

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

November 2015 Newsletter

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

The November Meeting

Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2015
Time: 8:00 p.m.
Place: Manotick United Church
5567 Manotick Main Street.,
Manotick, ON



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



The dining room at the Dickinson House set up for the Victorian Tea on Women's Day. It was another successful event. They always sell out. So next year get your tickets early.

Subject:

Book Launch: The Dickinson Men of Manotick

The Speakers:

Bill and Georgina Tupper

The book *The Dickinson Men of Manotick* is a look at aspects of the development of the eastern Ontario – northern New York State by chronicling the history of several generations of the Dickinson family.

The first Dickinsons emigrated from England to Massachusetts in 1630. From there they spread west and north, their descendants eventually reaching Northern New York State and Eastern Ontario. Along the way they became farmers, operated transportation businesses for people and freight, mill operators, and politicians. It was a time when the wilderness was being opened up, when fortunes were routinely made and lost and when a fledging economy was being established in both New York State and Ontario.

Moss Kent Dickinson and his sons, George and William, were instrumental in the founding and development of Manotick, building and operating four mills (including Watsons Mill) and participating in politics at the local, regional and federal levels. Before coming to Manotick Moss Kent owned steamboat lines on the St. Lawrence River, the Ottawa River and the Rideau Canal.

Dr. William (Bill) Tupper and his wife Georgina are both history buffs with a keen interest in politics. They took an interest in the Dickinsons because of the role the family had in local development and politics. Bill has served as Mayor of the local township and a Member of Parliament. Georgina founded the local archives. All this made them a perfect choice to research and write this book.

This Month

1. The November Meeting
2. The October presentation.
3. News from the Rideau Archives
4. Dickinson House
5. Minutes of the October Meeting.
6. Remembrance Day.

The October Presentation

At Home with the Prime Minister

Ottawa Residences of the Prime Ministers Prior to 1951

Article by Owen Cooke, pictures courtesy Anne Raina.

Hagit Hadaya spoke to about 25 members of the Rideau Township Historical Society and their guests at the Client Service Centre in North Gower on the evening of 21 October. Among those present was Barbara Humphreys, longtime member of our Society, who had been one of Hagit's lecturers when she was an undergraduate at Carleton University.



Hagit Hadaya with Barbara Humphreys at the October meeting. (Photo by Owen Cooke)

Hagit spoke about her current research project, to write a book about the Ottawa homes of the early Canadian Prime Ministers before the Canadian government purchased 24 Sussex Drive as an official residence. Although she is in the early stages of her research, she treated us to a wealth of detail and anecdotes about the domestic arrangements of each of the Prime Ministers up to Louis St-Laurent.

She noted that the situation for the earlier Prime Ministers was different from that facing today's incumbents. Parliament sat for only three to four months each year, so the Prime Ministers did not have to buy houses in the capital. In some cases, their wives did not accompany them to the capital, and they rented rooms in hotels. Most were men of modest means, and there was no living allowance paid. As they walked to their offices, they preferred locations in Centretown or in the new suburb of Sandy Hill.

One of the first "homes" of a Prime Minister still extant is Stadacona Hall at 395 Laurier Ave. E., where Sir John A. Macdonald (Prime Minister 1867-1873, 1878-1891) lived 1878-1883, before moving to Earnescliffe. Stadacona

Hall later was the home of Sir Frederick Borden, Minister of Militia and Defence in the Laurier administration, and is today the Brunei High Commission.

Other residences have not survived. 22 Vittoria Street was used by Alexander Mackenzie (P.M. 1873-1878), after his earlier quarters burned and he personally assisted in fighting the fire. Sir John Abbott (P.M. 1891-1892) also lived in this house, and Sir Charles Tupper (P.M. 1896) considered moving here. The house – and the whole street – was demolished to make way for the Confederation Building on the north side of Wellington St. Other homes used by Sir John Thompson (P.M. 1892-1894), Sir Charles Tupper, Sir Robert Borden (P.M. 1911-1920) and Arthur Meighen (P.M. 1920-1921 and 1926) similarly have not survived.

One which still exists is the handsome brick house at the corner of Somerset and Metcalfe Streets which Thompson and his wife Annie rented in 1894, soon before his untimely death at Windsor Castle where he was a guest of Queen Victoria. The house is today the headquarters of Soccer Canada.

Early Prime Ministers rented rooms at the Russell House, a famous early hotel at the corner of Elgin and Sparks Streets, or at the Victoria Chambers at Wellington and O'Connor Streets. In later years the Roxborough Apartments at Laurier and Elgin were a fashionable address, the city's first luxury apartments



House at the corner of Somerset and Metcalfe Streets, now the home of Soccer Canada, previously the residence of Sir John Thompson, P.M. from 1892 until his sudden death at Windsor Castle in 1894 (photo by Hagit Hadaya)

Sir Wilfrid Laurier (P.M. 1896-1911) initially lived at the Russell House, but in 1897 the Liberal Party purchased the house at 355 Laurier Ave. E. in Sandy Hill for \$9,000 as a suitable home for a prime minister to entertain. Our longest-serving Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King (P.M. 1921-1930, 1935-1948) lived at the Roxborough, but moved to Laurier's house in 1923. It was bequeathed to him in Zöe Laurier's will. Today Laurier House is a National Historic Site dedicated to the two Prime Ministers.

R.B. Bennett (P.M. 1930-1935) was a bachelor. He chose a suite in the Chateau Laurier, and the owners, Canadian National Railways, strove to provide more luxurious accommodation when he became Prime Minister – a 17-room suite renovated at a cost of over \$85,000. When word of his luxurious lifestyle became public, in the depths

of the Great Depression, it became one more reason to dump the Conservative government.

By the time Louis St-Laurent became Prime Minister in 1948, his rented quarters at the Roxborough were no longer so fashionable. The government at last purchased the house at 24 Sussex Drive, to be the Prime Ministers' official residence. Nevertheless, in 1951 the St-Laurents were reluctant to move in. Jeanne, Mme St-Laurent, did not want to leave their elegant and comfortable house in Quebec City, and when she saw the front hall at 24 Sussex, she cried, "I'm not going to live here. I cannot live with that wallpaper!" of giant chrysanthemums. But the chrysanthemums went and Jeanne stayed.

Hagit offered a few thoughts on the much-needed repairs to 24 Sussex, on an evening only two nights after the federal election. We concluded with a lively question session and refreshments.



Prime Minister W.L.M. King's study at Laurier House, 335 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa. The home both to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, P.M. 1896-1911 and King, 1921-1930, 1935-1948. At the end of the room is the portrait of King's deceased mother, with whom he believed he was in spiritual communication. (Library and Archives Canada C-018629)

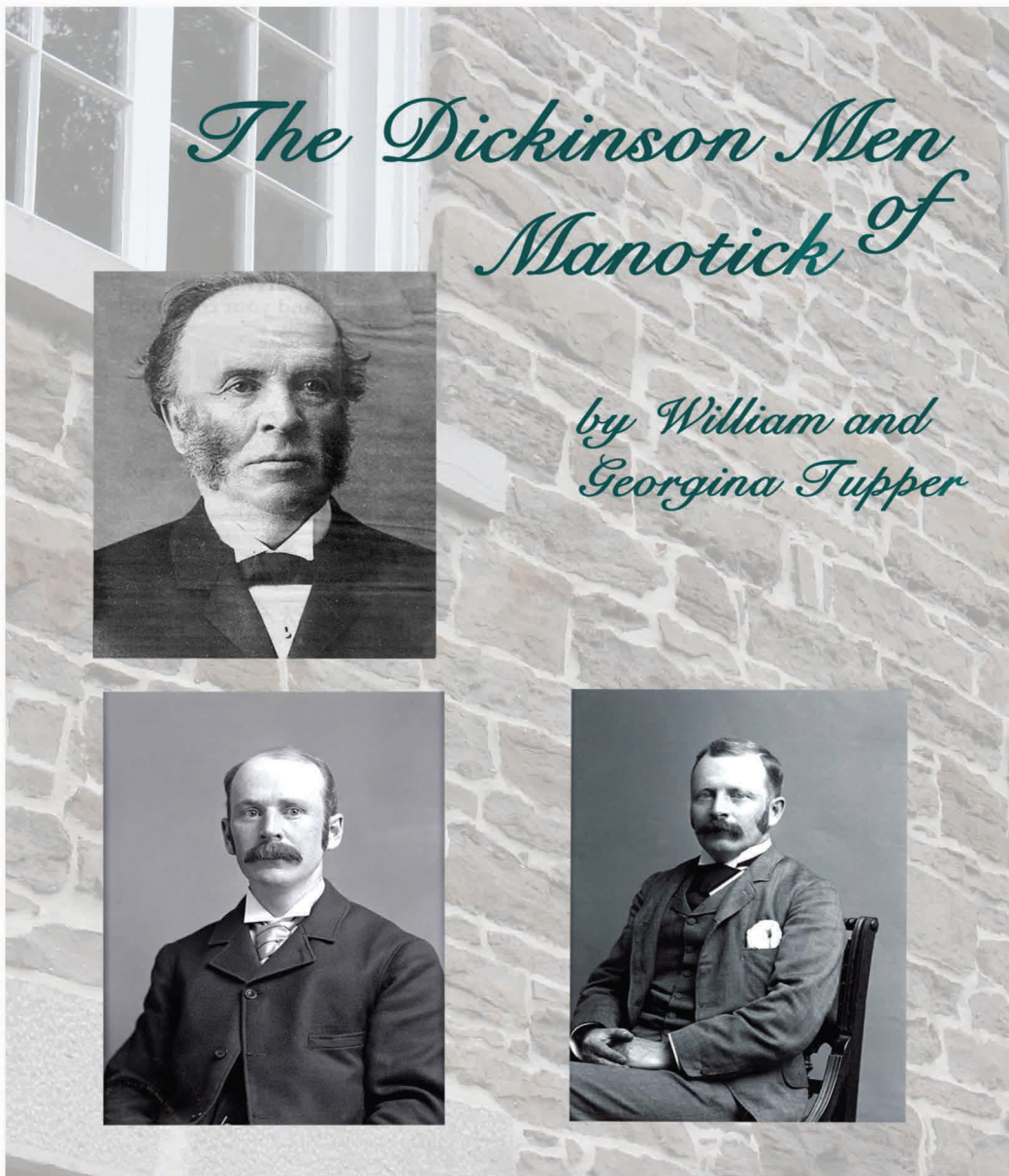


The Chateau Laurier, 1937. R.B. Bennett, P.M. 1930-1935, had a palatial suite in the back left corner, where we can see the awnings on the second floor. In the worst of the Great Depression many did not care for his lifestyle. (Library and Archives Canada E-010862042)

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

RIDEAU TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Invites you to attend the launch of their new book



Wednesday, November 18, 2015
Manotick United Church
5567 Manotick Main St.
8:00 p.m.

The Dickinson House

Women's Day Tea

(Article and photos by Maureen McPhee)

Our hard-working RTHS volunteers hosted another popular Victorian Tea at Dickinson House on Women's Day in Manotick. Guests enjoyed a traditional three-tiered display of scones with whipped cream and jam, assorted tea sandwiches, and a selection of sweets, all garnished with eye-catching fresh strawberries.



Lori Stirling and Darlene Price enjoy the Women's day Victorian Tea at the Dickinson House

Dressed in period costume, our servers offered a choice of teas served in vintage teapots and poured into our collection of bone china cups and saucers. Christian Joyce, who carried out historical research for RTHS last summer, shared his talents as a classical guitarist, to everyone's enjoyment.

One guest judged our tea to have been "better than the Chateau Laurier." Following the tea, many visited the third-floor Coral Lindsay Exhibit Hall to view "Tableware in Times Past". This special exhibit will remain in place until December 6.



Stephanie Cameron serving tea.



Christian with classical guitar.

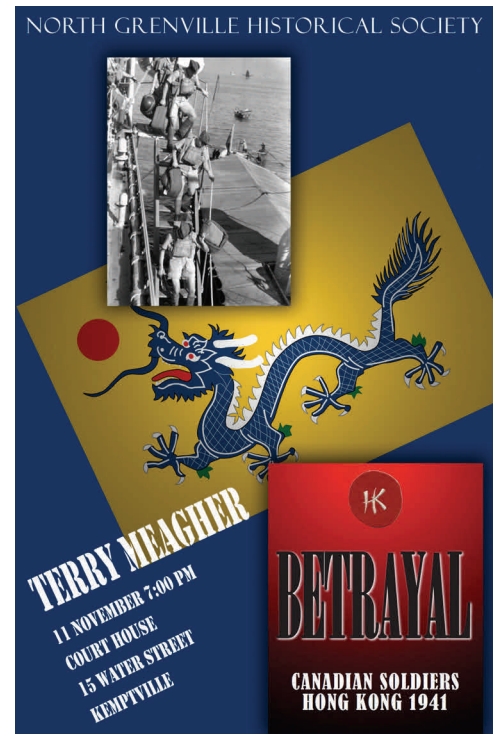
North Grenville Historical Society Meeting

On the right is a poster for the next public meeting of the North Grenville Historical Society, which will be held on Wednesday, November 11, 2015 at 15 Water Street, Kemptville. The door to the Court House will open at 7:00 pm and Mr. Terry Meagher's presentation will begin at 7:30. Coffee, tea and sweets will be available throughout the evening

Mr. Meagher will discuss his book **Betrayal: Canadian Soldiers Hong Kong 1941**. According to a press release issued by Veterans Publications "Canadian Soldiers deployed to Hong Kong were betrayed twice: first by the Canadian government, the second time by the British commanders in Hong Kong who blamed them for a sub-standard performance. Of the 1,873 soldiers sent to Hong Kong, 292 were killed in battle and 267 perished in POW camps. Hong Kong was one of the most horrific battles in World War II, with casualty rates to match."

"The battle is seen through soldiers' eyes and told mainly through their words." The book includes Ken Ewing's story. Mr. Ewing signed up at the age of 16 and was a Prisoner of War in Hong Kong for three and a half years. Prior to his death in 2012, Mr. Ewing was a resident of Burritts Rapids. Terry Meagher stated that his friendship with Ewing inspired him to uncover the truth about what really happened in Hong Kong.

We hope that you will be able to join us on November 11 for what promises to be a very touching and informative presentation. All are welcome - old friends and new.



The Dickinson House Museum

Presents a Special Exhibit

Local Heroes in Times of War



A CANADIAN IN ITALY

Nov. 11, 14 & 15
1127 Mill Street
Manotick
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

An exhibit commemorating the contributions of two distinguished Canadian servicemen who retired to Manotick and continued to make contributions to their society.

The Rideau Township Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of 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.

The Records of Coral Lindsay

This month, the Rideau Branch received a large set of records from the estate of Coral Lindsay, longtime volunteer and one of the founders of the Rideau Archives in 1990.

Coral died tragically last year. Many of her records had already been donated to Rideau Branch (MGR043). Noteworthy among these were the account books of James Lindsay, records of the Kars Women's Institute, and many records of Lindsay's Wharf. This final group of records is comprised of a wide range of materials: genealogical information, local histories, family photographs, personal mementos, and records from her days as a teacher.

Along with these were many files of research materials, a testament to her avid interest in the history of this area. Among the materials is a letter of 29 June 1982 about her time aboard the Steam Launch Phoebe in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Rideau Canal. With characteristic humour, she addressed the letter to Lt. Col. John By. She complained in the letter of suffering from Canal Fever, a malady she insists "may have been latent in my being all the days that we have resided in the Wilds of the Rideau Valley".

Her research papers bear out this deep interest in the Canal and the shipping traffic upon it, with files on ships, boat-builders, captains, and locks. The volunteers at Rideau Archives will be working busily over the winter to complete the preparations to make available these wonderful documents which attest to Coral Lindsay's life here and to her role as historian of her community.

(The picture was taken at a presentation Coral gave in Becketts Landing.)

Stuart Clarkson



MINUTES OF THE RIDEAU TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OCTOBER MEETING

October 21, 2015, Client Centre, North Gower

Opening: Vice-President Tom MacDonald called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. About 23 members and guests were present. The minutes of the September 23, 2015 meeting, previously circulated in the October newsletter, were approved on a motion by Bill Tupper, seconded by Ron Wilson. Tom then called on various directors for reports.

Program: Owen Cooke, co-chair, reported that the November 18 meeting will be at Manotick United Church and will be a book launch of *The Dickinson Men of Manotick*. Our annual Christmas party is scheduled for Thursday Dec. 17 at the Cornerstone Wesleyan Methodist Church in North Gower. The January meeting will be our AGM, and Bring and Brag by members.

Communications: Ron Wilson, communications director, asked for volunteers to write articles on the monthly talks for the newsletters, now that we don't have Lucy Martin to do this.

Publications: Jane Anderson, publications director, reported progress on the upcoming book, *The Dickinson Men of Manotick*, by Bill and Georgina Tupper, and on the Oral History Project.

Dickinson House: Maureen McPhee, committee chair, advised members of the upcoming two-day Victorian

Tea, Nov. 7-8, and the subsequent exhibit for Nov. 11, 14 and 15 on Local Heroes in Times of War. The last special event will be the Heritage Christmas Crafts on the first weekend in December.

Grants: In the absence of Angela Beking, grants director, Maureen reported that the application for the City of Ottawa grant has been completed and submitted.

Evening Program: Owen Cooke introduced our speaker, Hagit Hadaya, who gave an interesting illustrated talk on residences of some of Canada's prime ministers. Owen Cooke then thanked Hagit and presented her with an honorary RTHS membership.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned about 9:00 pm, followed by a social time with refreshments.