



## December Meeting Details


Rideau Township Historical Society  
*Presents*

## “A Voice for Christmas”

A dramatic retelling of a classic  
W.O. Mitchell “Jake and the Kid” story


*featuring*

## Christine Erdos & Sean O’Malley




It's the middle of winter 1942, on a cold and clear Saskatchewan prairie. A young boy has only one Christmas wish — to talk to his dad, who is somewhere in Europe with the South Saskatchewaners, who have fought with honour at Deippe and Pourville.

This timeless Saskatchewan tale of family, love, and perseverance will remind us to never take connection for granted.



A prairie girl through and through, Christine enjoys taking on a dramatic role and understanding what makes another character tick. She has missed stage work during the pandemic and can't wait to get back under the lights.




Sean has always enjoyed slipping into someone else's skin for a while, often as someone who works with horses. Both he and Christine are excited to meet with RTHS, even if only on ZOOM.


*And that's not all ~ we invite and encourage RTHS members to bring a story, a song, a poem to share with us for 3-5 minutes. If you'd like to participate in this way please contact Myra at myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com. (we're also happy to help you with any ZOOM-related questions you may have.)*

**Join Us Via ZOOM**  
**December 15th, 7:30 p.m.**

**To register, or for more information visit:**  
[www.rideautwphistory.org](http://www.rideautwphistory.org)



*Preserving and Promoting Local History for the former Rideau Township*



Museum Management Agreement, with members of both organizations looking on.



RTHS is a volunteer organization which has managed Dickinson House since it opened in 2008, welcoming visitors from around the world. Both WMMI and RTHS feel it is time for the entire Dickinson Square to be managed by one organization, which has the support of paid staff. As the owner of artifacts on display in the House, RTHS will still be involved and many RTHS members will continue as volunteers in various capacities.

Watson’s Mill Manotick Inc. has welcomed the dedicated Dickinson House volunteers into WMMI’s soon-to-be-formed Dickinson House Committee. WMMI and RTHS look forward to a long and fruitful relationship in Dickinson Square

Click [HERE](#) for our website registration page.

## RTHS Happenings

### RTHS and Watson’s Mill Sign Management Agreement

As of January 2022, Watson’s Mill Manotick Inc. (WMMI) will assume responsibility for the management and operation of the Dickinson House Museum, subject to consent from the City of Ottawa which owns the building. Pictured are the presidents of WMMI and the Rideau Township Historical Society (RTHS), Ruth Mills and Susan McKellar, signing a Dickinson House

### Dickinson House a Hub of Activity During the Dickinson Square Christmas Market

Dickinson House was one of the sites for the Dickinson Square Christmas Market this year. An average of 450 people per day visited the vendors located in the parlour and upstairs sitting room, as well as the Dickinson House gift shop.

The museum was also decorated for Christmas with the dining room being the highlight. Our thanks to Melanie Hayes and Stephanie who outdid themselves this year in creating a beautiful festive display

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



- Telephone shopping – For those less technically inclined, Maureen has indicated she will take orders by phone. (613-692-8260)

### The Christmas/Winter Notecard Collection



NC-019-Sleigh Ride



NC-020-Christmas in Manotick Village



NC-021-Dickinson House Christmas



NC-022-Winter in Dickinson Square



NC-027-Dickinson House Christmas Tree



NC-028-Dickinson House Christmas Dining Room



NC-029-Dickinson House Christmas Wishes



NC-030-Dickinson House Christmas Lamp

### Handcrafted Gifts Still Available in the Dickinson House Gift Shop

While Dickinson House officially closed for the 2021 season on December 5, RTHS members can still choose from a selection of handcrafted items in the Shop.

Particularly popular in the Gift Shop are our Christmas and Winter themed notecards, and the Snowflake ornaments crafted by Susan McKellar (see examples in the photos above – bottom right.) Notecards come with an envelope, and are blank inside, awaiting your personal message.

Gift Shop items can be purchased several ways:

- Online Shopping – purchases can be made directly online at <https://dickinsonhousemuseum.square.site/>. You can use the “Pickup” option, and Maureen McPhee has indicated she will be available for pre-arranged pickup of items at Dickinson House.
- Email shopping – if you prefer, you can email the details of the items you wish to purchase to Dickinson House at [dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com) and Maureen will organize your purchase and communicate with you to establish a mutually acceptable time for pickup at DH.

### Report on November’s Feature Presentation

#### Alexander Mackenzie’s Journey to the Pacific

Richard Van Loon – November 17, 2021

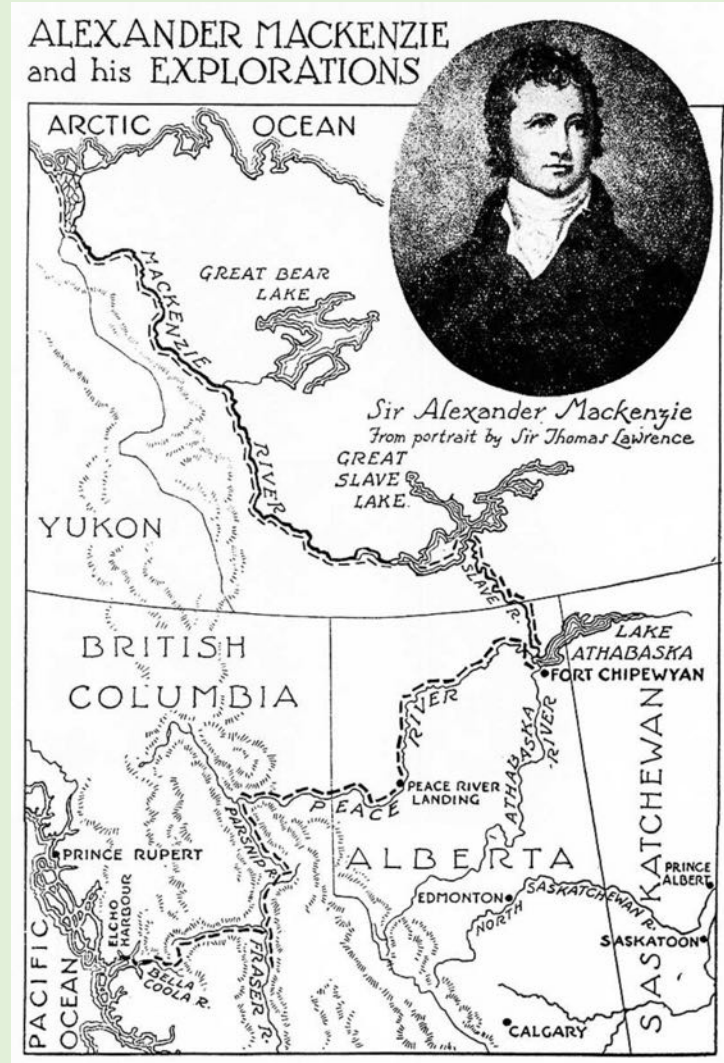
On November 17th we were treated to an extension of Dr. Van Loon’s **Hard Travels** series, this time about the epic journeys of Alexander Mackenzie.

Before launching into the story of Mackenzie’s journeys, Dr. Van Loon provided us with a rich context within which to place the story of the journey.

Firstly, he reminded us that the Athabaska Region, where our story takes place, had been peopled for at least 10,000 years, and that trade routes and territories had

been well established, as well as common language facility. Dr. Van Loon helped us to understand that, without the co-operation of the first nations, the journey of 10 men, a canoe and a dog would likely have been doomed to failure from the first.

Secondly, he let us know that, from his perspective, the motives of the traders from the North West Company (of which Mackenzie was a senior trader) were as follows: money in the form of valuable furs, fame, adventure, and curiosity. For Van Loon, the idea of service to king and country may have been there, but not perhaps top of mind.



Alexander Mackenzie and His Explorations

Jefferys, Charles W. 1945

The Picture Gallery of Canadian History Vol. II, p.40

As he eased into the story of Mackenzie himself, Dr. Van Loon reminded us that the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 may have marked a dividing point from the French to the English from a political standpoint, but that the methodology to find the best fur routes was based on the proven success of the French traders who had come before.

Finally, in terms of context, Dr. Van Loon has made extensive use of Mackenzie's journals, as well as two secondary sources. (See links at end of article)

Now, to Alexander Mackenzie - a brief biography. He was a well-educated Scot from the Island of Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides, which, we infer from Dr. Van Loon, may have made him sturdy enough to withstand the weather in the Athabaska region (Fort Chipewyan, which was the jumping off point for his two journeys) and beyond. Of interest to this writer is that he chose Canada, having been shipped out to the thirteen colonies just before the American Revolution. As Dr. Van Loon pointed out: this was a loyalist family.

At the tender age of 18 or 20 - in 1785 - Mackenzie was first sent west, as a second in charge to Peter Pond, the unsavoury American fur trader, who may have killed at least three, possibly four people in his quest for success, and who did much of the early mapping of the area later travelled by Mackenzie.

By 1789 Mackenzie undertook his first major exploration - the one that led him approximately 3,000 miles to the Arctic, from Fort Chipewyan to the Arctic Sea. He called what we now call the Mackenzie River the River of Disappointment, because it did not lead to the west. To atone for his mishap, and to learn to be a better navigator, he spent the next three years preparing for another run for the elusive western sea.

By May 1793 he was ready to go. As Dr. Van Loon described the voyage, in a 25-foot canoe with 10 people and a dog, we were treated not only to a great story, but a travelogue of some of the toughest terrain this country has to offer.

From Fort Chipewyan to Fort Fork (the modern town of Peace River), down through the 23-mile Peace River Canyon in a "toilsome and perilous process", Mackenzie and his crew found out the hard way that it was important to heed the advice of the local guides they encountered.

The Parsnip River, which flows off the Peace, runs into the Rocky Mountain Trench, and then into the three Arctic Lakes, which took them over the Continental Divide and then to the final descent into the sea down the MacGregor and Fraser Rivers.

Happily, the Athabaskan language group is the largest language group in northern North America, and so for the longest part of the journey, the first nations interpreters that Mackenzie carried with him or met along the way were able to translate and ease communications. It was only when they got to the very end of the journey that there was difficulty communicating, and that the voyagers felt threatened. Nonetheless, once Mackenzie and his men realized that they were in fact at the ocean, (the

Bentinck Arm of the Dean Channel) even though they felt threatened, they stayed on the water until he could get a proper latitude and longitude reading, for cartographical and fame purposes!

The journey from Fort Fork to the Pacific took 75 heart-rending days out; the journey back, (once they knew the way) a mere 33 days.



This was Mackenzie's last great voyage. He spent the winter of 1793 in Fort Chipewyan and journeyed back to Montreal in the spring of 1794. He returned to Scotland in 1812, after having published his journal and receiving a knighthood. He died in 1820, a young man by our standards, having lived a life full of adventure.

Big thank you to Dr. Van Loon for an entertaining and informative talk, which is in no way replicated here! You had to be there!

### Resource Notes

Here is the Gutenberg Project version of Mackenzie's journals:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35658/35658-h/35658-h.htm>

You can download it for free. As Dr. Van Loon indicated, you can also get it at the library, and Amazon will sell it to you!

This is the reference to the Derek Hayes book:

<https://www.amazon.ca/First-Crossing-Alexander-Mackenzie-Expedition/dp/1550549944>

For those of you who are interested in historical geography - and this talk certainly ignites that - here's a reference to a historical atlas that Derek Hayes has also prepared:

[https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/historical-atlas-of-the-pacific-northwest-maps-of-exploration-and-discovery--british-columbia-washington-oregon-alaska-yukon\\_derek-hayes/332221/item/49919/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-qGNBhD3ARIsAO\\_o7ykty5NDoHU\\_TcH7ZmOxUhFjZnCZLBlpQ9L9tuyTSCTNg\\_5496W6-gaAiMTEALw\\_wcB#idiq=49919&edition=5094180](https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/historical-atlas-of-the-pacific-northwest-maps-of-exploration-and-discovery--british-columbia-washington-oregon-alaska-yukon_derek-hayes/332221/item/49919/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-qGNBhD3ARIsAO_o7ykty5NDoHU_TcH7ZmOxUhFjZnCZLBlpQ9L9tuyTSCTNg_5496W6-gaAiMTEALw_wcB#idiq=49919&edition=5094180)

Finally, here is the reference to Barry Gough's book, *First Across the Continent*.

<https://www.amazon.ca/First-Across-Continent-Alexander-Mackenzie/dp/0806130024>

## RTHS Membership Fees

The Membership Director would like to remind everyone that our membership year runs from January to December. Members are asked to please submit renewals, either by cheque, by mail or online as indicated on the form included with this newsletter. Once again, the printed receipts, both for 2021 and 2022 are being held until we can meet in person. Thank you for renewing.

## How to Connect with RTHS



<https://rideautwphistory.org/>



[www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory](http://www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory)



[rideautwphistory@gmail.com](mailto:rideautwphistory@gmail.com)



<https://twitter.com/RideauTpHS>



<https://dickinsonhouse.org/>



[www.facebook.com/Dickinsonhousemuseum](http://www.facebook.com/Dickinsonhousemuseum)



[dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:dickinsonhousemuseum@gmail.com)

# Sign me up as a member of RTHS



Members of the Society enjoy:

- Monthly meetings featuring engaging presentations, followed by refreshments
- Group excursions to historical points of interest in Eastern ON
- Local books published by the Society, and a monthly newsletter
- Opportunities to participate and contribute as volunteers

For more information visit <https://rideautwphistory.org> and facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory.

Please mail this form with a cheque for membership dues payable to: Rideau Township Historical Society, Box 56, North Gower, ON, KOA 2T0, OR pay by e-transfer to [rideautwphistory@gmail.com](mailto:rideautwphistory@gmail.com) and email a scanned copy of the form to the same email address.

Name:

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Address:

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City & Postal Code:

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Telephone:

Email:

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Date:

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Are you a new RTHS member?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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Individual Membership \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership (2 adults & school-age children) \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

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Donation \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Other Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Receipts for paid memberships will be issued when we are able to meet face-to-face, but tax receipts for donations will be issued at the end of the year.*

**Thank you for supporting RTHS!**

## Rideau Township Historical Society Minutes

### ZOOM Meeting

November 17, 2021

Susan McKellar opened the meeting at 7:30 by welcoming approximately 23 members and guests. A brief business meeting then ensued.

Susan informed the membership that the Grant application has been submitted to the City of Ottawa.

Also, RTHS has signed an agreement with Watson's Mill Manotick Incorporated for them to assume responsibility for the management of DH, pending approval from the City of Ottawa. RTHS will still own and manage the Collection of artifacts in the House for the duration of the contract.

### Reports:

#### **Finance - Sandy McNiece**

All is on budget financially and we now have a positive balance of receipts over expenditures of approximately \$3000.

#### **Membership - Owen Cooke**

We now have approximately 60 members, many of them life members. Owen is now accepting membership renewals for 2022.

#### **Communications - Margot Belanger**

Pictures were taken of the signing of the contract with WMMI and these will be published when we get final approval from the City of Ottawa. She encouraged everyone to check out the new 'Items of Interest' section on the RTHS Website.

#### **Publications - Susan McKellar**

Nyame Samuel's book should be ready to be published early in 2022. The North Gower book is now being formatted with the goal of also publishing it in 2022.

#### **Dickinson House - Maureen McPhee**

Dickinson House will be open during the Watson's Mill Christmas Craft Sale and 3 vendors will be selling their wares at Dickinson House.

#### **Program - Myra McFarlane**

The December Christmas meeting will feature a dramatic reading of a Xmas story. Myra also invited members to participate with their favorite Xmas stories (3-5 minutes in duration) and to let her know if they wish to present. [myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com](mailto:myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com)

January is our Annual General Meeting and a local artist will tell how history affects art, followed in February with Chris Rodgers presenting a segment on music history.

As always, Myra welcomes any program suggestions.

Bill Tupper then introduced our speaker for the evening, Richard Van Loon, who gave a very interesting and informative presentation on the exploration of Western Canada, concentrating on the exploits of Alexander Mackenzie.

Following a very engaging Question and Answer period, Bill thanked Mr. Van Loon and in particular appreciated his reporting on the involvement of the indigenous community in Mackenzie's adventures. Bill indicated that we would welcome Mr. Van Loon back at a future meeting to speak on other historical topics of interest.

Susan McKellar then thanked all for attending, wished everyone a good evening, and closed the meeting.