

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

November 2017 Newsletter

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

The November Meeting

Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2017
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: North Gower Client Services Centre
2155 Roger Stevens Drive
North Gower, ON



Subject: Courage in Afghanistan

After a career in the public service, T. Robert Fowler returned to his love of writing and has produced four books of Canadian military history, beginning with *Valour on Juno Beach; the Canadian Awards for Gallantry, D-Day - June 6, 1944* and most recently *Combat Mission Kandahar; the Canadian Experience in Afghanistan*, published in 2016.

The Speaker: Bob Fowler

On Wednesday, 15 November, at 7:30 p.m. at the North Gower Client Service Centre, 2155 Roger Stevens Drive, Bob will share his thoughts with us on the nature of courage in battle, and relate it to one Taliban ambush in Afghanistan.

The Winter/Spring Programme

Our annual **Christmas dinner** will take place on December 13th at Knox Presbyterian Church in Manotick and will feature a catered meal – details will be presented at the next meeting.

January - Annual Meeting and Bring & Brag

February - Irene Stanton on A.Y. Jackson

March - 3 short segments: Dennis Osmond, "Magic Lanterns"; Rod Brazier, "Railways in Muskoka"; Gary Bagley, "Loyalists"

April - Valerie Knowles - either the history of Canadian immigration or William Van Horne

May - 3 short segments: Karen Craig on the Craig family; Owen Cooke, update on Tommy Watterson; Bill Tupper, "William Cowan"

June - Excursion to St. Clare's Church, Dwyer Hill; Pinhey's Point, Dunrobin; St. Mary's Church, Dunrobin.

In Memoriam

The Society mourns the passing of member **Ben Sorensen**, Q.C., who passed away on October 11, 2017 at the age of 88. While he was living at Orchard View on the Rideau in Manotick he enjoyed attending the meetings that were held there. His wife Joyce predeceased him in 2014, and he is survived by two sons and a daughter.



Photo by Maureen McPhee

Linda Galvin got right into the spirit of the Suffragette Movement at the Pink Tea.

The Irish Experience in the Ottawa Valley

Speaker: Terry Currie

Article by Owen Cooke. Photos by Maureen McPhee

On Wednesday, 18 October, twenty-six members and friends gathered at Pierces Corners Hall to hear Terry Currie discuss the Irish experience in the Ottawa Valley. Although Terry was born in British Columbia, he came with his family to be part of a multi-generational farming experience on the old family farm near Kinburn, without electricity and working with horses. Educated in a one-room school at Fitzroy Harbour, he went on to the more modern Arnprior High School, then to St. Patrick's College in Ottawa where he studied History and English. After a career of high-school teaching, mostly at Almonte High School, in retirement he returned to the University of Ottawa to study history. His Master's thesis became his first publication, *The Ottawa Valley's Great Fire of 1870*. Since then he has been busy teaching and writing on various aspects of Ottawa Valley culture.

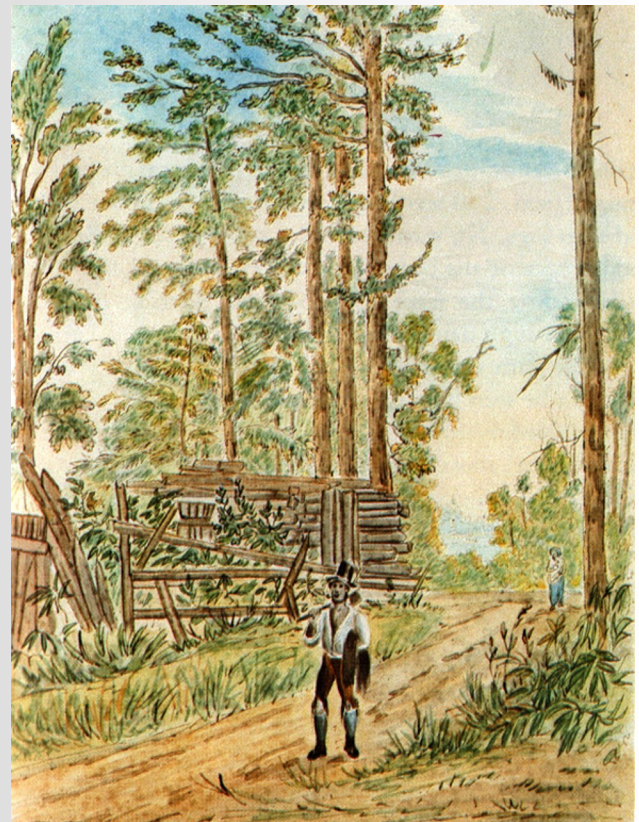
People are starved, he says, to know about "us". The Ottawa Valley is unique, as illustrated by its log barns not found in other parts of Ontario, and its unique accents. It's a single geographic and cultural unity on both sides of the Ottawa River. According to Terry, we, "the Ottawa Valley", are more famous in Ireland than we realize ourselves.

In the day of Julius Caesar, the Irish were cattle herds-men, living on small holdings, but were already known as brilliant musicians. Irish musicians were brought as slaves to play in Rome. The Irish retained their way of life through to the first Norman invasion of Ireland in 1185, when the Normans built castles in order to keep the Irish subservient. The problems arose when the Norman lords married locally and became Irish. The real catastrophe, though, came with the Reformation. The English Civil War came to Ireland with Oliver Cromwell. In his bid to further Puritan ascendancy, Cromwell had killed off half the population of Ireland. Some 100,000 Irish were enslaved and shipped off to the plantations in America. There they intermarried with black slaves which resulted in American blacks with Irish names. This fact has only come to light recently.

Meanwhile, Sir Walter Raleigh brought back potatoes from the New World, first to Cork in 1598, the first potato planting in Europe. The Irish peasants grew grain to pay their rent and the tithes owed to the Church of Ireland (Anglican), but around the edges of fields grew potatoes. With this good, cheap food, the Irish population soared. From about 600,000 left in Cromwell's day, there were three million Irish a century later, and 6.5 million by 1801. There were 13 million by the mid-1840s Famine, caused by disease in potato crops, then the population dropped precipitously.

The Catholic Irish peasants lived in a cashless society. Three-quarters of the people spoke only Irish Gaelic, almost all were illiterate. The poorest in Tipperary had not even clothing – they covered themselves in straw and plants.

A way out appeared during the Napoleonic wars with the beginning of the timber trade and then canals in the Ottawa Valley. Unskilled Irish labourers found work at the beginning of the Ottawa River canals – the Grenville and the Carillon, and soon on the St. Lawrence on the Lachine Canal. Here they drove off the Québécois workers. It was said they "owned" the Lachine by violence. When Colonel By started work on the Rideau Canal in 1826, he separated the Irish and Québécois gangs on different parts of the Canal to prevent violence. The Rideau waterway was the largest public works project in the world in the first half of the nineteenth century and offered great possibilities for unskilled, illiterate Irish workers to become useful settlers.



An Irish labourer on the Rideau Canal, drawn August 1830, by J.P. Cockburn

The Irish paid £10 passage to shipowners and provided their own food to emigrate aboard the empty timber ships returning to North America from Britain. Once here they

could work on the canals in the summer and in the timber trade in the winter and soon have enough funds to settle as farmers.

In Ireland, many Presbyterians united with the Catholic Irish in opposition to the Church of Ireland. Thus they settled with the Catholics in the Ottawa Valley. The British Colonial Office saw Upper Canada as a home for loyal, Protestant families who would oppose any American aggression. Lanark was settled partly by Highlanders, all Presbyterian. In 1823 Peter Robinson brought out what were regarded as “drunken Irish rebels” from the Cork area and settled them in the Valley. There were also numbers of Anglican settlers from Tipperary.

This settlement pattern of mixed groups of Irish farmers differed greatly from the American experience, where the unskilled Irish formed the lowest orders of society in the large cities. Also, our settlement was largely completed before the desperate days of the Famine. Thomas D’Arcy McGee came to Canada in 1847, sent by the Boston Patriot, to report upon the situation of the Irish in the Canadas. He found literate Irishmen living in dwellings which one could not tell from those of other settlers. They had done better than the Irish in the United States.

Life in Canada was too hard, and the climate too cold, to carry on the old animosities from Ireland. In our stable agricultural Valley communities, one can still tell the old divisions – Curries are Protestant, Currys Catholic; Cavanaughs are Protestant, Kavanaughs Catholic – but we have arrived at a situation where a Grand Master of

the Orange Lodge could become Parade Marshal for the St. Patrick’s Day parade in Douglas.



Photo by Maureen McPhee
Laura Tupper, a recent visitor to Ireland, with Terry Currie, our speaker.

Following his presentation Terry answered numerous questions and signed copies of his book on the fire of 1870.

The Dickinson House

On Saturday, November 4th, Dickinson House held a very successful tea in conjunction with Women’s Day in Manotick. The theme was a “Pink tea”, reviving such occasions that were held as part of the Suffragette Movement of the 1900s and 1910s. The tables were set with pink tablecloths, the decorations were pink and the patrons enjoyed pink shaded sandwiches and treats. Suitable background music was played and a good time was had by all. The regular volunteers were assisted by students who waited on the tables and were also able to respond quickly to any and all requests. The Dickinson House Committee sincerely thanks Marissa Waddell, Lindsay Konrad, Emma and Heather Creasey for their help.

On Saturday, November 11th and Sunday November 12th there will be a special display highlighting soldiers from the area who were present at Vimy Ridge and lost their lives during the First World War. The next major activity will be Heritage Christmas Crafts on December 2 and 3. The Christmas Tale will be the reading of “The Shepherd” by Frederick Forsyth on December 10. Please note that this is a date change from December 17th .

The volunteer staff at the Pink Tea, left to right - Lindsay Konrad, Heather Creasey, Melanie Hayes, Stephanie Cameron, Marissa Waddell, Emma Creasey, Maureen McPhee and Pat Earl.



Photo by Maureen McPhee
The colourful food trays served to guests All of the treats were homemade by Dickinson House volunteers.



Photo by Maureen McPhee

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.

Rideau Branch Archives Annual Report 2016-2017

Rideau Branch Archives continues to be a vital centre for heritage activities in the rural south of the City of Ottawa. Once again, the Branch received almost two dozen deliveries of local historical materials over the course of the year, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our donors. Our volunteers received several training sessions over the past year. Energized by several new volunteers over the past year, the branch has also expanded its activities into new areas, including preparatory work relating to online access.

	12 months	change	2015-2016
Total volunteer hours	2627	+8%	2423
Volunteers	11	+22%	9
Average total hours per month	219	+8%	202
Deliveries received	20		23

2017 statistics (year-end 31 Oct. 2017), with 2016 comparison and percent change.

The past year presented a number of unexpected challenges, including a small flood event at the North Gower Client Service Centre. Fortunately, it had very little impact on the archival records held there. These records have been temporarily located in the Central Archives' main vaults until a new permanent storage facility in the Rideau Township area can be determined. Many thanks to Conservator Silvia Kindl and to all of the Rideau Branch volunteers and staff members at the City of Ottawa Central

Archives lent a hand, ensuring the safety of the Rideau Branch records.

Silvia also helped out with several conservation issues over the past year, including the completion of a state-of-the-art treatment on an 1832 indenture by which Calvin Burritt conveyed the 100 acres comprising lot 8, Concession 1 in Osgoode Township to Alanson Parks, part of the Harris family papers (Acc. No. 2012.0006) at Rideau Branch.

Stuart Clarkson



Conservator Silvia Kindl treating indenture with Calcium Phytate in 2% Gellan Gum (Treatment Record, RV360 2012.0006, Image 40)

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