

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

November 2012 Newsletter

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

Next Meeting

Date: November 21, 2012
Time: 7:30 pm
Place: Marlborough Community Centre,
3048 Pierce Road
Pierces Corners



This Month

1. The Next Meeting
2. From the Pen of the President
3. The October Meeting
4. The Dickinson House
5. News from the Rideau Archives
6. Watson's Mill some events

Bring a Friend, Light Refreshments



Photo Courtesy of Vintage Wings of Canada

Topic:

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)

It became apparent early on that the Second World War would be fought and won in the air. But in 1939, Canada had only 235 pilots. Many thousands more would be needed. The BCATP was designed to solve that problem.

The BCATP eclipsed the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, both in manpower and cost. In 1940 dollars, it was a \$2 billion undertaking. In 18 months, 105 airports were designed and built across the country, many of which are still in use today, for example among them Ottawa, Rockcliffe, Carp, Amprior, just to mention a few, right here close to home.

By the end of the war, Canada had trained 210,000 airmen, including 50,000 pilots, plus navigators, bomb-aimers, Wireless operators, and riggers and fitters, and built over 11,000 aircraft. No small feat.

Rob Fleck, President and CEO of Vintage Wings of Canada, will present a slide show of the history of the BCATP, leading the audience through the footsteps of a typical young man who like thousands of others underwent aircrew training, in support of Canada's huge contribution to the Second World War effort.

Speaker: Robert (Rob) Fleck

As a young man Rob Fleck joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, (RCAF). His first posting was to NATO operations in West Germany, flying the CF 104 Starfighter. His second posting was to Cold Lake, Alberta, as a fighter pilot instructor on the CF 18 Hornet. In addition to teaching new fighter pilots the art of air combat, Rob also carried out operational duties in Canada's role in the air defense of North America.

Following his service in the RCAF, Rob turned to the civilian aviation industry which included operating a repair business of aviation electronics, Chief Pilot with Exec Air, a large Canadian firm managing a fleet of business jets, and operating an air cargo feeder airline that included FEDEX and Purolator as clients. Eventually Rob joined Air Canada as an airline pilot flying the Bombardier Regional Jet and later the Air Bus.

Three years ago, Rob obtained a leave of absence from Air Canada to take on the job of President and CEO of Vintage Wings of Canada, a not-for-profit corporation based at the Gatineau Airport. (www.vintagewings.ca). Vintage Wings owns and operates more than a dozen WW II fighter aircraft and trainer aircraft employed by Canada during WW II. While at Vintage Wings, Rob has greatly expanded the organization's activities to accomplish its mandate, which is to Commemorate, Educate and Inspire Canadians about Canada's rich history in aviation.

From the Pen of the President

The Society's November meeting will be held in the Community Centre at Pierces Corners. This building was originally the Marlborough Township Hall. What do we know about this building?

Personally I have an attachment to the building as I spent the roughest night in my political career in this building in the autumn of 1973 as I was attempting to present myself as a candidate, along with four others to be Rideau Township's first Mayor. The place was packed, hot and smoke filled, with people trying to get in through the open windows to listen and be heard. Politics has been called a blood sport and it felt like it that night. Some months later I would have the privilege of chairing Rideau Township Council's first organizational meeting in this historic hall.

The Township of Marlborough's local government as we know it was created in 1850 by the Baldwin Act of 1849 known as the Municipal Corporations Act. Prior to that time Townships were governed by District Councils. On August 15th, 1855 at a Council meeting chaired by William Mackey a decision was made to build a Municipal

Hall on Lot 9, Concession 3, on land owned by Robert Mackey. It was to be a 24 x 48 foot frame building and cost "140 pounds of lawful money of Canada". Later a horse stable measuring 18 x 60 feet would be built adjacent to the Hall.

By the late 1930's a serious dichotomy developed between the municipal Council of the day and the then owners of Lot 9, Concession 3. On December 15th, 1937 the Marlborough Council decided to move the Town Hall to Pierce's Corners, a distance of about 1900 feet to a lot purchased from Henry Irvine. It should be noted that J. Clifford Donnelly was elected Reeve and took office on February 5, 1938. He served in that capacity until his death in 1972. On February 10, 1938 the Council passed a motion to accept a contract to move the Town Hall to Pierce's Corners for \$125.00. The Council first met in the Town Hall in Pierce's Corners on October 3rd, 1938. It would serve as the Town Hall until the end of 1973 when Marlborough became part of Rideau Township. This historic building had served its constituents well for 118 years. In 1974 it began a new chapter in its life as a Community Centre, a privilege it continues to enjoy.

The October Meeting Speaker: Brad Smith

Article and Pictures by Lucy Martin

RTHS presentations cover many topics of regional interest and are held in a number of noteworthy local venues. The Oct 17th meeting in Burritt's Rapids took in yet another fine heritage building, the Anglican Christ Church.



The Anglican Christ Church in Burritts Rapids

The stately white building on Donnelly Drive overlooks the village. It was initially built in 1831 on land donated by Daniel Burritt Jr. Two additions date from 1861 and 1992. RTHS President Bill Tupper described the building's significance in last month's newsletter, in which he recalled the different ways he has interacted with "the oldest surviving church in the Rideau Valley".

Rector Andrew Chisholm was unable to attend but a lovely photo and more background on the congregation and structure can be found at:

<http://www.merrickvilleanglicans.org/ChristChurch.htm>

Approximately 44 members and interested area residents gathered for this talk. Tupper introduced speaker Brad



Centennial cairn at Christ Church was built using stone coping from the Burritt family farm in Vermont.

Smith as a distinguished lawyer who enjoyed a career in government service followed by private practice.

Brad and Renee Smith purchased Burritt Farm in 1963 and became students and defenders of the village. Brad Smith credited his wife with being the real family expert on the community and its history. "Get the book" he quipped more than once, referring to "Burritt's Rapids 1793-1993: A Scrapbook" by Olivia Mills and Renee Smith. Indeed, a number of us did get signed copies after the talk, with proceeds from its sale going to the Burritt's Rapids community. A copy is also available at the Rideau Archives. Brad Smith called the co-authors' efforts "An example for us all of what you can do with local history – it's fascinating."

Quoting from the book's introduction:

The Village of Burritt's Rapids is situated in the gently rolling farmland bordering the Rideau River in Eastern Ontario. It straddles the river where Colonel By, by using a natural channel, ran his canal around the small drop in the river which gives the village its name.

Controlled by a dam one half mile upstream, with its water flow also regulated by the many works higher in the canal system, the rapids of yesteryear are, save in springtime, but a pale reflection of the former self. To the tranquility of the river and the canal are added the local buildings – stone farm houses, log barns and the wood frame homes of a bygone age.

Smith described the Loyalist migration that established Upper Canada as "the flotsam and jetsam" set adrift by the America Revolution. Smith said while many of the dispossessed had been rich and powerful others were simple folk who just wanted to get on with their lives.

Historic catch phrases can summarize the spirit of an era or nation. The American credo of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" followed by the French Revolution's cry of "liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" struck many Loyalists as likely routes to mob rule and violent anarchy. They preferred the goal of "peace, order and good government".

Smith briefly detailed how events of the Revolutionary War left loyal colonials in dire need of a safe haven. One branch of the Burritt family that supported the crown saw their farm seized in Arlington, Vermont under a Court of Confiscation order in April of 1776.

After years of drama and danger as a prisoner-of-war, spy and scout for the crown, Stephen Burritt began peacetime life anew in Canada. Documents show Daniel Burritt Sr. and his son Stephen applied for Loyalist land grants in 1786-87. Stephen Burritt began with a land grant in Augusta Township. Stephen's four brothers and six sisters settled in Upper Canada as well.

Stephen Burritt established what became Burritt's Rapids (with assistance from various brothers) by building on the north side of the Rideau in 1793.

According to supplemental reference books, Stephen Burritt was awarded 200 acres at Lot 26, Concession 1 of Marlborough Township. By the end of 1773, families with nearby concessions included Ashael Hurd, William

Sowles, John McNeil and Edmund Burritt. (Daniel Burritt Jr. was another early settler, though as of this writing I have not nailed down the date of his taking up residence in Burritt's Rapids.) Early settlers on the south shore as of 1805 included: Abel Adams, Alex McCrae, Helison Harris, James Lane and "one Bongard".

Stephen Burritt's wife, Martha was the daughter of another



New village resident Jayne Molony meets old-timers Brad and Renee Smith after Brad Smith's talk on the history of Burritt's Rapids.

early settler, Roger Stevens. One of Stephen and Martha's children, Edmund (b. Dec 1793) is thought to be the first white child born in the area. These pioneer families had the capacity to deal with settling new land, with all the perseverance, skill, and industry that demanded.

The mid-village island that forms the center of Burritt's Rapids was created by the construction of the Rideau Canal, which took advantage of a previous ditch. There was no bridge until the 1820's, but the site offered valuable water power. Over time the village evolved into a shape speaker Smith compared to "a tadpole with two tails".

Settlement and the establishment of mills lead to more elements of a thriving pioneer community, such as churches, schools, hotels, stores, taverns, skilled tradesmen, a bank and doctor. By the death of Daniel Burritt Jr. in 1859 at age 87, the village of approximately 400 souls boasted those amenities and more.

At first the Rideau Canal offered new prospects for Burritt's Rapids. But not long after the canal began to stimulate more economic growth, serious competition from railroads entered the picture. Over time, rail and shipping routes along the St. Lawrence corridor became more important than the Rideau and communities along that waterway.

Industries that had been based in Burritt's Rapids faded away. A woolen mill that had employed 30 people burned in 1950. The village's only remaining store closed in the last decade. It is still instructive to look down the street and see the heritage buildings in the context of the 19th century uses. But the village is now principally residential in nature.

This story is typical of many such rural communities in this region of Ontario. Unassuming and often smaller today than in yesteryear - but built by settlers who displayed impressive determination, principles and industry. Smith says we owe their memory more recognition and respect.

After decades in Burritt's Rapids, Brad Smith reports that the small village of just several hundred residents often seems like "the uttermost part of the earth". As the southern-most boundary of a very large municipality, Burritt's Rapids is now governed by Ottawa officials who may have scant familiarity with the village and its needs.

Post-talk questions from the audience centered around the general concerns of current residents and curiosity about specific buildings. A side discussion emerged about traffic and the closure of the near-by Andrewsville Bridge. NOTE: more information on the status of that bridge is available on-line at

<https://sites.google.com/site/saveabridge/>

There was also some discussion about what living conditions in Wales in the early 1600's may have prompted the Burritt line to move to the New World in the first place.

By the way, a fulsome study of the Burritt family line in North America (1635-1940) as descended from William Burritt of Stratford, Connecticut can be found on line at: <http://archive.org/details/burrittfamilyina00burr>

At the conclusion of the formal presentation I met new resident of Burritt's Rapids, Jayne Molony. She and her husband arrived from Toronto in May. She says they discovered Burritt's Rapids on the Internet. They came to look around and in a matter of hours they bought the house they'd come to see. She was attracted by the historic character of the picturesque village and hopes to learn more about her new home.

Asked how he first came to live in the village Brad Smith said it all began with something he spied in a newspaper when his family still lived in a stone bungalow in New Edinburgh. It was just a small ad, about a farm by the river. They went out and had a look. Smith says the place was in disrepair, so they had to think about it for a while. They decided to buy it in 1963 as a summer place. Eventually, they took the plunge and moved in year-round in 1966.

Smith says dealing with older properties takes some doing but added they'd been fortunate in having a good restoration architect and help from people who worked on Upper Canada Village. He remarked, "It was like building

a new house inside four walls - an awful lot of work! It wasn't all finished and still isn't all finished."

And how did he approach preservation with practical needs? "You have to take care of these places. But you can't become totally absorbed by them - you gotta live there, you know? You gotta be comfortable in them, with children and dogs." Laughing, he added, "It's a very livable house, but not in a modern sense!"

Dave Westman lives just a few kilometers from the church and heard about the talk from his neighbour. He decided to attend and bring his wall-size "Map of the United Counties of Leeds Grenville Canada West" which was dated 1861. Westman says the map came from a school in Smiths Falls before it was bought by a collector. A friend picked it up at an estate sale, before giving it to Westman.



(l to r) Renee and Brad Smith study a regional map from 1861, while Doug Culham speaks with map owner Dave Westman.

Westman likes the map's many fine details, including its depiction of specific businesses that reflect prior industrial activity in the region, like "Canada Cornstarch Works, Edwardsburgh" and "Grenville Foundry, Prescott". Westman spoke with Georgie Tupper about the prospect of having the map go to the Rideau Archives for posterity.

All in all it was a pleasant evening of "exploring" Burritt's Rapids - a charming and historic part of our regional heritage.

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

The Dickinson House

On December 1 and 2, children and adults who visit the Dickinson House Museum, 1127 Mill St. in Manotick, will be able to get into the spirit of an old-time Christmas by trying their hand at making a Victorian tree ornament. Materials and instructions will be provided. Guided tours of the house will also be available. Come to Dickinson House and warm up with a hot cider, after visiting the Watson's Mill Christmas Market.

There have been different displays on the 3rd floor attic of the Dickinson House since July. For November - December we have a variety of 19th century and early 20th century dolls, books, games and other toys, entitled Playtime Past. Come see these artefacts and what they are made of or from.

Coming Event

RTHS Annual Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 12th, 2012
Manderley Golf Club, 5920 Prince of Wales Dr.
6:00 p.m.

Musical Entertainment by Mr. Len Goldfarb

Hot turkey buffet
Cost: \$30.00

There will be a sign-up sheet at our meeting on November 21st, or please notify Ruth Wright by Dec. 7th if you plan to attend. (613-489-3886)



Remember the delicious buffet last year. Well we're doing it again this year.

News from the Rideau Branch, Ottawa Archives

Hours: *The Rideau Archives is open every Tuesday from 9:30 am to 4:30 p.m., and at other times by appointment. (613-489-2926).*

The LACAC Files at the Rideau Branch.

Soon after the formation of the Township of Rideau in 1974, municipal authorities and interested community volunteers began a sustained effort to identify the architectural heritage of the old townships of Marlborough and North Gower. The property files of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) offer valuable information about the heritage buildings of the villages and concession lines, recording the history and architectural style of nearly 400 buildings. They can be perused at the Rideau Township Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives; an index organized by street name and civic address is available.

So if you are just curious or are doing serious research on your heritage house or building, come and see us at the Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives in North Gower on a Tuesday. Its likely we can help you.



Most of the LACAC files contain pictures of the houses and buildings, both new and old, to augment the written information.

Watson's Mill Events

The Mill is located at 5525 Dickinson Street, Dickinson Square, Manotick. Free parking on-site.

Web Site: www.watsonsmill.com

Watson's Mill hours of operation: Office hours: weekdays, 10:00-4:00. Watson's Mill: starting Saturday, May 5th: open to visitors daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please visit www.watsonsmill.com for a complete calendar of events. Below are some highlights for the fall.

Christmas Market & Fine Art Sale:

Saturdays & Sundays, November 17-18, November 24-25 and December 1-2, 2012, daily 10:00-4:00: Free public admission * Vendors & Artists: contact us for guidelines and application forms, or visit the Watson's Mill website. (www.watsonsmill.com)

As warm autumn colours make way for cool winter weather, Watson's Mill is preparing for the Christmas season by hosting their annual Christmas Market & Art Show, featuring numerous participating local artists, artisans and crafters. For the last two weekends of November and the first weekend in December, visitors to the mill can get into the spirit of the season and find unique gift ideas in our one-of-a-kind shopping experience. The event culminates on December 2nd, with the traditional Carols at Sunset featuring the Manotick Brass Ensemble.

The Christmas Market & Art Show is a fun way to officially initiate the ritual of the holiday season and tackling that long holiday shopping list. There are different vendors and specialty items on each of the weekends, with a good mix of product types. Visitors will notice many new participants this year as well as some of their returning favourites. The Christmas Market is hosted at Watson's Mill, so dress warmly!, and the Art Show is hosted in the Carriage Shed.

MINUTES OF RIDEAU VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

OCTOBER 17,2012, BURRITTS RAPIDS

The meeting on October 17th 2012 was held in Christ Church Anglican Church, Burritts Rapids.

Members of the local community joined members of RTHS for an interesting evening.

President Bill Tupper brought the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. He welcomed everyone present saying he hoped this would mark the beginning of the two groups joining together on more occasions.

Regrets: Bill Adams, Maureen McPhee, Colin Wright, Bill Leach, Ron Wilson

A card was circulated for folks to sign –an encouragement for Colin Wright recovering from open heart surgery.

Bill asked that the RTHS executive be empowered to read and approve the minutes of the September meeting – agreed.

In the absence of the treasurer, Bill gave the following report:

- Bank balance end of September: \$13,244.04
- Dickinson House : \$167.24
- Government of Canada cheque for: \$2,813.58 (balance owed for summer students)

Program – Ruth Wright reported on upcoming meetings:

- November 21 – Pierce’s Corners Hall. Speaker :Ulrich Bolinger – Yellow Wings- Vintage Wings of Canada
- December 12 – Manderly Golf Club. Christmas dinner with entertainment – sign up sheet at next meeting

Membership – Pat reported the following:

- Life Members – 12
- Complimentary – 6
- Paid Members – 98

Publications – Ellen reported that the second edition of ‘Cheese Factories of Rideau Township’ is well on the way to being completed.

Grants – Tom MacDonald reported two City of Ottawa grant applications are being prepared for November mailing. RTHS has received 1 provincial, 2 city as well as student grants this year.

Dickinson House – Bill reported Dickinson House will be open weekends until December 2nd. Thanks to Harvest Fest Dickinson House had 500 visitors the weekend of October 6-8. The Apple and Honey displays on the lawn of Dickinson House also drew more visitors.

Announcement:

Kars Women’s Institute will be celebrating 100 years on November 27th from 2-4pm at Kars Rec Hall.

Bill introduced the speaker of the evening – Brad Smith. Mr. Smith gave an interesting talk on the History of Burritts Rapids. He spoke of the Loyalists who were forced from their homes south of the border and traveled north settling on the north shore of the Rideau canal. Through perseverance and industry they built a vibrant community of mills, hotels, taverns and homes. Mr. Smith stressed the importance of remembering these people and the sacrifices they made to make Burritts Rapids what it is today. Brad and Renee Smith have published a book entitled Burritts Rapids 1793-1993.

After answering several questions, Mr. Smith was warmly thanked by Ruth and presented with ‘Kars on the Rideau’.

Bill thanked the members of Christ Church for their hospitality and also for their loving care of the oldest framed church in Eastern Ontario.

Members retired to the church hall for a time of fellowship and refreshments.