



January Meeting Details

Rideau Township Historical Society

Presents

ANDREW KING

Author, Artist and Historian

Truthseeking in Art and History



"The same truth that guides the pen of the historian should guide the pencil of the artist."

Benjamin West



Who better to speak to the kind of truth that is reflected in both text and art than Andrew King, local artist and historian, who will be joining us on January 17th to discuss how he sees connection between his art and his sense of history?

Andrew is well known for his columns in the Ottawa Citizen, and for his books, *Ottawa Rewind* and *Ottawa Rewind Two*, both compilations of posts from his blog. With an artist's eye, and an eye for a good story, we'll see and hear how Andrew interprets and represents everyday signs and symbols in Ottawa and the surrounding area in his work.

Please note that Andrew's presentation will be preceded by the Society's Annual General Meeting and election of officers for 2022.

Join Us Via ZOOM
January 19th, 7:30 p.m.

To register, or for
more information visit:
www.rideautwphistory.org



Preserving and Promoting Local History
for the former Rideau Township



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

A Look at Coming Attractions

February 16th 2022: Chris Rodgers will be with us for a virtual, interactive session focused on understanding how music provides a way to learn history!

In Remembrance – Norm Fraser

Norm Fraser passed away peacefully on Boxing Day at age 88. Both he and his wife Yvonne were former members of our Society.

Dr. Norman Lowe Fraser was born in North Gower and grew up in Sudbury. He attended University of Western

Ontario, then medical school at University of Toronto. He practised first in Toronto, where he met Yvonne, then later joined the Department of Health and Welfare. In practice with the federal government, he spent three memorable years as Zone Director working from the Moose Factory General Hospital.

Moving back to North Gower, Norm became involved with the local community, both before and after retirement. He was a dedicated member of Holy Trinity Anglican Church. He played local softball and hockey. After retirement he became more committed to his art as a member of the North Gower Artists and as an art student at St. Lawrence College in Brockville. Our Society is probably most familiar with one of his earlier works, the often-reproduced portrait of Moss Kent Dickinson commissioned by Rideau Township. The original hangs in Rideau Archives.

Norm was proud and knowledgeable about his Scottish origins and his ancestors in the lower Ottawa Valley.

Rideau Township Historical Society members extend their sympathy to Yvonne, his children Anne, David, Jennifer, Rebecca, Heather and Norman and their families

Report on December's RTHS Event

Our December 15th seasonal gathering was, once again, on zoom - alas, and we made the best of it, again.

To put us in the correct frame of mind, **Susan McKellar** did a short invocation (see next page) (courtesy of the Ottawa School of Theology and Spirituality) to help us frame the meeting, the holiday season, and frankly, a way forward in these challenging times. Thank you Susan.

After a short business meeting, we began our program.

First up, **Christine Erdos and Sean O'Malley** read a Canadian Christmas classic to us: *A Voice for Christmas*, by W. O. Mitchell. As fate would have it, the text for this jewel as sourced from the Maclean's archives was published in Maclean's magazine on December 15th, 1942.

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

This
Christmas
End a quarrel.
Seek out a forgotten
friend. Dismiss suspicion,
and replace it with trust.
Write a love letter. Share some
treasure. Give a soft answer. Keep
a promise. Find the time. Forgo a grudge.
Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you
were wrong. Try to understand. Examine your
demands on others. Think first of someone else.
Be kind; be gentle. Appreciate. Laugh a little. Laugh a
little more. Express your gratitude. Gladden the heart of a
child. Welcome a stranger. Take pleasure in the beauty and the
wonder of Earth.
Speak your love.
Speak it again.
Speak it yet
Once again.

Invocation for the Christmas Season

The story itself is one of the beloved *Jake and the Kid* stories, in which the kid tells us about growing up on a farm in Southern Saskatchewan, and his relationship to Jake, the grizzled old farm hand.

This particular story takes place in the few days leading up to Christmas 1942, when the kid's father is off fighting in Europe with the South Saskatchewan Regiment. Also coincidentally, (or is it?) Christine's grandfather fought with the South Saskatchewan regiment, and Christine is no stranger to the kind of prairie winter described in the story.



All this to say, Christine and Sean transported us to that far away winter of 1942 and that Christmas Day, when, you guessed it, a Christmas miracle occurred, courtesy of the magic of radio.



Thank you Christine and Sean for a wonderful reading, which, as always, led to a lively exchange about the story, the subject matter, and about what was real and what was imagined.

Now it wouldn't have been a proper seasonal gathering without stories and historical curiosities as unearthed and introduced by our members.

We were lucky to have **Sandy McNiece** tell us the story of the **Christmas Spider**, which explains why we have tinsel on our trees, and to learn that to this day, glass and crystal spider ornaments are prized by families. We also learned that in Christmas 2020 Dickinson House actually sold such ornaments, along with the story, and that they had been a best seller. Maybe we will see them again next Christmas? Never too early to start planning!

The Legend of the Christmas Spider:

A long time ago in Germany, a mother was busily cleaning for Christmas. The spiders fled to the attic to escape her broom. When the house became quiet the spiders slowly crept downstairs for a peek.

Oh, what a beautiful Christmas tree they saw!

In their excitement they scurried up the trunk and out along each branch. They were filled with happiness as they climbed all over the glittering tree. As they climbed, the tree became completely shrouded in their dusty grey spider webs.

When St. Nicholas came with the gifts for the children and saw the tree covered with spider webs, he smiled because saw how happy the spiders were, but he knew how heartbroken the mother would be if she saw the tree covered with the dusty webs.

So he turned the webs to silver and gold. The tree sparkled and shimmered and was even more beautiful than before.

That's why we have tinsel on our tree and every tree should have a Christmas spider in its branches!

Moving from historical Germany to historical Rideau Township, **Rod Brazier** shared with us three glimpses into Christmas past, gleaned from the **Kars Tweedsmuir Histories** (a wonderful resource by the way.) Firstly he

shared a poem by *Norman Mussell* about one of the unsung heroes of families everywhere; then excerpts from *Mrs. Wesley Crawford's* 1966 talk to the Kars Women's Institute about customs of Christmases past, and finally a piece entitled *Early Life in the Kars Area*.

Milkman Christmas – Composed by Norman Mussell circa 1930s (Tweedsmuir History of Kars, Vol. 3)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
To the fellow who calls each day,
Ere the morning sun tints the eastern sky
With its ever welcome ray.
A pleasant word, a cheerful smile,
He is back in the cab and gone,
For this isn't the only place he must call
His path of duty to run.
His face may not even be shaven
And he's never dressed in silk,
But there's no one can lift life's
burden for us
Like the man who draws the milk.

This being the season for wondrous things, **Chuck Gruchy** brought us an excerpt from a BBC4 broadcast last shown in 2017, entitled *Mechanical Marvels and Clockwork Dreams*, presented by Dr. Simon Schaffer. This video shows us an automaton built in the mid 18th century that really is a precursor to computer programming, and only just a little creepy! As the description tells us, it really is a marvelous marriage of engineering and art!



And, in a treat for the senses, **Guilio Maffini** shared with us one of his childhood memories of buying roasted chestnuts from a street vendor, encased in a paper bag,

and before eating, putting up one's front to keep warm! Not only a taste treat, but one that does double duty!



Finally, lest we forget we are in the midst of a raging pandemic, Susan provided a modern take on *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* for **Myra** to read.

Thank you to all who presented, participated, and showed up!

And with that, and warmest greetings to all, RTHS signed off for another year.

We take this opportunity, in our first Report of the New Year, to wish everybody good health, safety and better days to come.

How to Connect with RTHS



<https://rideautwphistory.org/>



www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory



rideautwphistory@gmail.com



<https://twitter.com/RideauTpHS>



<https://dickinsonhouse.org/>



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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 and email a scanned copy of the form to the same email address.

Name:

Address:

City & Postal Code:

Telephone:

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Date:

Are you a new RTHS member?

Yes _____ No _____

Individual Membership \$15 _____

Life Membership \$100 _____

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

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!