



Preserving and Promoting Local History for the Former Rideau Township

### Autumn Meeting Announcements

Given the current and anticipated COVID situation, we must unfortunately announce that until further notice, all RTHS meetings will continue to be held on ZOOM.

No one wants to get together more than your executive, but we need to stay safe.

### Coming Events

**Regretfully, due to circumstances beyond our control, we must cancel our upcoming meeting, scheduled for September 22.**

However, mark your calendars for the third Wednesday of each month: *October 20<sup>th</sup>, November 17<sup>th</sup>, and December 15<sup>th</sup>* (for our annual seasonal gathering,) and stay tuned for details on upcoming programs as they are finalized.

*If you like to:*

- Learn about local history;
- Enjoy publications by and about our members;
- Share your knowledge and perspective about history and local legends;
- Learn about how we frame historical discourse...

Then this season is for you!

Oh, and if you have an idea for a program, would be interested in leading a discussion yourself, or just want to share some feedback on RTHS programs, let Myra McFarlane know, at [myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com](mailto:myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com)

### Dickinson House Summer Events

Our newly refurbished Dickinson House had a busy summer season. In addition to welcoming guests (with COVID protocols in place) our summer students and volunteers hosted two events: a Victorian Tea and “Storytelling in the Square.” Both events were held outdoors, making full use of the Museum’s back porch and lawn.

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, a sold-out gathering of guests were served a scrumptious Victorian Tea on the lawns of Dickinson House. Guests enjoyed the tea and goodies while being entertained by a trio of harpists who played on the Dickinson Lawn Stage.



On Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, the Dickinson House Museum held its second storytelling concert, despite unsettled weather, on the west lawn at Dickinson House with an audience of some 50 listeners, including eight children.



*Our Storytellers: Pat Holloway, Gail Anglin, Paul Mussell*

Pat Holloway, a retired secondary school teacher, and co-chair of Ottawa Storytellers, shared a story derived from the diary of Charles Billings about one "Barney Riley" who managed to blow himself up while seeking revenge on a superior. It sounds terrible, but was entertaining, and full of action and intrigue. The children in particular enjoyed this story, delivered with confidence, and emphasized by energetic body language.

Gail Anglin particularly enjoys delving into history and bringing it to life through story. In 2019 while at Dickinson House she told the story of Joseph Currier, Ottawa's first Member of Parliament, and co-builder with Moss Dickinson of the milling complex in Manotick. On that occasion she used music and song to emphasise key elements in the story. Gail is also a co-chair of Ottawa Storytellers. Her story on Saturday was about building the Rideau Canal as told from the viewpoint of the Canal's Commanding Officer's wife, "Ester By" in a letter written to a fictitious cousin residing in India. She wore an 1830 costume tailored for the occasion.

Paul Mussell is an Osgoode farmer, small business owner, and an entertainer on the agricultural banquet circuit. He is the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth 11 Diamond Jubilee Medal for his contributions to community. He is twice a cancer recovery patient. Paul energetically recalled his relationship with his grandfather, and his grandfather's involvement with local characters such as Fred O'Callaghan and his brother Lou. While describing events at rural auctions Paul demonstrated his mastery of the auctioneer chant.

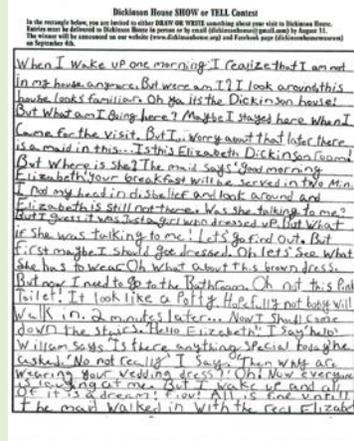


The audience, who responded to each storyteller with warmth and appreciation, enjoyed light refreshments following the storytelling.

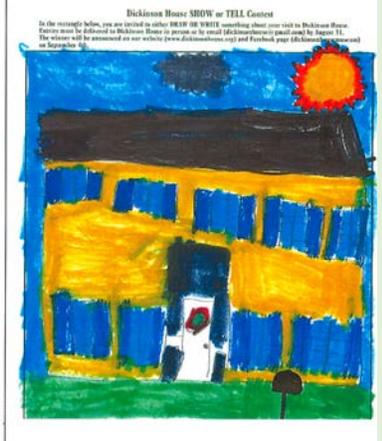
Also this summer the Museum held two contests for children. For the month of July, youngsters were invited to choose, colour and submit a pre-printed colouring page to

win a gift certificate to Octopus Books. Entries were judged by Dickinson House staff based on colour and creativity, and the winner was 5-year old Ethan.

For the month of August, the contest theme was "Show OR Tell." Entrants could either draw a picture OR write a short description or story about Dickinson House. The winners in each category (see below) received gift certificates for Octopus Books.



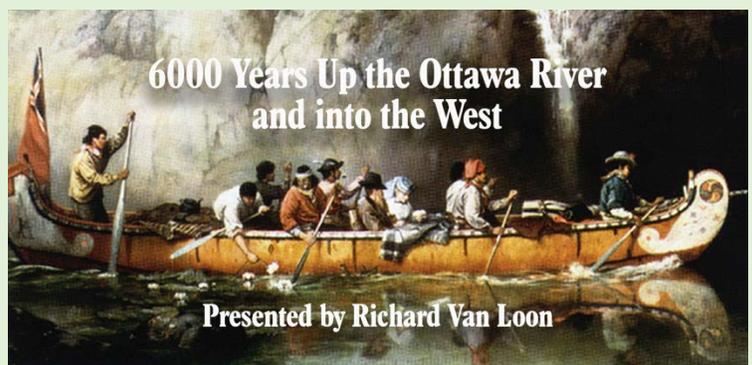
Etair - Age 10



Liam - Age 7

Reports by Jane Anderson, Bill Tupper and Debra Buffett-Riddell; Photos by Rod Brazier and Maureen McPhee

## Report on June's Special Presentation



Our guest speaker, Richard Van Loon, took us travelling back in time, and up the Ottawa River – a very interesting trip!

And the stars of this historic time were not French explorers like Samuel de Champlain, the *courriers du bois* or the Voyageurs, but the First Nations people. In Van Loon's opinion, the Europeans' eventual success in exploring and developing the New World would not have been possible without the First Nations' knowledge and their willingness to give permission for foreigners to travel through their land.

Our journey began about 500 million years ago, when the Ottawa Valley was formed. The Ottawa River was much younger, only about 8,000 years old, formed after the Ice Age when huge amounts of water flowed down the valley. The discovery of First Nations artifacts on Morrison Island points to people living there for thousands of years. It was a key point for a number of major First Nations trade routes, and the artifacts included stone tools from east of the Great Lakes, and copper from west of Lake Superior.

The first means of travel were in dugout canoes, laboriously made by burning trees down, then burning and scraping out the interior of the log. Later, canoes were made of bark. Birch was the best bark, but when not available, they would use other kinds, such as elm.

Jacques Cartier was the first European to reach the Saint Lawrence River, and he attempted to establish a settlement at Hochelaga in 1535 and 1541, but he failed in his efforts.

It was Samuel de Champlain who came to Tadoussac in New France in 1603, and could be considered the true "father" of New France. Champlain was a well-educated Frenchman who had been a soldier and travelled widely; he also had a royal stipend, a privilege that many other explorers did not enjoy. He made contact with the First Nations people, whom he liked and respected. He wisely formed an alliance with the Algonquins, and fought with them against the Iroquois Confederacy, making enemies of these fierce warriors for the better part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to establish better communications with the First Nations, Champlain arranged what might be considered the first student exchange program! In 1610, he delegated young Etienne Brûlè to trade places with an Algonquin named Savignon, the son of Chief Iroquet, so that both men could learn each other's language and culture. Brûlè heartily embraced the First Nations culture and travelled widely throughout their lands.

Champlain made two voyages inland, on the Ottawa River, one in 1613 and one in 1615-16. His motive was not strictly exploration; Champlain hoped to eliminate some of the middlemen that made the fur trade up the Ottawa River and beyond so expensive, and he planned to build a stronger relationship with the First Nations along the trade

route, and gain their permission to travel freely without paying tributes.

Starting from Montreal in May of 1613, his travelling party soon encountered the many challenges that the Ottawa River threw at travellers, including rapids, strong eddies and thick woods that made portages miserable and dangerous. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the party reached what today is the Ottawa-Gatineau region. Further north, they undertook a long portage inland to avoid the worst of the rapids, aiming for Muskrat Lake near present-day Cobden, through dense mosquito-infested forest. It was along this route that an astrolabe (surveying instrument) dated 1613 was discovered centuries later that may have been lost by Champlain.

From Muskrat Lake, they were able to make their way to present-day Pembroke and Tessouat Island (now called Morrison Island), so named by Champlain for the First Nations chief who controlled this strategic trading centre and extracted "tariffs" from travellers going up or down the river. Unfortunately, Champlain failed to convince Tessouat to allow him free passage farther up the river, and he decided to turn back. But he cleverly let it slip that four big ships, loaded with items for trade, were sitting down in the Saint Lawrence River, and Champlain's homeward trek was considerable more grand than the first leg of his journey: a total of 80 native canoes loaded with furs accompanied him home!



"Shooting the Rapids" by Frances Anne Hopkins (1838-1919)(Public Domain)

Champlain's second expedition of 1615-16 was more successful; he travelled to Huronia and beyond. He made excellent maps, and wrote a 5-volume series of books entitled "Voyages" that are available on-line. In these journals, Champlain referred to the First Nations people as "*les sauvages*", but this was not meant as a pejorative term; he meant it to be interpreted as "people who live in the wilderness". Champlain died in 1635 in Quebec City, but his burial site is unknown.

Perhaps Champlain's greatest legacy was his approach to dealing with the First Nations; he did not see Europeans as conquerors, but rather traders and partners with the First Nations, and he respected their ownership of the land they occupied. The philosophy was characteristic of the approach the French took the entire time they occupied New France. Indeed, for decades, Quebec City was a very small colony, with perhaps 20 permanent residents; even by 1640, there were less than 360 full-time residents.

From the initial activities of the *coureurs de bois*, the fur trade grew to be a serious, very lucrative business dominated by the Voyageurs, who, unlike the *coureurs de bois*, did not live among the First Nations people, but worked on contract for the North West Company.

The Voyageurs were small but very strong men, who fit more easily into the legendary 40-foot *Canots du Maître*, which weighed 300 pounds and could carry four tons of goods and 15 people. (See illustration below.) There were 30 portages on the Ottawa River alone, and these men had

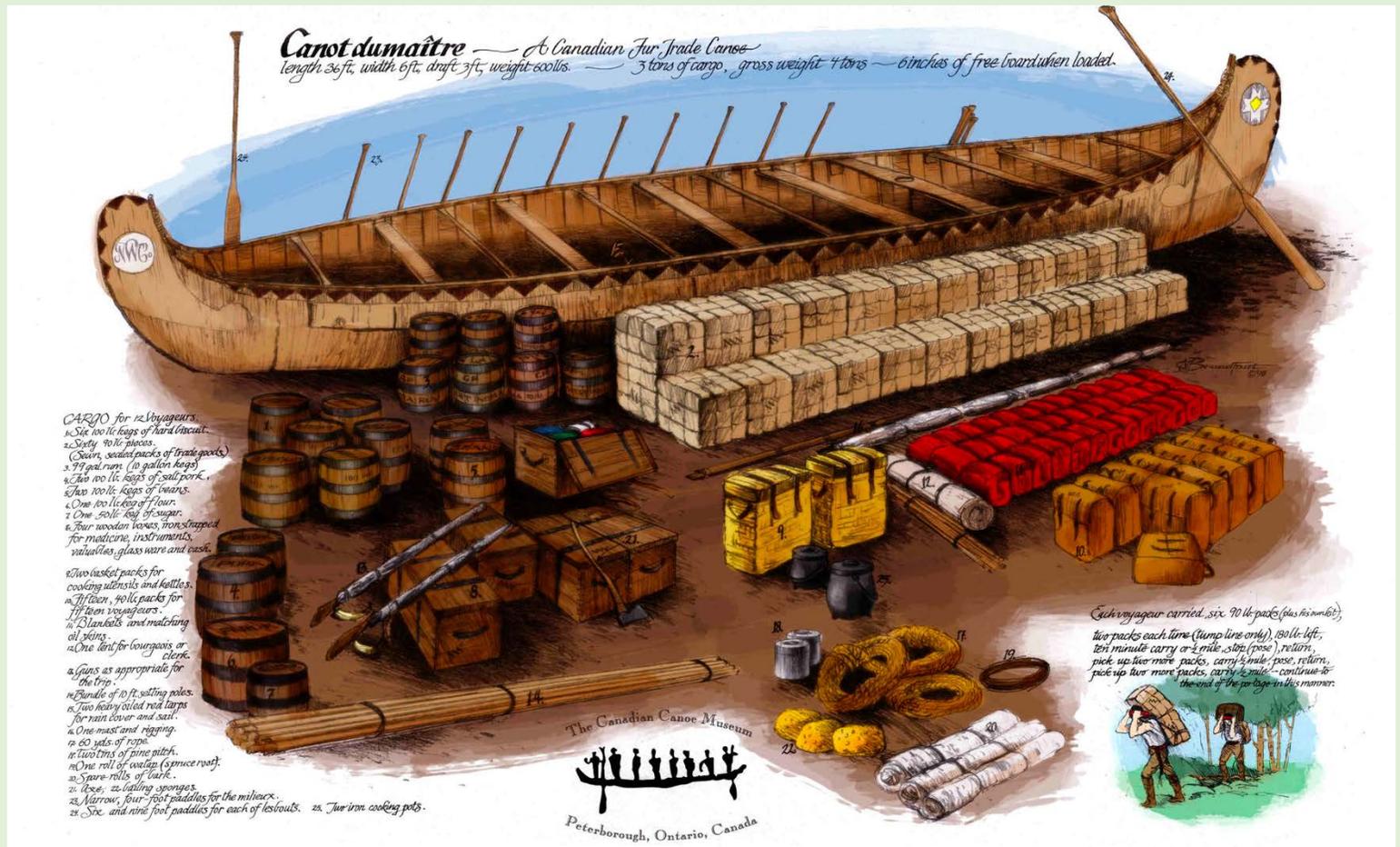
to carry two or three 90-lb. packs (of supplies, furs, etc.) on these treks, as well as transport the canoes.

Convoys of up to 90 canoes would travel up and down the Ottawa River, with perhaps 1000 men. They worked 15-hour days to take advantage of the longer daylight hours. It was a dangerous occupation; there are lots of crosses along the river marking hastily-dug graves. Unlike Champlain, the majority of these men were illiterate and there is no written record their adventures; perhaps they were too tired to be bothered!

As time went on, and the lumber trade started to dominate the economy of the regions surrounding the Ottawa River, the Voyageurs had to contend with the lumber drives in the river. Finally, in 1821, the North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company, and the fur trade routes centred on Hudson and James Bays.

And, with that, the Voyageurs no longer paddled the Ottawa River. An amazing era had ended.

Margot Belanger



## 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)

## Did You Know?

That a new item or article about Rideau Township history is posted EVERY DAY on the Rideau Township Historical Society's Facebook Page (see web address above.)

Since 2018, the number of people "Following" the RTHS Facebook Page (those who "subscribe" to our daily posts) has grown from under 50 to over 600, and the "Reach" of our Posts (the number of people who actually see any of our posts) has grown from under 100 to over 1,000!

If you haven't visited our Facebook yet, we invite you to check it out at [www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory](http://www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory). We promise you'll find something of interest, and likely something you didn't know about Rideau Township history and heritage.

***And while you're there, don't forget to "Like" and "Follow" us!***

# 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://rideautownshiphistory.org> and [facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory](https://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

Wednesday, June 16, 2021  
ZOOM Virtual Meeting

Susan McKellar opened the meeting at 7:30 and welcomed approximately 35 members and guests.

A brief business meeting then ensued.

Susan first invited Maureen McPhee to outline the motion which was circulated via email to the members in reference to extending the voting privilege to the ex officio member of WWMI (Watsons Mill Manotick Inc.) currently on our Executive committee. This required an amendment to our constitution.

**Moved by Maureen McPhee:**

“WHEREAS: The Dickinson House Sub-Committee of the RTHS Executive Committee works very closely with Watson’s Mill Manotick Inc. in presenting heritage programming in historic Dickinson Square in Manotick.

AND WHEREAS: The Executive Committee has determined that it is desirable to include within its membership an ex-officio member representing Watson’s Mill Manotick Inc. to facilitate communications among those operating the Dickinson House and Watson’s Mill Museums.

IT IS THEREFORE MOVED: That By-Law # 2 be added to the RTHS Constitution stating:

“The Executive Committee shall also include one ex officio member representing and appointed by Watson’s Mill Manotick Inc. This member will serve at the pleasure of the Executive and will have all of the privileges of committee membership, including the right to vote, but none of the obligations of membership.

The ex officio member will not be counted in determining a quorum for an Executive Committee meeting.”

Seconded by: Giulio Maffini

No objections. Motion carried.

**Moved by Owen Cooke :**

That RTHS should encourage WWMI to reciprocate and extend the right to vote to the ex officio member of RTHS on their board.

Seconded by Chuck Gruchy.

No objections. Carried.

Ruth Mills indicated that since she is now President of WWMI, she will be seeking another representative from WWMI to be the ex officio member of RTHS.

### REPORTS:

**Finance** - no outstanding issues, all in good order

**Membership** - we now have 51 current members

**Communications** - the new RTHS website is up and running, and progress is being made on the Watsons Mill new website.

**Dickinson House** - work on the House is completed and looks great

**Moved by Maureen McPhee** that we approve the minutes of the last RTHS meeting on May 19th as circulated.

Seconded by Rod Brazier.

Carried.

Maureen McPhee then introduced Richard Van Loon who gave a talk and slide show on *Travellers and Traders on the Ottawa River : 4000 BC to 1830*.

Following a question and answer period, thanks were extended to Mr. Van Loon for his very interesting and informative presentation.

It was noted that this would be our last meeting until September. Best wishes were extended to all for a safe and happy summer and the meeting was adjourned.