



The Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township

September 2011 Newsletter

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

Next Meeting.

Date: Wednesday, September 21, 2011
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: St. Andrews Presbyterian Church
6810 Rideau Valley Drive South,
Kars, Ontario

This Month

1. The June Excursion
2. From the Pen of the President (an RTHS strategy for the future)
3. The Dickinson House
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7. Bessie Dickinson
8. Craft Weekends at the Dickinson House

Topic: *The Gentlemens' Townships:
The Surveys of Oxford and
Marlborough, 1791*

Speaker: *Dr. David Shanahan*

The main theme of the talk is the manner in which the normal procedures for surveying townships were changed in the cases of Oxford and Marlborough in order to satisfy the demands of a group of "Gentlemen". Who were they, and what was their purpose? Why were these two Townships laid out where they are?

Dr. Shanahan arrived in Canada from his native Ireland in 1982 to work on a Masters in History at Lakehead University. He remained to complete a PhD at Carleton in 1987, and never went home again. He has continued to publish and present papers on his academic area of interest, the Irish in Canada in the nineteenth century, but has been working professionally in the field of First Nations history since 1989.

Bring a friend

Light refreshments

From the Pen of the President

The executive of the Rideau Township Historical Society (RTHS) decided in July 2011, to develop a Strategic Plan for the Society. The objective of this planning process is to help determine the future direction of the Society. The existing RTHS Constitution identifies a number of objectives which the Society has sought to achieve since it was founded in 1974. The strategic planning process will examine whether those objectives still reflect the overall mission of the Society, or whether some redirection of the Society's activities over the next ten years would be beneficial.

The key element in the strategic planning process is to develop a dialogue with the membership. This will take place through two initiatives, one of which is the distribution a questionnaire to the members, and the other having a direct discussion with the membership at a meeting exclusively devoted to planning for the future to be held on October 19, 2011.

The questionnaire will be distributed to the members at the RTHS meeting on September 21. It will also be available on the RTHS web site and can be completed

electronically at www.rideautownshiphistory.org and click on survey. I encourage you to complete the questionnaire, which provides you with the opportunity to share your thoughts on the Society's current activities and to offer advice on the objectives to pursue in the future. Your input will be very important. Your response along with those of other survey participants will be tabulated and summarized, and a report will be provided at the October 19 strategic planning meeting. You will have the opportunity to dialogue with other members on the planning results at this meeting and accept, clarify or alter the results.

We have been fortunate to obtain the volunteer services of Warren Wilson, a local resident and experienced strategic planner to assist us with this planning process. Warren has advised us on the questionnaire, will analyse the results, and will be our facilitator at the October 19 Meeting.

This planning initiative is very important for RTHS as it will chart the Society's future role in the community. Your help in shaping the future of RTHS is most important. I thank you in advance for your contribution.

The Dickinson House Committee, a Busy Summer

The Dickinson House Committee has had a busy spring and summer. There were two principal tasks. The first was to plan and implement the activities at the house for the summer. In addition to conducting tours of the house as in previous years, we ran a program to recruit and train volunteers and put on a heritage craft weekend each month during the summer. The recruiting program was less successful than had been hoped, but the training part of that task bore fruit in that the volunteers were better informed and we had a good number of compliments in the vein of “you people sure know your history”.



The second task for the Committee was to prepare a business plan for operating the house in the future. This was done at the request of the City to aid them in their deliberations on the future of Dickinson Square. This was not a

simple task. The “plan” that resulted consists of a building plan and a financial plan. . The building plan is a document that describes the alterations needed to return the house to an earlier state more in line with when the Dickinsons lived there. Elements of the building plan include such things as opening up the arch between the present parlour and dining rooms, and moving the wall to recreate the “general store” room on the south-east corner of the house.

The financial plan consists of a spreadsheet that lays out the cost of operating the house in the future and the revenues that might be expected. It lays out four options all requiring grant money to implement. This document is an annex to the building plan and together they represent the “business plan” that we were asked to prepare.

The Executive has reviewed this business plan at a meeting on September 12 and approved it in principle. The membership will be briefed in general terms at the upcoming meeting. The executive will then study the plan in more detail and prepare recommendations for the membership on if and how the RTHS might participate. These recommendations will be presented at a later meeting.

The number of visitors this year is tracking last years numbers, except for the first day of Dickinson’s Days, when we were down. The craft weekends have been especially busy and should be repeated next year.

All in all it looks like another successful year for this RTHS project.

Coming Events:

September 17-18: Heritage spinning & weaving demonstrations at the Dickinson House, 1127 Mill Street across from the Mill. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.

Sept. 16-18: The RTHS will have a book table at the Marketplace of the upcoming conference of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

(BIFHSGO). Contact Susan McKellar @ (613) 489-3961 to volunteer to sell books if you wish to help out.

September 16: A walking group from Ottawa has asked for a tour of the Dickinson House on September 16. They will arrive at 10:00 a.m. and plan to proceed about 11:00 to continue walking around Manotick.

Coming Events at Watson’s Mill

Milling Demonstrations: Sept. 18th & 25th;

Whisky Tasting: Sept. 23rd;

NIN Collection Boutique Fashion Show: Sept. 30th;

Haunted Harvest Festival: Oct. 8th;

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

The June Excursion

Each June, society members are offered a field trip in place of an evening talk. This time we toured two main destinations, made two small side stops and also enjoyed a very pleasant lunch.

The trip this year was to Fulford Place in Brockville and the Heritage Place Museum in Lyn, Ontario.



The weather gods were kind and June 18th was a lovely almost-summer day. About 25 rode the bus, ably chauffeured by North Gower resident Brenda Rybiak. Including those who arrived independently, our group numbered approximately 30 on arriving at Fulford Place in Brockville.

Many are already familiar with Fulford Place. Overlooking the sparkling St. Lawrence, this landmark was designed by American architect Albert W. Fuller. After two years of construction it was completed in 1901. The four-story house originally boasted 35 rooms with 20,000 interior square feet on 15 acres. At its peak, the property also included a boathouse and a spacious log cabin on grounds designed by landscape architect Frederick Olmsted. Fulford Place Museum now consists of 3 (still lovely!) acres.

George Fulford Sr. made his fortune selling “Pink Pills for Pale People” (iron pills, basically) along with other medicines and products. His business concerns reportedly spanned 90 countries and 60 cities. We were told his wife (née Mary Wilder White) was primarily interested in people and preferred the log cabin to the mansion after her husband's death. (Judging by photos, the 'log cabin' was also very nice!) Both were used in summer only. Fulford Place enabled the family to welcome important figures in business, politics and society. Edward VII, the Duke of Kent and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin all dined there.

Each year Fulford Place picks a different topic for more detailed displays. This time the focus was on the lives and society weddings of George and Mary's two daughters. Dorothy (1881–1949) married Arthur C. Hardy (son of former Ontario Premier Arthur S. Hardy) in a 1901 ceremony at Fulford Place. Her younger sister Martha

–1910) died in childbirth. George and Mary's only son, George II, was born in 1902 when his mother was 46.

George Sr. died in 1905 at age 53 from injuries suffered in an automobile accident in Massachusetts - said to be one of the earliest such fatalities in North America. His widow never remarried. Fulford Place remained in the family until George Fulford II died in 1987 and George Fulford III bequeathed it to the Ontario Heritage Trust. After extensive renovations, the house opened as a public museum in 1993.

Long-time volunteer Jean Freemantle proved an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide for our group's tour. The museum was unusually successful in retaining, recovering and restoring the house's original art and furniture. To illustrate, at Dickinson House only one item is known to have been in use there during the Dickinson family's time, a chair once sat in by Sir John A. Macdonald. At Fulford Place everything on display is original, with the sole exception of a wall telephone, which was added slightly later.

Indoor photography is not permitted so one must go in person to see the wonderful examples of Edwardian grandeur and craftsmanship.

While older houses require a great deal of work and expense this slice-in-time experience offers beauty and insight from upper-crust life in the Thousand Isles in the early 1900's.

On departing Fulford Place, we enjoyed hospitality and good food at the Brockberry Café on King Street, a short



The Heritage Place Museum at Lyn

distance away.

After lunch, it was back on the bus and onward to the village of Lyn, 10 km west of Brockville. On the way, we made two brief stops. The first was the home grounds of Braeburn Farms. RTHS President Bill Tupper explained

how it grew to become one of Canada's leading egg producers. The second was a lovely veteran's memorial, largely built by Orval Ladd, our final host.

The afternoon's main event was a tour of Heritage Place Museum, usually open Sunday afternoons from 1-4, Easter through Thanksgiving. We thank the four volunteers who came in just to show us around on a Saturday.

Orval and Pat Ladd can probably be credited with establishing Heritage Place in their home town of Lyn. They spoke at length explaining the museum in general and the many unique items found within. One might not know it today, but at its height Lyn was a major site of water-powered industry. Displays and photos detailed the many things once refined or manufactured there, including: flour, lumber, cheese, leather, harnesses, barrels and pitchers.

A blacksmith shop to the rear of the main building contains a wonderful array of old tools and devices seldom used today. Ladd said he could fill even more space, as people continue to bring him items worthy of preservation and display. The Ladds and their fellow volunteers exemplify how much individuals can contribute to causes and communities.

The return trip was pleasantly uneventful and only lacked napping cots to approach perfection.

Fulford Place and Heritage Place Museum are both worth repeat visits, as no single tour could cover all they contain and represent.

We thank all our gracious hosts and RTHS Program Director Susan McKellar who made all the arrangements. Suggestions for future field trips are always welcome. We hope you'll join us next June!



A model of the factories and other building in Lyn during the manufacturing era.

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).

This past summer, visitors to the Rideau Township Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives were met by Julie St-Pierre, our 2011 summer student. A graduate of Mount Allison University (New Brunswick), Julie brought a wealth of experience from her previous work as a student assistant at this university's archives. She carried on with the cataloguing of documents into the Archives database to enhance the intellectual and physical control over the documents.

Julie is pursuing her education in the field of archives management at the University of Toronto. We wish her success in her studies and thank her for her diligent work.

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

The Dickinson Monument in Beechwood Cemetery

The Dickinson Monument in Beechwood cemetery marks the resting place of the entire Dickinson family. As we saw during the visit to Beechwood last fall, the monument is in deplorable condition. The inscriptions on the inset plates are almost unreadable and the base has been struck by some heavy piece of machinery which has both damaged the corner and shifted it on its foundation.

In addition the column appears to have been struck by lightning and the top portion has fallen to the ground. Age and acid rain have discoloured the entire monument. Since there are no Dickinson descendants, your Executive is considering restoring the monument as a fitting project for the Society.

During the summer Brian Earl has looked into having the monument repaired, cleaned and restored, and what the costs might be. He has completed his research and has a creditable company to do the work. The costs will be \$4,500 including tax.

Normally the descendants of a family might be expected to maintain the grave site. However in the case of Moss Kent Dickinson none of his children married and there are no descendants to do so.

The executive is therefore recommending that the restoration become an RTHS project funded by a grant if possible or from Society funds.



The Dickinson Monument

The Lemonade Stand

Good News! I have organized a new fund raiser for the Dickinson House.

My friend Marissa and I have been selling old-fashioned lemonade in period costume, weekends on the Dickinson House lawn. To date we have raised \$84.25 for Dickinson House.

Next summer I plan to start earlier in the season and raise as much money as I can for the House.

Please join us next summer for a glass of lemonade and a historical tour of Dickinson House where there is always something new and interesting to see.

Margaret Rose Cameron



Marissa and Margaret at their Lemonade Stand. Thank you very much girls for you contribution to the House and Manotick's history.

Heritage Craft Weekends at the Dickinson House

This summer the Dickinson Committee organized a series of heritage craft weekends at the Dickinson House, on the basis of one per month. The subjects covered were heritage gardening, quilting, domestic skills (butter making, icecream making, laundry (washboards and tubs, crank wringer)), heritage carpentry. This coming weekend (September 17-18) there will be demonstrations of cloth making by spinning and weaving.

These weekends have been a great success. There has been increased visitor numbers for the house and lawn, and the visitors have showed interest to the point where they have gone home and come back with tools of their own, or other people who have known how to use tools that we didn't understand.

It is expected that the craft weekends will be included next year and years following.

Remember this coming weekend the will be spinning and weaving demonstrations.

The Women's Institute Tea, September 8, 2011

A Presentation on Charlotte & Bessie Dickinson by Maureen McPhee

Article by Lucy Martin, Photos by Brian Earl

Maureen McPhee is an officer on the RTHS executive board, as well as a volunteer at the Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives and at the Dickinson House in Manotick. Working at Dickinson House, McPhee realized there was more to learn about the house's original occupants, particularly on the female side.



Maureen presenting her research on Charlotte & Bessie Dickinson at the Dickinson House.

McPhee spent about a year pouring over old minutes from the Manotick branch of the Women's Institute. She concentrated on Charlotte Dickinson (1851 - 1927) and her youngest sister Elizabeth Dickinson – better known as “Bessie” (1861-1933). A middle sister, Lydia (1857-1872) died young of consumption. McPhee summarized her findings before a Women's Institute meeting held at Dickinson House on Sept 8. in a talk entitled: “The Girls and Women of Dickinson House”.

Moss Kent Dickison (1822-1897) his wife Elizabeth Mary Trigge (1822-1861) and their sons George (1848-1930) and William (1853-1933) have their own better-known stories, and were not part of this avenue of inquiry.

M.K. Dickinson was a widower when he and his five children moved into the recently-built Dickinson House in 1870. Charlotte lived there for the rest of her life - as did Bessie, until two years before her death in 1933. Circumstances and activities suggest the sisters were very close.

The Manotick branch of the WI was founded in January of 1909. Bessie joined in June of that year, at age 48. Bessie served in various capacities as a committee member, director and auditor from 1911- 1920's and was an active member until the 1930's.

Charlotte joined in 1916, probably drawn in as part of her interest in supporting the war effort at the time. Charlotte remained active in WI until 1923, when her health began to decline.

From her research, McPhee surmised that Charlotte was a patriotic Canadian who used her considerable domestic skills with charity and compassion in her community and beyond.

Bessie was even more active in WI. She appears to have been warm, compassionate, educated, literate, musical, self-confident, possessed of good domestic skills and was modern enough to acquire newfangled clerical skills as well. (Bessie could type and audit financial statements). Besides playing an important role in her WI branch, Bessie was also active in supporting St. James Anglican Church, where she was a choir leader.

Dickinson House shows up as a part of the record too. Some WI meetings were held there from 1910-1927, most often the Spring annual meeting and the pre-Christmas meetings, where gifts were made. Meeting sizes ranged from a low of 7 (weather suppressed) to as many as 45, with an average of about 30-35 in attendance.

Asked about any research surprises, McPhee said she learned more than expected about Charlotte and Bessie. McPhee felt she got an unexpectedly detailed sense of the community from the minutes, which she called more “fulsome” in style than typical meeting minutes of today. Also, she found the sisters (Bessie in particular) remarkably aware of, and interested in, events beyond their own community. The Sydney coal mines, the role of the navy in



the war, military tactics, the well-being of returning soldiers near and far - topics reflecting broad interests that extended well beyond their immediate family and village.

Following McPhee's talk, RTHS President Bill Tupper spoke in character as Willie Dickinson, describing the tragedy of his lost love (who jilted him and ran off with the best man) and Dickinson House as a focal point in the Manotick community.

WI members then enjoyed a house tour before taking tea - which included nut bread like one served by Bessie & Charlotte - before concluding their meeting.