



# The Rideau Township Historical Society

*Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township*

## October 2011 Newsletter

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

### **Next Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday October 19  
**Time:** 6:30 pm - please note the early start  
**Place:** Knox Presbyterian Church  
5533 Dickinson Street  
Manotick, Ontario

### **This Month**

1. The September Meeting
2. From the Pen of the President
3. The Strategic Planning Meeting
4. The Dickinson House
5. News from the Rideau Archives
6. Coming Events

### ***The Strategic Planning Meeting:***

Members are reminded that the October 19 meeting is a strategic planning meeting and will not include a speaker. The results of the survey are in and a report on the results will be given by Warren Wilson at the meeting. The response to the survey was excellent and we wish to compliment the membership on their support in this planning initiative.

**See the RTHS web site for a link to the survey report.**

At the meeting members will have the opportunity to dialogue with other members on the results of the survey and then to accept, clarify or alter the results.

In any case this planning meeting will set directions and priorities for the RTHS for some years to come, so we need your continued ideas and support.

The agenda for the meeting and the strategic plan are included in this newsletter. We would ask that in preparation for the meeting you review both. This will help us get a good start on our work that night.

We thank you in advance for your contribution.

### ***Bring a friend***

### ***From the Pen of the President***

Elizabeth Stevens Stuart, one of the original members of the RTHS, passed away in September. She was a teacher, heritage activist, author, mentor and a supporter of good government.

Elizabeth was born at Maplehurst Farm in Dalmany, Osgoode Township on July 7, 1907. She attended school in Dalmany, Kenmore and Lisgar Collegiate, and began preparation for a career in teaching by taking physical education at Queens University summer school. She entered the Ottawa Normal College in 1925, and graduated from Queens with an honours degree in English and History in 1932. She returned to Kingston to teach war veterans in 1945 and 1946. In 1947 she completed her actuarial exams and received a Masters Degree in Mathematics from Queens.

During the war years she worked for Canadian Intelligence and was employed at the National Research Council from 1949-1952. However, she was primarily a school teacher and taught at Lyndhurst, Tweed, South Carleton, Osgoode High and North Dundas High Schools.

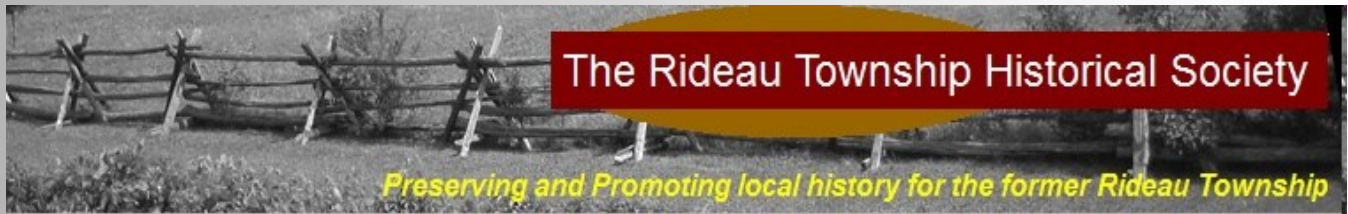
### ***Light refreshments***

Elizabeth's interest in history led her to becoming a local history researcher and a well known genealogist. While she initially focused on the Stuart and Stevens families, being a relative of Roger Stevens, she branched out to become an authority on Osgoode pioneer families and the history of Osgoode Township. When the schools began teaching computer skills to the students, Elizabeth enrolled and acquired a computer as a tool to further her genealogical research.

In the early 1970s she encouraged the formation of the Osgoode Township Historical Society and the creation of the Osgoode Museum in Vernon in 1978, as well as the Osgoode Male Choir.

These many interests were acknowledged by being the recipient of the Order of Osgoode, the Ontario Heritage Foundation Recognition Certificate, and the Ontario Bicentennial Medal for outstanding service.

Elizabeth was an icon in the greater community and a mentor to many. She was the speaker at the second meeting of RTHS in November 1974 sharing her research on her Stevens family. She was a warm, thoughtful, energetic individual who touched many lives and left an enormous heritage and community legacy.



**Rideau Township Historical Society – Strategic Planning Meeting - Agenda**  
**October 19, 2011 – 6:30 PM Start - Knox Presbyterian Church - Manotick**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To shape a 2012 – 2017 strategic plan for RTHS by:
  - Reviewing the results of the input gathered through the member survey.
  - Reviewing and providing feedback on a draft strategic plan that was developed by the Executive Committee based on the survey results.
2. Identifying/confirming the next steps – path forward in this process based on the progress we make

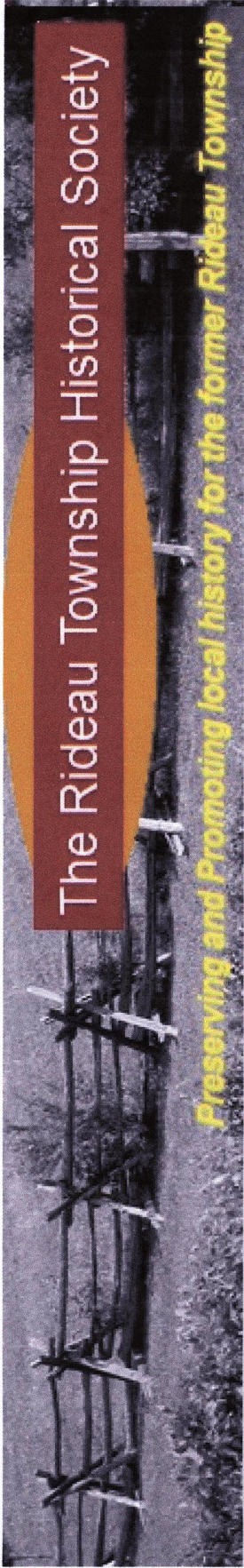
**PREPARATION**

Please review the survey results available at [www.rideautownshiphistory.org](http://www.rideautownshiphistory.org) and the draft strategic plan (attached).

**ROADMAP**

---

	<b>A. Getting Started</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>06:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ <b>Arrival and light meal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandwiches, dessert, coffee</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>07:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ Welcome / Opening Remarks <span style="float: right;"><i>Bill Tupper</i></span></li> <li>  Agenda Review <span style="float: right;"><i>Facilitator</i></span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for the evening</li> <li>• How we will work together</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<hr/>		
	<b>B. Focus on RTHS Direction</b>	
<hr/>		
<b>07:15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ Review of the Survey Results <span style="float: right;"><i>Will Pearl</i></span></li> <li>‘ Discussion #1 <span style="float: right;"><i>Facilitator</i></span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are our reactions?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surprises?</li> <li>• Key messages?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>07:45</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ Discussion #2 – With the survey in view.... <span style="float: right;"><i>Facilitator</i></span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we like about the draft strategic plan that has been developed?</li> <li>• What are our suggestions for improvement?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding elements – vision, mission, values</li> <li>• Key Result Areas &amp; Strategic objectives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is there anything redundant? Is there anything missing?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>08:45</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ Next Steps <span style="float: right;"><i>Facilitator</i></span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for finalizing the strategy?</li> </ul> </li> <li>‘ Closing Remarks <span style="float: right;"><i>Bill Tupper</i></span></li> </ul>	
<b>09:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘ <b>Adjourn</b></li> </ul>	



**MISSION**

The mission of the Rideau Township Historical Society (RTHS) is to stimulate interest in the history of the people, communities, institutions and industries within the boundaries of the former Township of Rideau, as well as historical subjects in general.

**VISION**

RTHS is recognized as a well-established Ontario heritage society with an active membership that, working in cooperation with others, provides high quality historical programming and interpretation, researches and publishes authoritative works of local history, and creates heritage destinations that engage the public and enhance knowledge and understanding of historical matters.

**VALUES**

- Importance of telling the story of historical development within the former Rideau Township and elsewhere.
- Responsibility to engage local residents and the public.
- Importance of partnerships with like-minded organisations, to maximize effort and use of resources.
- Importance of marking and preserving historic sites.

## KEY RESULTS AREAS – (Where we focus efforts) & Related Strategic Objectives (What we need to do)

### 1. Excellent Programming

- 1.1 To seek out high quality speakers on a broad range of topics.
- 1.2 To increase the number of excursions.
- 1.3 To continue publishing a range of authoritative works of local history, including smaller booklets.
- 1.4 To minimize business elements of regular RTHS meetings, e.g. by publishing rather than reading minutes.

### 2. Effective Promotion & Communication

- 2.1 To increase regular promotion, advertising and reporting of RTHS activities in local newspapers; use of public notices; and broader distribution of newsletters.
- 2.2 To establish a committee to work with the Communications Director, including members from outside the RTHS Executive.
- 2.3 To improve joint communications with other heritage organizations.
- 2.4 To have more RTHS booths at events such as fairs, conferences and community celebrations.

### 3. Attraction of Adequate Funding

- 3.1 To establish a committee responsible for grant applications and fundraising, the Chair of which will be a member of the RTHS Executive.
- 3.2 To recruit an individual with expertise in grant applications.
- 3.3 To hold fundraising events.
- 3.4 To charge an entrance fee for certain key RTHS-sponsored public events.

### 4. Heritage Destinations

- 4.1 To assume management and restoration of Dickinson House and operate a living museum therein.
- 4.2 To explore the need for a second museum in North Gower, with a special focus on fire-fighting artefacts.

### 5. Increased Membership

- 5.1 To recruit new members, with a particular focus on young people.
- 5.2 To use social media and communications technology to connect with members.
- 5.3 To sponsor youth heritage projects.
- 5.4 To invest in youth through history scholarships and bursaries.

## *The Dickinson House*

The Thanksgiving weekend was very beautiful, offering everything an Indian summer should do. The Dickinson House, with its new coat of paint, shone in all its glory, for this, the Manotick Harvest Festival.

The Festival was well attended and resulted in a very good weekend at the Dickinson House and the Mill. At the Dickinson House the RTHS hosted 471 visitors over the three days, making it quite an enjoyable and interesting time for the volunteers. In the course of such a weekend we meet a lot of interesting people and the learning goes both ways.



For example, this past weekend we had visitors from Scotland, Russia, Hungary, Edmonton, Calgary, and

some others. The ones from farther away usually come with relatives or friends they are visiting or they are visiting Ottawa and seeing the sights. These people share stories of their history and experiences and are sincerely interested in the stories we tell about ours.

The third floor of the house has been a good addition to the tour this year. People are really impressed with the space itself as well as the artefacts and we receive many complements on it.



On another note, one of the volunteers who demonstrated spinning wheels at that craft weekend has returned and is doing some research on the Victoria spinning wheel that was built by Stephen Martin of Kars. The design is apparently of some further interest.

## *Coming Events:*

### *Goulbourn Township Historical Society Program, October 15*

Just a reminder that the next Goulbourn Township Historical Society Program is October 15. This meeting will take place at the Stittsville Library with guest speaker, Roger Thomas, an active member of the Huntley Township Historical Society.

Roger will speak on Life in Ireland before immigration in the early 1800s. "The talk will concentrate on the life of the farmer and farm labourer who eventually immigrated to Canada, Australia and the United States as well as oth-

er places. The talk is based on his extensive readings as well as trips to the UK which included visits to many Folk Museums and historic sites and will be profusely illustrated. The talk should be of interest to those interested in how their ancestors lived in Ireland before they immigrated to Canada."

This talk may also provide you with explanations as to when your ancestors immigrated.

As usual, the presentation starts at 1:30 and as usual attendance, refreshments and parking are free.

Bring a friend

## *Watson's Mill*

Genealogy Workshop: Oct. 22nd;

Paranormal Investigation: Oct. 29th;

Christmas Market: Nov. 19th-Dec. 4th.

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

Web Site: [watsonsmill.com](http://watsonsmill.com)

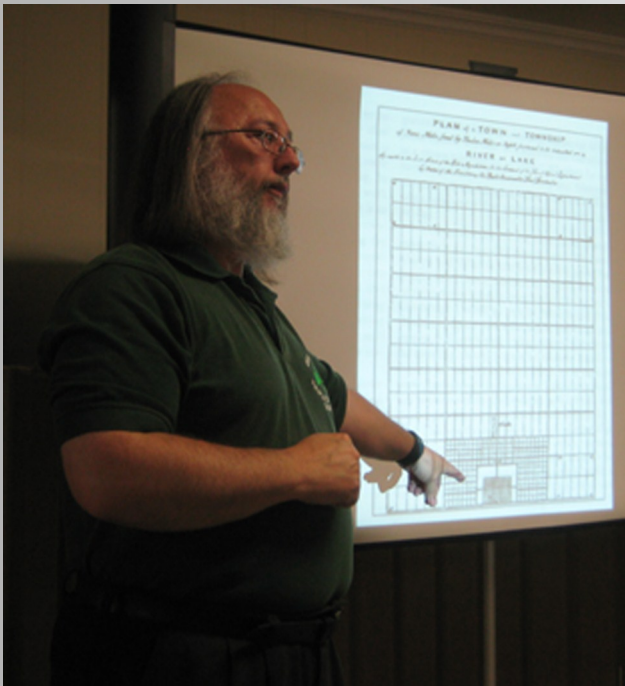
# *The September Meeting*

## *Presentation by Dr. David Shanahan*

*Article by Lucy Martin*

September's speaker was historian Dr. David Shanahan, a resident of Oxford Mills and the current president of the North Grenville Historical Society. Shanahan became curious about the establishment of Oxford and Marlborough townships. After much research, he concluded the township patterns then in place were altered to satisfy the demands of a group of gentlemen. He characterized his talk as more of a report than a finished summary, since his investigation continues and interpretations do vary.

An aside: Shanahan's professional interest focuses on First Nations land issues in these areas, particularly the tangled history of territory acquired by treaty, lands that were never officially transferred, and how (only too often) land deals were made by parties with no right to sell it in the first place.



*David Shanahan showing a standard survey grid for a new township along a river.*

After the American Revolution, Canada's colonial administrators sought to resettle war refugees and to develop modern-day southern Ontario. Loyalists and retired British militia needed new homes and future prospects. Initial layers, or rows, of townships, were set up along the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers.

Early land grants favoured officers and regular army personnel over civilian Loyalist militiamen, who had fought for

the crown, yet lost all their holdings in the former American Colonies. When exiled militiamen protested that they were not being properly compensated for their service and actual losses, it was decided in 1788 to open up new 'rows' of townships to provide for more land grants.

Shanahan reminded modern listeners that we can hardly appreciate what this area was like as original, old-growth forest and brush, or the difficulty of over-land travel. Trees then could easily be eight to twelve feet in diameter, up to 150 feet tall, with branches so low and thick that horse-men would be forced to dismount and walk. To illustrate: when the line for the Rideau Canal was being surveyed, a party set out from present-day Parliament Hill to Dow's Swamp – now Dow's Lake – a journey that required three days!

But back to the clamour for land. Oxford and Marlborough were the first 'second row' townships to be established. The significance of rivers there made Oxford and Marlborough very attractive. What some now call Kemptonville Creek was then called the South Branch of the Rideau. At that time, the South Branch's size and water flow seemed of equal size and importance to the Rideau for transportation and water power.

The surveyors tasked with mapping Oxford and Marlborough in 1791 were Jesse Pennoyer and Theodore DePencier. Imagine the difficulty of establishing all those straight lines through so much wilderness, under dreadful physical hardship. Somehow, though, they succeeded. (A translated copy of DePencier's journal can be found at the Ottawa Archives; Rideau Branch which details the project, including things like bear attacks.)

Shanahan explained that two main grid models had been designed at that point for establishing new townships. If along a river, the township would be a rectangle 12 miles deep and 9 miles wide, with a mid-spot along the river designated as for the main village. For land without a navigable river, the township design called for plopping the town centre in the middle of the rectangle. As was common practice in Upper Canada at that time, 1/7th of the lots would be held as crown land, to fund the townships and another 1/7th would be held as clergy reserve for the Anglican Church, the only church authorized in Upper Canada to perform official marriages.

Shanahan's research suggests that the Land Board charged with establishing the plans for Oxford and Marlborough townships was somehow comprised of the very men applying for those grants.

This Land Board issued new surveying instructions and changes to the standard grid pattern. Customization most likely intended to maximize the lay of the land and the goals of these men with influence. After all, if it was to be theirs, why not lay it out as they wished?

Land awards could make one's fortune. But they were not a sure thing. To retain title, owners (or actual settlers) had to ensure 10 acres of land was cleared and a habitable dwelling built on each allotment within 3 years. Those unable to fulfill those conditions would lose the land (along with their efforts to date) to another settler or new buyer.

Shanahan identified some 18 men as being the main movers and shakers in birthing Oxford Township. Although they did not retain the degree of ownership first hoped for, they remained influential and had an impact on the establishment and development of the area.

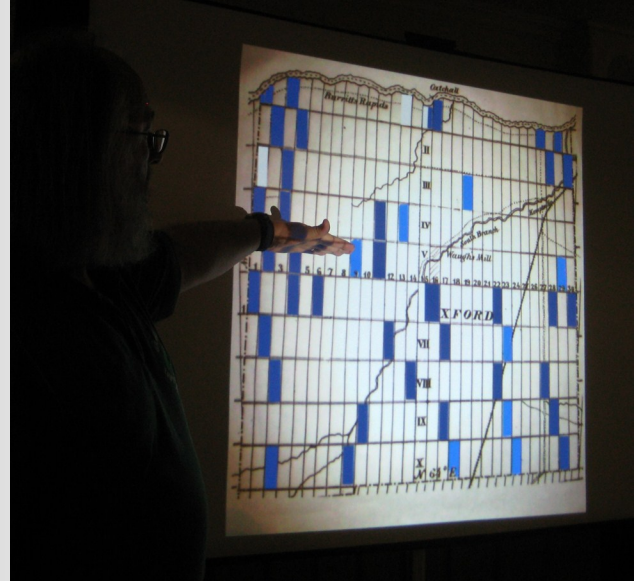
Shanahan's talk was specifically focused on how just two townships were located and developed. After he spoke, I asked for some broader context.

"The system that they were using, that didn't last long." Shanahan said. "By 1796 the government realized that this was really being abused, and they put a stop to it."

Shanahan says the settlement of Oxford and Marlborough is part of a broad pattern, that most definitely influenced Canada's development.

"The fact is that these people had already received very large chunks of land - in a number of different townships. And that gave them a very strong political base. Which they continued to operate from, for generations."

Shanahan said these sorts of entanglements exemplify what historians call the family compact. "This is the origin of the elite aristocratic, you know, ruling group of Upper



*This picture shows the Oxford grid as it was finally implemented*

Canada, up until the 1840's. It gave them a base. Land was the real base for every kind of wealth and influence."

From the heroic endeavours of early surveyors - to back room wheeling and dealing - we thank Dr. Shanahan for revealing remnants of hardship, power and social evolution in the quiet country roads we still drive today.

## ***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 Rideau Township Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives was again one of the destinations along the Rideau Discovery Tour "held" on September 10th and 11th. A few dozen visitors dropped by to explore the Archives' treasures and view the featured exhibits on "Home Children in Rideau" and "Post Offices of Rideau Township". There are presently three branches of the Post Office in the former Township of Rideau but did you know that there was once as many as fourteen in North Gower and Marlborough?

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