

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

June 2020 Newsletter

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Oh Boy! Our Summer Holidays.

As has been our practice, we will not issue newsletters in July and August. The executive will meet at the call of the President if necessary.

The web site will be updated if there are items of interest or announcements to be made. Any changes will be noted on the home page.

The Society wishes members and officers a safe and healthy summer and to thank you for your support this past year.

Dickinson House Update

Dickinson House has not been immune to the disruptions cause by Covid-19. The building has been officially closed by the city until 30 June. However, we have been able to carry out some needed maintenance and to build up a new display, *Steamboats on the Rideau*, on the third floor. Originally we had planned to open on 16 May and had planned to carry out our regular program. This, of course, has radically changed.

Another setback was not receiving funding for four students under Canada Summer Jobs, as we have in the past. However, the Board of Watson's Mill has generously agreed to place two students in the house each day to ensure that we will be open. I want to publicly thank them for their gesture and also to thank the RTHS Executive for agreeing to subsidize one student's wages. Currently we plan to open on 07 July and carry on until the Labour Day weekend. The house will only be open five days per week, Wednesday to Sunday. Three student guides will be on duty to assist visitors as much as possible given all of the Covid-19 restrictions. We have developed a detailed plan to keep both visitors and student guides as safe as possible throughout the period.

We did receive funding for one student under the Young Canada Works program. We have hired Caitlin Douglas to work with us this summer. She is a graduate archaeologist and bring much experience in museum work. Welcome aboard Cait! On the maintenance side, the office style fluorescent light fixtures in the Master bedroom, the sewing room and the stairway have been replaced and the ceilings repainted. We look forward to a good season and trust that all of the preparations, both display and safety, will provide visitors with a rewarding experience.

NEW

Take a Virtual Tour of the Dickinson House

[Click here](#) to try it. *It is impressive.*



The replacement lights were chosen to be of a style that might have hung in the house.

The Manotick Horticultural Society: 90 years of fellowship and proud community service!

***Contributed by Margot Belanger,
Current RTHS Board Member and Past President of MHS***

In my basement, in a large, somewhat dilapidated cardboard box, rests a great deal of the recorded 90-year history of the Manotick Horticultural Society, and one of this box's most valuable treasures is the Society's original Minutes Book, filled with the handwriting of a legion of women and men who have long-passed into their own family histories.



Dorothy Clapp, Past President and long-time Secretary was one of the founders of the Society.

Not all the minutes for all the meetings spanning the early years of the Society are recorded, but there is enough information to register the highs and lows of the Society up to the Nov. 12th, 1946 meeting. It is fitting that this last entry recorded the fact that a special tea was held in honour of out-going Society's Secretary Mrs. Annie Clapp (mother of Dorothy Clapp, herself Past President and long-time Secretary) for the ten years of faithful service as one of the founders of the Society.

Here are some tidbits from the Society's glorious past:

- By March, 1930, seven very determined canvassers of the membership committee had secured 71 paid-up members and, by year's end, there were 103 members. The membership fee was initially \$1.00, but a comparison of the membership lists and the annual financial reports over the next decade indicates that the fee may have later been reduced to 50 cents. Might this have been because of the effects of the Depression on family budgets?

- One source of income was identified. In 1931, the Society started holding its annual flower show in the month of August and the price of admission was 10 cents, and money was approved to print membership cards, a sure sign the Society was on solid footing.
- In July 1931, the Society executive voted to have refreshments at the meetings, a tradition that we still carry forward, thank goodness!
- At the very first meeting of the Society in 1930, one of the Board as was designated to research for a seed company through which members could order products. Two Ottawa companies were considered and the Graham Brothers was selected, and 125 "premium lists" were ordered and \$115.53 worth of seeds and shrubs were eventually purchased. However, in 1933, the Society switched allegiance to the Ken McDonald and Sons Seed House and stuck with them until at least 1946; the company was in business in the Byward Market from 1875 to the 1960s.
- In February 1932, the Society started an outreach program to local youth, a tradition that would continue for many years. It was proposed that seeds be purchased and distributed to the senior classes of the public schools so that flowers grown by the students could be shown in a special class at the annual August MHS flower show.
- The Society displayed a commitment early on to preserving the local ecosystem. In 1935, a letter was drafted and sent to "the Government" to protest the use of the river banks as a dumping ground. In 1937, there was growing concern within the Society about the preservation of provincial wild flowers, in particular the Trillium, and it was suggested that a good approach to raise awareness would be to get local school children involved.
- In 1937, a decision was made to approach the Village Trustees regarding the Dickinson property lot being presented to the Village as a memorial to the family, with the idea of beautifying it. Whoever made a case for this project must have succeeded because, in 1938, an Improvement Committee was formed and the Society approved \$10.00 to be spent on what was now being referred to as the Dickinson Memorial Lot, providing the Township ponied up a matching \$10.00 which it did, according to financial records. A photo of the lot was sent to the University of Guelph for plant-

ing suggestions appropriate for a park-like setting; a three-year plan was drawn up.

- In 1938, the Society got into show business to raise funds, organizing a community concert at Harmony Hall (later the Manotick Legion building that burned down). Featured were performances by local talent, including the Manotick Orchestra and the Kitchen Orchestra. The concert raised a whopping \$50.29, a considerable sum for that time!
- In 1943, MHS initiated the Victory Garden program; vegetable seeds were purchased, and Society members, Manotick citizens and school children worked side-by-side to produce fresh vegetables to supplement food products restricted by rationing. MHS also had a program called Seeds for Britain, through which seed packets were purchased and sent to Britain to increase fresh food production for the embattled British public.
- The August 14, 1945 meeting of MHS cut short. Why? Because V-J Day was declared, and it was noted in the formal meeting minutes that the meeting would be short one!
- For decades, thanks to the generosity of Watson's Mill Manotick Inc. the Society was able to use the Mill as a venue, for the Society's Annual Spring Plant Sale which has been legendary in the Village; there is always an eager line-up of gardeners waiting for the door to open, and the first 15 minutes of the sale is a "feeding frenzy" as the choice items (donated by Society members) are quickly snapped up.
- Down through the years, the Manotick Horticultural Society has tended a number of public gardens in the Village. Today, volunteer teams of the Society's membership maintain gardens at the Manotick Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, in AY Jackson Park, and at the local Canada Post Office, as well as the Millennium Garden along the Veterans Walk, the Sue Slade Day Lily Garden in front of the Carriage Shed, the garden in front of Dickinson House and the Pioneer Herb Garden behind the House.
- *The last two pictures on the right are of the herb garden and a front flowerbed at the Dickinson House.*



The annual plant sale, held at Watson's Mill each spring, is a must and is always a great success.



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). [Please note that during the pandemic the Archives is closed.](#)*

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.

The Harvest of 1887

By Stuart Clarkson

"I trust under the blessing of Almighty God the present promise of an abundant harvest may be fully realized, and that when we meet again I shall be able to congratulate you on a further increase in the general prosperity of the country. Meanwhile I bid you farewell."

Governor General Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, Marquess of Lansdowne, finished proroguing the first session of the sixth Parliament on 24 June 1887 with these words. While comments about the crops may have substituted for news of genuine parliamentary activities (the session was said to be uneventful), it was true nevertheless that 1887 was shaping up to be a bumper year. From Ashton to Metcalfe, the grain crop was going quite well, though potatoes were threatened by the Colorado potato bug.

Paris green was being employed against that pest in Kars, where it was reported that grains and vegetables were all maturing earlier than the previous year. As early as March the Eganville Enterprise had been predicting good results due to heavy snows the previous winter -- snow being considered the "poor man's fertilizer" (apparently the nitrogen in snow is slowly released into the soil as it melts).

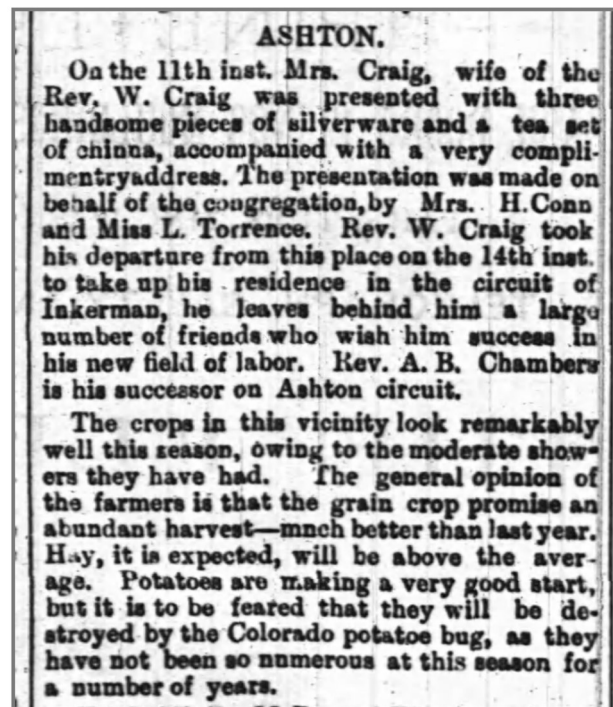
G.W. Monk, MPP for Carleton, indicated the crops in the Ottawa Valley were faring much better than in drought-ridden areas along the shores of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario.

But in the end it was not quite so rosy for Rideau area farmers either. The Ontario Department of Agriculture's annual report on industries for 1887 gives some meteorological context. The May-July period ranged from 2 to 7.4 degrees Fahrenheit above normal, and by the end of that time some fall wheat was already ripening. Although it followed a snowy winter, the summer of 1887 was dry, especially in eastern Ontario. There was also more sunshine across the province that summer than in any of the previous five years, with Pembroke leading the other reporting communities.

North Gower Township farmers themselves explained in the same report the effects of that bright, hot summer. John O'Callaghan thought that the spring wheat had suf-

fered from the heat and also by rust, resulting in small grains. He also found the rye small, again due to the heat as it was ripening. James E. Craig said very little fall wheat was planted in North Gower -- only where very sandy. Peas were about average that year -- perhaps an early crop had avoided the summer heat. Not much fruit was grown in the township, he said, with apples being poor that year and plums as well, despite an early promise -- nearly half dried up. And thus the Governor General's promise of abundance did not materialize, and the families of the area were left with only an average yield, at best, from most of their crops.

Rideau Branch likewise holds much promise of abundance, but in the current crisis we cannot follow through with making it available to our researchers as summer approaches, but we will be sure to let you know once the Archives reopens in North Gower.



From the Ottawa Journal Thu Jun 23, 1887

Rideau Township Historical Society Books for Sale

In this time of pandemic, people may be looking for new books to read. And new neighbours might be interested in learning about our communities. Why not print off this list, and offer it to friends and neighbours that you encounter? Susan McKellar (613-489-3961 or susanmckellar68@gmail.com) would be happy to make deliveries.

These are a few of our publications of local history. For a complete list, visit our website.

www.rideautownshiphistory.org

- Buildings of Old Rideau Township: A Driving Tour
by Betty Bartlett, 2006.....\$ 10.00
- Carsonby: A Community History
by Carsonby Historical Society, 1969.....\$ 10.00
- Cheese Factories of Rideau Township, second edition
by Iona Joy, 2013.....\$ 20.00
- The Dickinson Men of Manotick
by William and Georgina Tupper, 2015.....\$ 25.00
- "I Am, Gentlemen, Your Obedient Servant", Joseph Merrill Currier (1820-1884)
by Andrew Narraway, 2019.....\$ 15.00
- Kars on the Rideau, Second Edition
by Coral Lindsay, 2010\$ 30.00
- Manotick Then and Now, Reflections & Memories, Second Edition
by Dora Stamp, 2009.....\$ 25.00
- Rideau Remembers: North Gower & Marlborough Townships' Sacrifice
in the Great War, 1914 – 1918
by Owen Cooke et al, 2018.....\$ 20.00
- The Women of Dickinson House and Their Place in Manotick Village
Society, 1870-1930
by Maureen McPhee, 2014.....\$ 15.00

- **Package:** The Dickinson Men of Manotick & The Women of Dickinson House.....\$35.00