

The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

November 2018 Newsletter

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

The November Meeting

Date: Wednesday November 21
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: Manotick Legion
5550 Ann St,
Manotick, ON



Speakers:

The book *Rideau Remembers* will be presented by Owen Cooke and the Book Research Team.

Subject:

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War – the Great War to its participants. Over the past few years the Rideau Archives Branch, City of Ottawa Archives, and the Rideau Township Historical Society have attempted to identify and document our lost young generation from the First World War.

This book is the story of those men and women who came from what became Rideau Township, and gave their lives in response to the call from their country and the British Empire.

The RTHS Christmas Party

5:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 12, 2018. Price \$

Knox Presbyterian Church,
5533 Dickinson Street, Manotick, Ontario

Come on out and help start off the Christmas Season right.



“Walking in the Footsteps of Philemon Wright”

Article by Susan McKellar

Photos by Ruth Wright

Aylmer native Rick Henderson shared his enthusiasm for his illustrious ancestor, Philemon Wright, at the October RTHS meeting in Carsonby, and by the end of his talk we all had learned a lot about the beginnings of Hull and area as well as Wright and his family. Henderson’s presentation was enhanced by interesting maps and illustrations.

Rick is the 4th great-grandson of Philemon Wright; his father did genealogy and Rick has followed in his footsteps. He stressed that as well as documenting the history for his family, he was motivated by the importance of personal relationships in stories. His research on relationships has led to new information and corrections to previous errors made by historians.

Philemon Wright (1760-1839) and his wife Abigail Wyman (1760-1829) were married in 1782; in 1800 they left their established families and their home in Woburn, Massa-

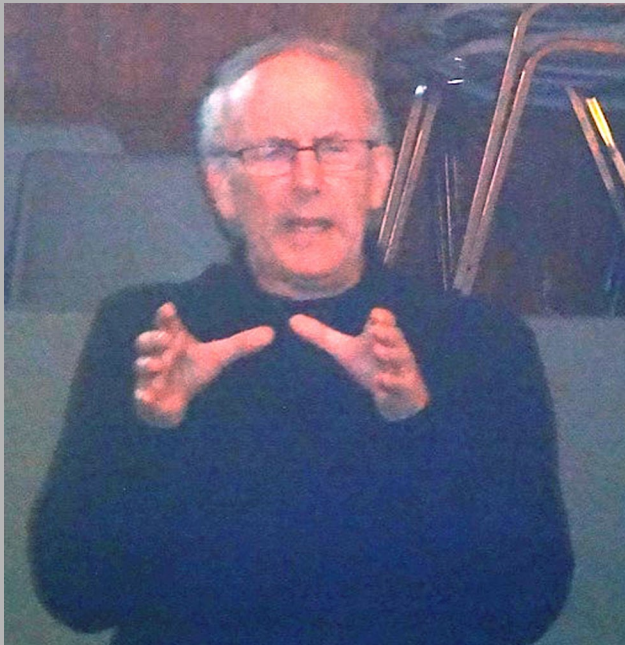
chusetts with their six children and moved to British North America. Two more children were subsequently born. Abigail was an important person in her own right, serving her neighbours and community as a nurse and even performing doctor’s duties.

Wright founded the first permanent settlement in the Ottawa Valley. He was heavily involved with the timber industry, and started several businesses. However Rick stressed that Wright was a farmer first and foremost, and that he considered that his highest avocation.

Philemon’s son Philemon Jr. was 17 when they moved to Canada, and as the eldest he worked hard for his family, especially when his father was away from home in the lumber camps. Philemon Jr. worked at farming, building roads and bridges, and even in timber. Unfortunately he died at the age of 38, while building a road to Grenville.

On a snowy day in November he was leaving for home when his carriage was overturned. He broke his neck and perished. Two of his brothers also died young. His brother Ruggles was the sole surviving son and so is better known now.

Philemon Wright and family arrived in 1800. There were a few settlers at Grenville, but basically there were no settlements farther up the Ottawa Valley, no roads, no canal, etc. Even though it was the ancestral home of the Anishinabeg (Algonquin) and was the territory through which they passed, hunted, etc. There were none living there



Rick Henderson presenting on Philemon Wright.

when Wright arrived.

Along with Wright came other families (some relatives), including 33 labourers, mainly axe men, 14 horses and 8 oxen. A man named London Oxford was an associate of Wright's and followed him up the Ottawa Valley; he was the first man of colour in the area.

Farmland in Woburn had been expensive and not easily available, and Wright had heard about a proclamation to the effect that if you settled on land in Canada for five years and created infrastructure, you could then own it. This led to his decision to immigrate.

A leader in the new community, Wright poured all his resources and energy into building "Wright's Town", the first settlement in the area, starting in 1801. As well as shops, he built Wright's Tavern, crowned with a beautiful cupola, that became a well-known landmark.

In 1808 a fire wiped out the town, but his sons Philemon Jr. and Tiberius, with help from others, rebuilt the town. Because it was small and not over-run with garbage etc.,

it was bucolic and sweet-smelling, and became a resort for people from "stinky" Montreal.

Rick described his successful search for the remains of the foundations and walls of the tavern, in the Eddy buildings in Hull, and showed us pictures.

Wright was an entrepreneur with a hand in many different endeavours as well as the town. He started the timber industry in the Ottawa Valley, and had a hand in many communities. The Wrights made high grade cement – the dam that created Dow's Lake in Ottawa was made with their cement. There is a document in the Wright archives on how to make "Roman" (waterproof) cement. They built steamboats, and the first large-scale timber slide at Chaudière Falls, 24 feet wide.

Wright also had several farms to which he gave names: Columbia Falls farm was on the location of the current Plaza Hotel, and Chaudière Farm was the kernel of Aylmer. By the time of his death, Wright owned 36,000 acres.

For those who were not able to attend the meeting and learn about this fascinating character, Rick's book is available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/RickJH99



Wright's Tavern in Wright's Town. Note the cupola.



The meeting was held at the Carsonby Hall and was well attended.

Rideau Township Historical Society

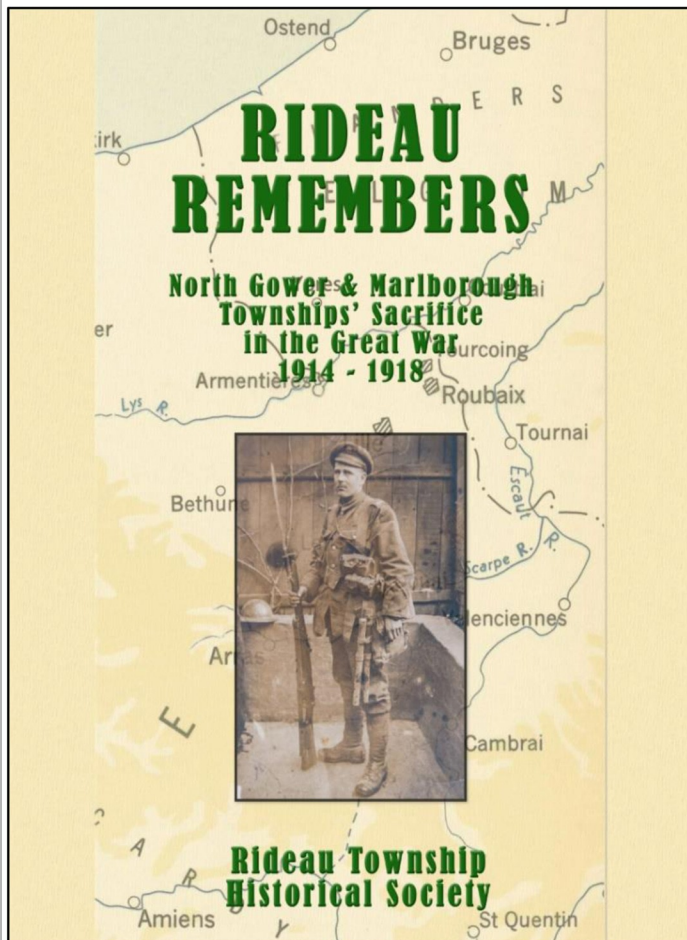
Wednesday, November 21, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.

Manotick Legion

5550 Ann Street, Manotick, Ontario

*Rideau Branch, City of Ottawa Archives,
and the Rideau Township Historical Society*

BOOK LAUNCH



Left to right: Owen Cooke, Stuart Clarkson, Ruth Wright, Dave Bullock, Georgie Tupper, Susan McKellar
Rod Brazier - absent



The Ontario
Genealogical
Society

SINCE 1961

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 Remembers

Article by Stuart Clarkson

The City of Ottawa Archives is very proud to have supported the research and publication of the Rideau Township Historical Society for its newest book, *Rideau Remembers*. The book was conceived and admirably written by Owen Cooke, with assistance by former City Archivist Dave Bullock and many other RTHS members volunteering at Rideau Branch.

The book details the lives, struggles, and grim fates of the soldiers and one nursing sister connected with the people and communities of North Gower and Marlborough Townships, who lost their lives while participating in the First World War.

Beyond what is covered in the book are other stories of people born or living locally who served in and survived the war, like Percy Victor Barrows, Chester Bennett Armstrong, William Johnson Anderson, Lawrence Albert McMillan, Hamilton Augustus Craig, Clifford Neville Mains, Alfred Ernest McCullough, Benson Earl Lyons, Charles Franklin McGee, and Marguerite Hermione Gagné, a nursing sister. Another was James Alexander Cryderman, who signed up in 1918 near the war's end at the age of 54, serving until 1920 in Vancouver.

Rideau Branch is currently displaying Cryderman's discharge papers and a photograph of Percy Barrows in its *Ties That Bind* exhibit, but there are many other pertinent items to be found at the Archives.

The local impact of the war is, in part, conveyed and embodied by the mementos kept by the families and friends of the combatants. A memorial card for Private Percy Edward Vaughan, for instance, was treasured by his cousin, Ruby Meredith.

It is unfortunate for us today, though, that the individuals intended to be remembered were not always identified on the mementos, or how they were known to local people

was left unexplained. Unknown is the connection between Ruby Meredith and Trooper George Robert Russell of Ottawa, serving with the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps.

Ruby kept a photograph of Russell in uniform, along with a second showing a memorial to George on his father's gravestone at Beechwood Cemetery. Both are held currently by Rideau Branch.

Russell had enlisted early, on 30 October 1914, surviving almost the entire duration of the hostilities before being killed in action in the summer of 1918, his connection with the Rideau area to be remembered for her remaining years by Ruby Meredith and perhaps others but now no longer comprehended by us.

The unknown soldier today is not only the one who lies buried in France without a memorial naming him but also the one who, surviving the war or not, was captured in uniform in a photograph without his name written on the back.



Trooper George R. Russell, CAVC, in France, [1915?] – Rideau Branch, MGR 182 Ruby Meredith Vaughan fonds.



Unknown soldier with dog, 1918 – Rideau Branch,

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