

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

June 2016 Newsletter

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

The June Excursion

Date: June 18, 2016
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Place: Ottawa Client Centre
2155 Roger Stevens Drive
North Gower



Main conference room in the Diefenbunker

Fall Program 2016

In September there will be a tour of the Parliamentary Centre Block conducted by Bill Tupper, with supper at the Parliamentary Restaurant beforehand.

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

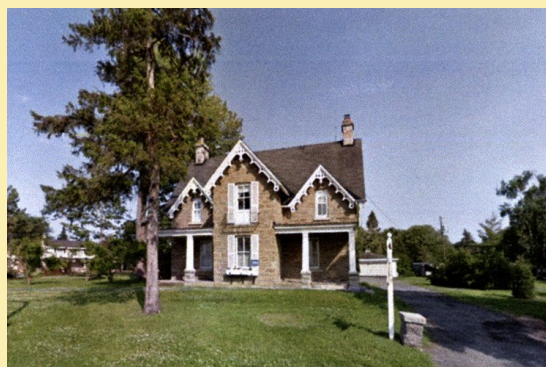
Dickinson House 2016

The 2016 season opener for Dickinson House was a "royal" success! A tea was held on Saturday, 21 May with HM Queen Victoria (played admirably by Sheila Dubyk). A good time was had by all. As the guests arrived, they were presented to HM The Queen by Acting Royal Chamberlain William Tupper, who also played a magnificent part.

After the excitement of the Royal Visit was over, the regular season of visits started. This year we have received vacancies for 4 students under the Federal program Canada Summer Jobs. Three vacancies have been filled so

Excursion Itinerary

The upcoming excursion on June 18th is to the Bell House, followed by lunch at The Swan in Carp, and then a tour of The Diefenbunker. Participants will gather at The Ottawa Client Centre in North Gower at 9:00 a.m. to board the bus, and will return at approximately 4:00 p.m. The cost of the tour is \$20.00 plus lunch. A sign-up sheet was circulated at the last meeting. If you have not signed up and wish to go, see the poster on page 4 for contact numbers.



The Bell House in Ottawa

This Month

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| 1. The June Excursion | 5. News from the Rideau Archives |
| 2. The May Presentation | 6. Fall Program |
| 3. Doors Open | 7. Publications Grant |
| 4. The Dickinson House | 8. Minutes of the April meeting |
| | 9. Dickinson House |

far. The fourth will likely be filled by a High School student at the end of June. We have two vacancies under Young Canada Works. These will also be filled at the end of June.

Many thanks to our regular volunteers who have returned for another summer, your help is very much appreciated. We participated in Doors Open Ottawa again this year. Over 900 visitors went through the house over the two days. Dickinson House is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day from now to October 30. Do drop in for a visit, particularly to see our new Trades and Professions Exhibit.

The May Presentation

Speaker: Maureen McTeer
Article & Photos: Brandon Kassis

Our featured speaker for this month's meeting was Maureen McTeer, an accomplished lawyer, author, historian, and politician. Dr. Bill Tupper introduced Ms. McTeer, in an elegant and thoughtful preamble, which described her many accomplishments, as well as her connections to the community. The topic of Ms. McTeer's discussion was the Past and the Future of 24 Sussex Drive, the Prime Minister's Official residence. She is uniquely qualified to talk on this subject, having lived in the house as the wife of Joe Clark, Canada's 16th Prime Minister, and written a book "*Residences: Homes of Canada's Leaders*."



Bill Tupper introduced Maureen McTeer and gave an overview of her truly brilliant career.

To begin Ms. McTeer talked about the builder of the house, Joseph Currier, whom we all know as the partner of Moss Kent Dickinson in the building of Watson's Mill and the founding of Manotick. She described the Troy, Vermont native's early life as he came to the Ottawa Valley and achieved the status of lumber baron at a young age. A series of tragedies revolved around Mr. Currier's life. His first and second wives passed away at early ages as did three of his four children who succumbed to typhoid in a span of ten days. His second wife, Ann Elizabeth Crosby, had died in an accident in the Mill.

Mr. Currier married for a third time. His new wife, Hannah Wright, was a niece of lumber baron and founder of the City of Hull, Philemon Wright. For a wedding gift, Currier built her a house at 24 Sussex Drive.

We learned that there was a particular reason behind the location of the property. Currier wanted a clear view of the two things that brought him his wealth; the forests and the river.

Almost immediately the mansion became a social spot for Ottawa's elite as the owners had many lavish parties including many that were attended by Canada's First Prime



Maureen McTeer presenting.

Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Following Currier's death, Hannah continued to own the property until it was sold to the Cameron Edwards family following her death. One interesting story told by Ms. McTeer was that all three owners of the property, Joseph Currier, William Cameron Edwards, and his nephew Gordon Cameron Edwards were federal MPs. Currier and Gordon Cameron Edwards were MPs for Ottawa, and William Cameron Edwards was the MP for Russell county.

In 1943 the federal government, fearing that Gordon Cameron Edwards might sell the property to be developed, expropriated the land for \$100,000. The expropriation was taken to court. In 1946 Gordon Cameron Edwards lost his case. He died shortly after. For quite some time the house lay vacant and soon became somewhat dilapidated as it was left to the environment, and acts of vandalism. Eventually the federal government decided to completely renovate the house and make it the official residence of the Prime Minister. It was at this point that Ms. McTeer argues that the historical architecture aspect of the house was lost; as the renovation saw all the beautiful Victorian style and furniture destroyed for simple 1940's style architecture. By 1950 the house was ready, and the Prime Minister (who wasn't told about the project until that point) was told to move in.

At this point Ms. McTeer moved to her main topic. She described how successive Prime Ministers have attempted to make the home theirs, but have refrained from doing any major work for fear that the costs would be scrutinized by the public for "wasting taxpayers' money". Thus at this point we find the house as it stands today—dilapidated and as the Auditor General has concluded needing a minimum of \$10 million in order to repair or replace practically everything in the mansion.

Ms. McTeer put a question to the audience asking what thoughts we had on the subject: whether we should repair

the house, and continue to have it as the Prime Minister's residence; whether we should tear down the house and build a new one in its place, one that fulfills the needs of the Prime Minister; or if we should move the official residence to another location, perhaps as Ms. McTeer commented to a new house on the Rideau Hall Grounds. One of her best arguments beyond the extensive repairs needed to the old house and the lack of historic architecture present was safety concerns. It was not designed to house the Prime Minister or any foreign dignitary. As a result there are a lot of concerns on this subject. In fact there have been serious security breaches in the past.

After lively and extensive discussion and questions Ms. McTeer concluded her talk, arguing that there are a lot of different options that we could take, that for her perhaps the most suitable would be to hold a Canada wide contest and have Canadian architects and builders design the perfect *Canadian* house with Canadian style and Canadian materials. However, first she put forward that we must seriously ask the question of what role do we want the house to play: do we want it as a place of business like Rideau Hall or the White House in the US, or do we want this strictly as a place for the Prime Ministers and their families to live. Once we answer that question we can move forward with the issue.



24 Sussex Drive

Following the discussion, Ms. McTeer was given a membership in the Historical Society and signed copies of two of our books, *The Dickinson Men of Manotick* and *The Women of Dickinson House*. The meeting was concluded with wonderful desserts and refreshments.



From left to right, Bill Tupper, Susan McKellar, Maureen McTeer, Tom Macdonald and Georgie Tupper. Ms. McTeer very kindly stayed on for quite some time chatting with people and answering further questions.



Ms. McTeer's talk proved to be a big draw at the meeting, with 75 members and guests attending.

Publications Grant

The Ottawa Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society is awarding the Rideau Township Historical Society a grant of \$2,500.00 towards the RTHS "Rideau Memorial Project".

The purpose of the project is to commemorate our war dead and service in two World Wars and the more recent past. The first part will be a volume remembering those who lost their lives during the First World War. The book takes the form of an overview of North Gower and Marl-

borough Townships during the war, followed by biographies of each local serviceman who died. At present about 45 who lost their lives and had a connection to Rideau have been identified.

Owen Cooke, David Bullock, Stuart Clarkson, Ruth Wright and Susan McKellar are working on the project. Stuart Clarkson is from the City of Ottawa Archives and works one day a week at the Rideau Branch at North Gower. The archives are a valuable source of information for the project. The archives, in turn, receive information found by the project from other sources.

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



A Bus Tour to the Diefenbunker and Fairfields Heritage House (Bell House)

Rideau Township Historical Society

Saturday, 18 June 2016

Cost – Adults \$20, students \$10

Bus will leave from North Gower Client Service Centre

At 9 a.m., return about 4 p.m.

Lunch at The Swan at Carp (not included in cost)

**To sign up contact Susan McKellar, 613-489-3961, or Owen
Cooke, 613-489-3962, or e-mail rideauarchives@ottawa.ca**

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.

Getting the Word out in Rideau

Advertising in the former Rideau Township over the years is the subject of a new exhibit at Rideau Branch, covering a period from the first stores in the area established soon after settlement in the 1820s to amalgamation in 2000.

Business owners over the years were not always interested in promoting their wares, and certainly many could not afford it, but others had the resources to engage in novel ways to drum up business.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Hiram Scott, owner of the post office and an attached general store in

North Gower, went to the expense of having postcards depicting his office through a printer in Belgium commonly used throughout Canada.

Cheaper methods included newspaper advertisements, pinback buttons, calendars, letterhead, pens, posters, and even yardsticks, all on display representing a broad range of businesses: restaurants, clothing shops, insurance agents, plumbers, farms and seed suppliers, garages and fuel suppliers, dentists, and chiropractors, and of course general stores. The exhibit will be in place for the remainder of the year.

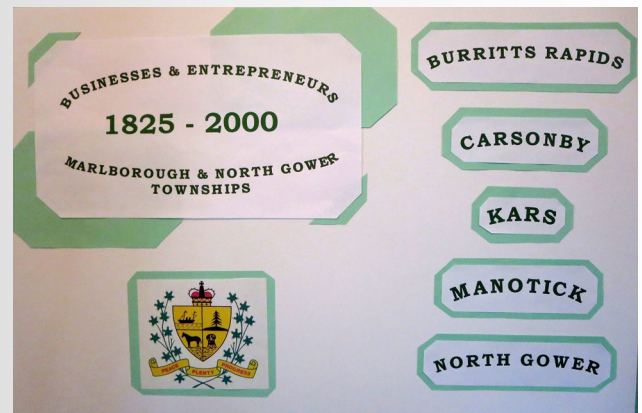
Stuart Clarkson



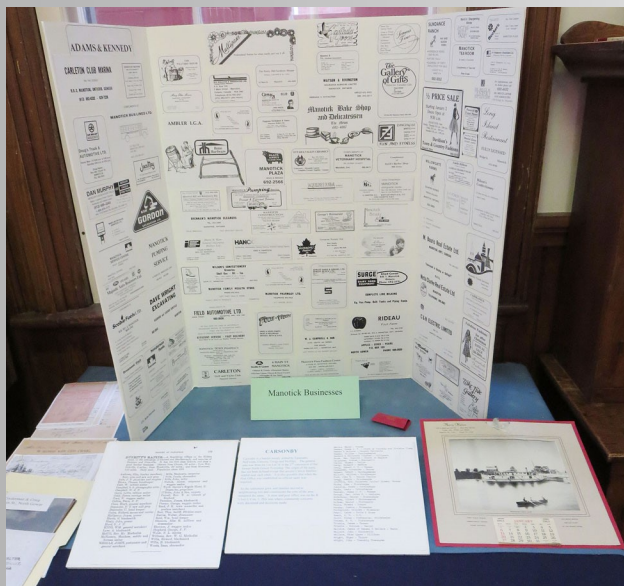
This display of various posters, advertisements, and buttons gives an idea of the breadth of the artifacts held at the Rideau Branch.

Doors Open Ottawa

As is the practice each spring the Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives in North Gower opened its doors for this event. Also as is the practice some special exhibits were prepared on the goods and services provided by the archives.



The Archives has extensive records on businesses in the former Rideau Township and the towns listed on the right.



This particular display of Manotick businesses is typical of displays that are prepared several times a year at the Rideau Branch. Drop in often to see the latest.

Rideau Township Historical Society Minutes

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Kars RA, Kars, Ontario

President Tom McDonald opened the meeting by welcoming approximately 75 members and guests.

Moved by Doug Culham that we adopt the minutes of the last meeting as published in the Newsletter. Seconded by Brian Earl. Carried.

Finance: Sandy McNiece reported that we have a balance of \$14,000 in the bank. We had received about \$3600.00 this month (most of which was part of the City of Ottawa grant), with expenditures of \$4100.00.

Program: Bill Tupper outlined the upcoming excursion on June 18th to Bell House, followed by lunch at The Swan in Carp, and then a tour of The Diefenbunker. Participants will gather at The Ottawa Client Centre in North Gower at 9:00 a.m. to board the bus, and will return at approximately 4:00 p.m. The cost of the tour is \$20.00 plus lunch. A sign-up sheet was circulated.

September will involve a Tour of the Parliamentary Centre Block conducted by Bill Tupper, with supper at the Parliamentary Restaurant beforehand.

Communications: Maureen McPhee reported that advertisement of scheduled events was proceeding as planned.

Dickinson House: Brian Earl reported that Dickinson House was all ready to receive guests for the opening this weekend. The Victorian Tea, with a planned visit from Her Majesty Queen Victoria, is sold out. As they are still short on volunteers, he invited anyone interested to contact him.

Youth: Brandon Kassis confirmed that the two \$500.00 scholarships to a history student at South Carleton and St. Marks' High Schools is well under way, and will be presented by an RTHS member at their respective graduation ceremonies.

There was nothing new to report under the Grants portfolio.

Tom invited people to pick up a walking tour brochure and a Doors Open brochure which were left at the back table. He thanked Melanie Hayes, Sandy Wilson, and Ruth Wright for providing the snacks following the meeting.

Bill Tupper thanked Scott Moffatt for his continued support of RTHS. He then introduced our guest speaker, Maureen McTeer after outlining her illustrious career.

Maureen McTeer then gave an informative history of 24 Sussex Drive and presented her opinions of options for the future of this historic house. Questions and answers followed.

Brandon Kassis thanked our speaker for her very interesting talk and presented her with the two books on the Dickinson House men and women and a complimentary yearly membership to RTHS.

The meeting adjourned followed by a social gathering and snacks.