



The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

September 2010 Newsletter

Newsletter Editors: Coral Lindsay and Ron Wilson (rideauarchives@ottawa.ca)

Date: Wednesday, September 15, 2010
Time: 7:30 pm
Place: Rideau Archives,
6581 Fourth Line Road (Main Street),
North Gower, Ont

Speaker *Teresa Charland*
Subject: *Harry F. McLean*

Teresa Charland spent 10 years researching the remarkable life of Harry McLean and writing the book *Building An Empire - "Big Pants", Harry F. McLean and His Sons of Martha*. It is a remarkable story. Harry McLean being one of the larger than life figures involved in Canadian railroading and nation building.

Her book provides an excellent view of the life and times of Harry, this not-well-known construction magnate and long time Merrickville resident who operated a number of major railway and hydroelectric projects but was not averse to tossing cash out of hotel windows.

The following web site by Colin Churcher provides information on one of Harry MacLean's operations in Eastern Ontario. (Colin Churcher spoke to the RTHS on railroads in Ottawa in March 2007.)

http://www.railways.incanada.net/Articles/Article2009_12.html

Teresa lives near Merrickville with husband Brent and daughters, Sabina and Emily.

150th Anniversary of the Mill

Watson's Mill celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2010.

Isabelle Geoffrion and the Watson's Mill Team have announced a year-long celebration to commemorate this anniversary. Stay tuned to their e-news at www.watsonsmill.com and celebrate with them throughout the year.

Events for September-October

September 17 - Scotch Tasting Event

September 24 - Fashion Show

October 9 - Haunted House Festival

October 30 - Paranormal Investigation

Bring a friend

Light refreshments

This Month

1. The June Meeting
2. The President's Pen
3. Four Corner's Program
4. Watson's Mill 150th
5. The Dickinson House
6. News from the Rideau Archives
- 7.

The President's Pen

Last January, shortly after being privileged to assume the role of President, I drafted a brief overview of the Historical Society but never pressed the send button. Nine months later the draft resurfaced. It reads in part:

In the mid-seventies, I had the opportunity to play a minor role in starting the heritage movement in Rideau Township. One of the great success stories of that endeavour is having in our community a thriving historical society whose membership is creative, energetic, productive, loyal, and respectful of one another. It's core responsibilities focus on education (speakers, field trips, etc.), research, publications, oral history,

preservation of artifacts, and the list goes on. Mixed with this is a social-fellowship component that is not well defined, but is important and valuable.

During the last two years, Dickinson House in Manotick has surfaced as an exciting opportunity for the Society to expand its educational role with a different and much expanded audience. Dickinson House is a valuable work in progress as it tells the story of the social and economic history of Manotick, and the contributions of the Dickinson, Spratt and Watson families. I envision Dickinson House playing a significant role with Watson's Mill and others in developing Dickinson Square into a major heritage destination.

The June 2010 Meeting

*Glenn Brooks on the Mill Quarter Board;
Brian Earl and Ron Wilson on Railroads*

Article by Lucy Martin

The June 16th meeting took place at Knox Presbyterian Church in Manotick, with 32 members and guests in attendance.

After regular business and reports, the first speaker was City Councillor Glenn Brooks, representing Ward 21 Rideau-Goulbourn. (Disclaimer: due to our summer hiatus, the June meeting's activities are being recounted in September, during the election campaigns. No preference or endorsement is intended by reporting on the incumbent councillor's activities.)

Brooks pledged financial support for Coral Lindsay's forth-



Guest Speakers Brian Earl, Ron Wilson and Councillor Glenn Brooks

coming Kars on the Rideau, RTHS's main publication for 2010. (Editor's note: \$1000 was later contributed toward that project from the councillor's discretionary funds.)

Brooks mentioned that his weekly newsletter reaches roughly 3200 email subscribers and is printed in local papers. Noting the society's many interests and activities, Brooks says he welcomes relevant submissions and announcements for inclusion in this outreach effort.

Brooks also chairs the recently-formed Mill Quarter Board which was established to manage city-acquired buildings in and around Dickinson Square, a subject of direct interest to RTHS through its volunteer operation of Dickinson House for the past three years.

Brooks recounted that the city's legal advisors have advised that Mill Quarter Board business must be conducted in camera (as a closed and private session). The public may provide input, and receive feedback, via those who serve on that board, including Brooks and other local rep-

resentatives Margot Belanger (chair, DSHMI) and Gerry Reasbeck (V.P., Watson's Mill).

Ron Wilson and Brian Earl gave presentations on real and model railroads.

Ron Wilson shared slides and impressions from his visit to the rail museum at Steamtown USA, in Scranton Pennsylvania. According to Wikipedia, the U.S. Congress es-



Left to right, Marg Rogers, Ann Scott, Margot Belanger, and Brian Earl examine model railroad exhibits.

established that National Historic Site in 1986 "to interpret the story of main line steam railroading between 1850 and 1950". It is run by the National Parks Service, a branch of the Department of the Interior.

Wilson was amused by staffers' "Smokey the bear" hats and impressed at the scope of the restorations and how engines and rolling stock were restored with the strictest attention to historical accuracy with respect to original ownership, company logos, and builder's plates.. There were 5 or 6 very large steam locomotives with boilers and fireboxes being rebuilt.

Fellow presenter Brian Earl began by donning his denim jacket encrusted with embroidered patches from various model railroad events. Earl spoke of his own affection for model railroads and presented the claim that they represent the 'world's greatest hobby'. (Proponents of other fine hobbies may disagree and a fair number of women in attendance shook their heads and smiled in bemusement!).

RTHS Supports the 4corner Youth Program

Again this year the Rideau Township Historical Society received a grant of \$3,000 from the City of Ottawa for youth theatre. The grant was used by the Education and Interpretation Committee of Watson's Mill to support a '4 Corners Youth Interpretative Theatre Project'. The program supports the concept of "turning on and turning in" youth in arts, theatre and heritage.

The theatre performance was written and performed by five students employed at Watson's Mill during the summer months. They adapted the story of "Alice in Wonderland" and used it as the vehicle to guide the audience through an historical experience that addressed social issues that permeates society today as well as in the 1800s. The plot portrayed the bazaar experience of being a transplanted person from the 1800s into 2010 and examined the profound differences of life today compared with that of Victorian Upper Canada.

The lead character was Bessie Dickinson daughter of Moss Kent Dickinson, owner of the Mill and founder of Manotick. The Mill, Dickinson House and the Square was the backdrop for the production. Bessie, from the 1870s would recognize familiar buildings and machinery but was totally unfamiliar with automobiles, electric lights and cell phones. This setting became her 'Wonderland'.

The play "Bessie In Wonderland" was directed by Cam Truman and presented several times during the summer and by all reports was very well received. The caste included Wynter Truman, Colin Langlois, Emily Ramsdale, Stuart Johnston Edwards and Alex Smaridge.

RTHS was pleased to have sponsored this program with WMMI.

Kars on the Rideau



The major publishing project the RTHS for 2010 has been the second edition of *Kars on the Rideau*. This book was first published in 1972 by the KARS Women's Institute, which had just won a national prize for their excellent work on the Tweedsmuir History of the area. *Kars on the Rideau* sold very well over the years and as a result has been out of print for a number of years. In reviewing our publishing requirements the RTHS decided that *Kars on the Rideau* contained too much valuable historical information that was not available elsewhere to be allowed to disappear from the scene.

New material for the book has come from a number of sources that were not available in 1972. For example material written by James Smythe Jamieson for his children has been extensively quoted. This material has added a social outlook and views of the times from someone who

lived them that gives one insights into the feelings of the people about their lives on a day to day basis. It is deeply interesting stuff.

To properly document local history and have it fully appreciated, it must be written at the local level by those with local ties and families to draw from. Coral Lindsay, the author, certainly passes this test. Combined with her life-time interest in local history this background has produced a winner.

Features of the Book

- A geological and cultural background of the area from the ice age and Champlain Sea of 10,000 to 12,000 years ago to the present.
- The 2006 archaeological find just north of Kars village.
- The early settlers and the United Empire Loyalist movement.
- The pioneer families and the immigrants.
- The lumber era and clearing the land.
- The Rideau Canal and early commercial development.
- Development of local administration, roads, and rules..
- The schools.
- The Steamboat era.
- Developing the farms and the evolution to 2010.

In the course of producing the second edition full advantage has been taken of the technology to not only provide additional written material but also to include as many pictures, old and new, as was practically possible. As a result the book now contains more than 300 pictures, maps, and diagrams to augment the text.

The technology has also permitted the development of a 300 plus name index for the genealogists.

This book will provide an excellent read for those from the area or those who have moved here as well as for anyone with an interest in the history of Canada and how it came into being.

The Dickinson House, Summer of 2010

This summer the RTHS has once again provided volunteer staff to conduct tours of the Dickinson House on weekends and holidays. We have also, thanks primarily to the help from Coral Lindsay and Mark Jodoin, provided the furnishing and displays. We have further provided the



Home made ice cream is being served on the lawn of the Dickinson House on the 150th anniversary of the opening of Watson's Mill, at the time of Dickinson's Mill.

spring cleaning, weekly cleaning, curatorial and inventory work.

This year, to enhance the visitor experience, we have added displays and exhibits on the third floor and furnished the two rooms on the second floor which had been devoted to last year's photo exhibits.

The third floor "attic" now features several domestic spinning wheels and wool reels or winders. There are a number of weaving looms, a pair of wool carders and a variety of locally-woven wool blankets. People have expressed a keen interest in this display.

The statistics for the year to date are as follows:

Open May 1 to August 31

Visitors 2900

Volunteers 28 persons

Volunteer days donated--156 (not including the cleaning and maintenance).

Once again the volunteers are gratified by the attendance we have been getting.

News from the Rideau Branch, Ottawa Archives

Hours: *The 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 Archives will be open Saturday, September 11 and Sunday, September 12 from 10 am to 5 pm for the **North Gower Discovery Tour**.
- There will be **two new exhibits this fall**. The first will be on the Post Offices of Rideau Township and the second on the 20th anniversary of the Rideau Township Archives
- The Rideau Township Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives was fortunate to have **Sarah Bennett** back for another summer. She was given the task of auditing the contents of 100 boxes of materials held in the Archives vault. She also catalogued the documents in the Archives database to improve the intellectual and physical control over the documents. As an added benefit, Sarah provided an analysis of the conservation status of the documents and improved administrative control over the Archives holdings. She hopes to be back again as either a volunteer or an employee. Thank you Sarah.
- North Gower's own **Sarah Davies** was also back volunteering as part of her high school curriculum. Sarah carried on with various tasks, including compiling a list of the names of veterans to be inscribed on the new cenotaph at Kars. Her interest in local heritage is growing and we encourage her to follow her inclination. Thank you Sarah.

Why not join the RTHS?

- attend the meetings and enjoy the presentations
- meet other people interested in local history
- find fascinating projects to volunteer for
- get assistance and advice with genealogical and historical research
- learn more about local history

Meetings are held monthly (except for July and August) at various locations in the former Rideau Township including Manotick, Kars, North Gower and Carsonby. We also do excursions to historical points of interest.

Yearly membership costs are \$10 for a single & \$15 for a family.

Contact the [Membership Director](#)

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