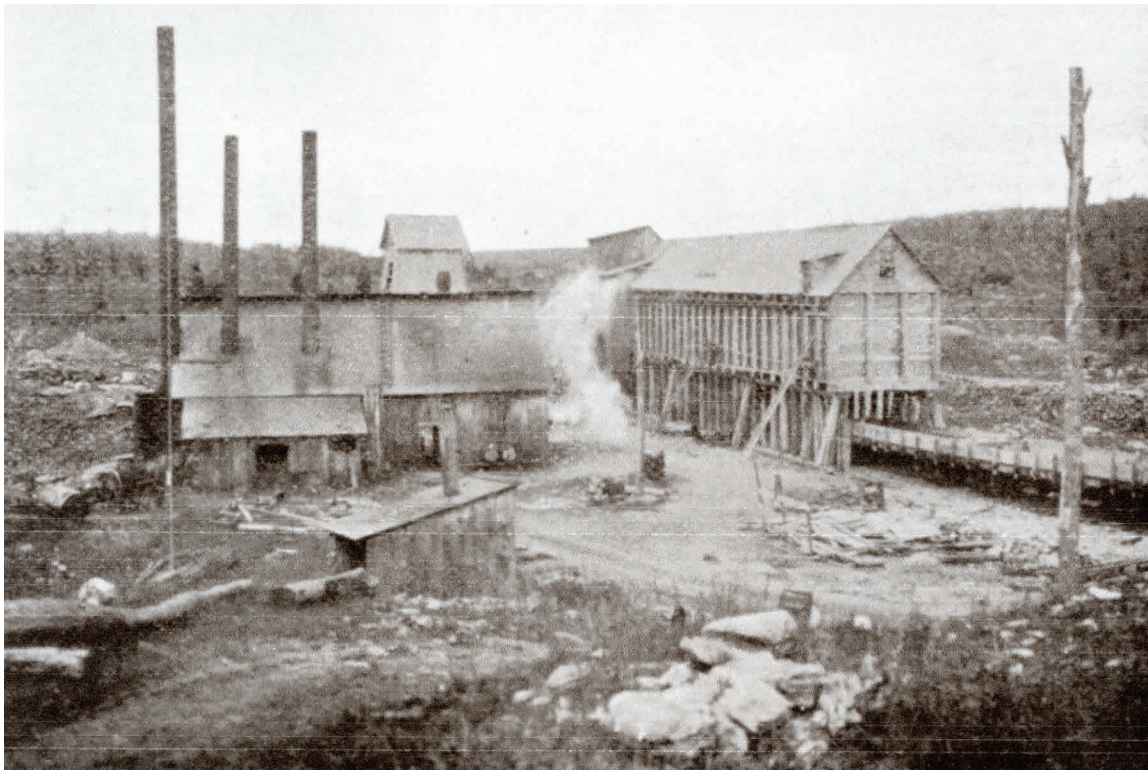
One of these iron deposits would become the Wilbur Mine which was discovered in 1880 and abandoned in 1911. The mine was located four kilometers south of the railway station at Lavant. A railway spur and a road were constructed into the mine site. A second railway spur serviced a nearby sawmill in the same time period. The Mine was in large part owned and operated by the Bethlehem Steel

Company. The iron ore was shipped to the Bethlehem Steel smelter in Pennsylvania until 1900, and after that to the Algoma Steel Plant at Sault Ste Marie. For a time the Wilbur Mine was the largest iron mine in Ontario.

There was also a second iron deposit in the immediate area known as the Boyd Caldwell Mine which was owned and operated by the Caldwell Family of Renfrew. It was an underground operation extracting ore from the #7 zone.

Both the Wilbur and Boyd Caldwell Mines have been abandoned for over a hundred years and both sites are overgrown and returned to nature. The old workings are flooded and not accessible.

Speaker Smith has focused on mine genealogical or mine sleuthing field research at the Wilbur Mine site. He searched for road and railway right of ways, building foundations, ore and waste piles, mine shafts, abandoned machinery, talking to senior residents, and locating old maps, photos, and census records. He has integrated this research into reconstructing what the community and mine may have looked like.



*Photo from the 17th Annual Report, Bureau of Mines, 1908*

*Wilbur Mine site 1907. The buildings in the left center with smoke stacks are the boiler and compressor houses. Appearing over the roof of the boiler house is the top of the headframe which housed the engine room for lifting ore from underground. To the right is the rockhouse, i.e ore storage bins with railway ore cars running underneath to be loaded with ore. Note the telegraph or telephone line on the right.*



The community had houses, boarding houses, a school, a store, and a population which varied between 100 and 250 persons. When the mine closed in 1911, the 1911 census records indicate 68 persons were living at the mine site and 2 others worked at the mine, but lived at Lavant. Of these 68 persons 30 worked at the mine, six of whom were miners, and one a driller. Others were firemen, engineers, teamsters, mechanics, labourers, carpenters, and an accountant, plus wives and children.

Associated with the mine operations was an office, a powder magazine, a boiler house, a compressor house, a headframe, an ore crusher, an ore storage and loading facility, an ore weighing facility, and the railway spur line. The ore was hand cobbled, a process where the ore and waste rock were separated by hand, in all probability by women and children. The ore zones were accessed by a combination of small open pits and an underground inclined shaft which operated to a depth of 300 feet.

How large was the ore zone or zones, what was the grade (percent of iron) of the ore being mined, and how many tons were mined annually or in total? Production records do not exist, so the questions go unanswered. However, a 'best guess' by the Speaker was that three to seven thousand tons were produced annually during the mine's heyday. An 1892 report indicates 100,000 tons of ore had been taken out of the Wilbur Mine.

Eventually the ore was mined out, or became too costly to mine, and the mine closed in 1911. The mine and hamlet were abandoned.

An interesting adjunct to the meeting was the presence of about a dozen people from outside of Rideau who came to learn about the Wilbur Mine or to share their experiences from working in the area. One of these people was the present owner of the mine site, Mark Chiarelli.



*The meeting was well attended including people from outside of Rideau. Always remember that the RTHS monthly meetings are open to all with an interest.*



*Left to right, Jordan Smith, Owen Cooke, and Ron Wilson taking the opportunity to chat after the meeting.*

## **Mayor's Rural Expo**

RTHS was represented at the Mayor's Rural Expo on Thursday, June 4th.

It was a lovely day on the Plaza outside Ottawa City Hall, and many people visited our table which was in "History Row", between Watson's Mill and the Osgoode Historical Society.

It was a good opportunity to spread the word about our publications, and what we're about.



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.

### **What to do with Whiskey in North Gower**

North Gower's history in relation to the consumption of alcoholic beverages is generally to be viewed as weighing in on the side of temperance. The area was indeed one of the first centres for temperance in the Ottawa Valley, with a society established on 7 July 1830, and the sentiment continued to gather strength throughout the Victorian era, during which the Scott Act, allowing for localities to make their own choice concerning the prohibition of alcohol, was first implemented. Even when prohibition was not in force, there was still the matter of enforcing local adherence to laws about selling liquor.

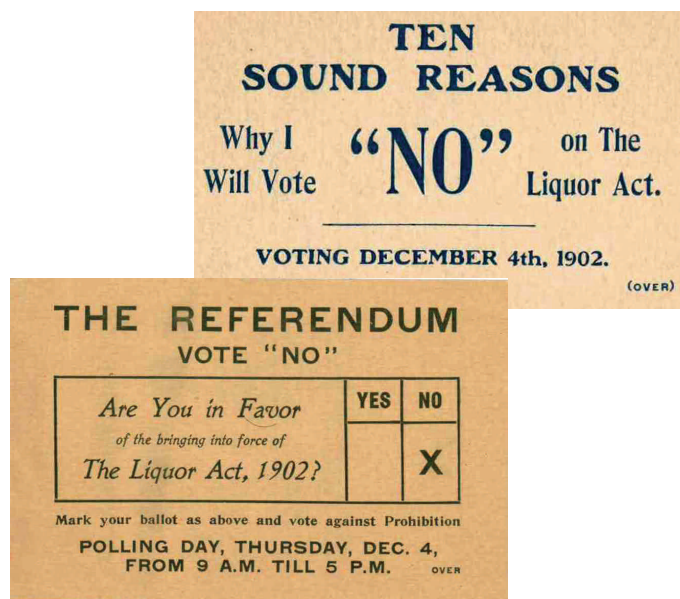
James Craig, sitting as Justice of the Peace in 1883, received information from Licence Inspector John O'Callaghan, recorded in an affidavit held by Rideau Archives (MGR071-02) that James Johnston on 2 June 1883 had sold liquor outside the Liquor Licence Act. The prohibition question was a matter of lively discussion. The mood in North Gower can be judged in 1889 by an Ottawa Journal report on affairs there which stated that "there has been no excitement here of any account since the defeat of the Scott Act."

James Craig kept a few mementoes of the local fight against the Liquor Act of 1902 (MGR075-01-001). For many, then, the question of what to do with whiskey in North Gower was answered simply by a request to get rid of the stuff. But John Gault, who ran a hotel in North Gower and therefore was on the other side of the fence on this issue, had a different solution: he put his whiskey in the outhouse. This somewhat drastic move did not, however,

deter the thieves who robbed him on the night of Sunday 4 August 1889 of his stock worth about \$100.

To find out where Rideau Archives puts its whiskey-related records, please visit us on Tuesdays. And keep an eye out in 2016 for an exhibition on liquor in the Ottawa area, now being planned by the City of Ottawa's Central Branch.

Stuart Clarkson



Ephemera from 1902 Liquor Act referendum (MGR075-01-001)

*Ontario  
County of Carleton  
So. west*

The Information of John O'Callaghan of the Township of North Gower in the County of Carleton License Inspector laid before me J<sup>r</sup>. Craig Justice of the Peace in and for the said County of Carleton, the 16<sup>th</sup> Day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty three - The said Informant says he is informed and believes that J<sup>r</sup>. Johnston on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of June Inst<sup>t</sup>, did sell and dispose of liquor on his premises during the <sup>time</sup> prohibited by the Liquor License Act for the sale of the same, without any requisition for medical purposes as required by said Act being produced by the Vendor or his Agent - Therefore as he acknowledges the a<sup>d</sup> charge to be correct. I do hereby impose a fine of \$20. on S<sup>r</sup>. J<sup>r</sup>. Johnston according to the Statute in that behalf made and provided <sup>given under my hand and seal at N<sup>o</sup>. 15<sup>th</sup></sup>

Affidavit by James Craig, Justice of the Peace, 16 June 1883 (MGR071-02)

**Minutes of the Rideau Township Historical Society**  
**May Meeting**  
**May 20, 2015, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Hall, Kars**

**Opening:** President Brian Sawyer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. 33 members and guests were present. It was moved by Ruth Wright, seconded by Sandy McNiece, that the minutes of the April 15, 2015 meeting as distributed in the May newsletter be approved; carried.

**Finance:** The treasurer, Sandy McNiece, reported that income from memberships is currently about 50% of the amount for the year that was anticipated in the budget. Income from the sale of publications is minimal. As noted previously, we have received the \$10,500 grant from the City of Ottawa, most of which goes towards Dickinson House operations. Sandy reported receipts in excess of disbursement year to date to April 30 were \$8,400, and the net cash position was \$14,000 at April 30, 2015 after reserves.

**Dickinson House:** Maureen McPhee, committee chair, reported that the House is now open for the season. University student interpreters have been hired, and she is in the process of interviewing high school students. A celebration (with cake) was held to mark Queen Victoria's birthday, and a Victorian Tea, planned for May 23, is sold out.

**Membership:** Patricia Pratt, membership director, reported we currently have 86 members.

**Publications:** Jane Anderson, publications director, reported that the Oral History Project is ready to go, and the committee is seeking suggestions for people to interview. The upcoming book, *The Dickinson Men of Manotick*, by Bill and Georgie Tupper, will be published later this season.

**Communications:** Ron Wilson, communications director, had nothing new to report (this means the monthly newsletter is produced and distributed regularly, and the web site is maintained).

**Youth:** In the absence of Brandon Kassis, youth director, President Brian reminded members that we will be proceeding with scholarships and donations to local high schools, as previously reported.

**Grants:** In the absence of the grants director Angela Beking, Maureen McPhee advised the group that a grant of \$1500 for the country fair has been received.

**Program:** Owen Cooke, co-chair, reported that the June Excursion to the house and grave of Sir John A. MacDonald in Kingston will be on June 20. A tour bus will collect people from the Client Service Centre in North Gower at 9:00 a.m. and will return by 5:00 p.m. The cost to individuals will be \$30 for the bus, plus the cost of their lunch. He noted that the RTHS is absorbing half the cost of the bus.

Mrs. Grant Cameron (Anne Raina), local author of "Clara's Rib", a true story of one family's experiences with tuberculosis, will speak on this story at the September meeting. The meeting will be on the 4th Wednesday due to speaker availability.

**Evening Program:** Owen Cooke introduced our speaker, Jordan Smith, who gave an illustrated talk on *The Lost Mines of Lanark County*. He then answered several questions from the audience, and was thanked by Bill Tupper.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned about 9:00 p.m., followed by a social time with refreshments courtesy of Jane Anderson and Ruth Wright.