



March Meeting Details

Rideau Township Historical Society Presents

What IS....

A participative exploration of how personal values & contexts influence the interpretation of historical events.

with **Dr. Daniel Woolf**

Professor of History and Principal Emeritus of Queen's University



"History tells, or ought to aspire to tell, true stories about the past; ...whatever moral judgements the historian may intrude, he or she has an obligation to present evidence without distortion or fabrication; a select few among the best written histories are not merely vessels for evidence of the past, but can become themselves (as Thucydides intended) bequests to posterity, literary artefacts to be read in future ages." (A Concise History of History; Dr. D. Woolf)

Dr. Woolf's research has focused on two areas: early modern British intellectual and cultural history, and the global history and theory of historical writing.

Join us on March 16th for an engaging and interactive session with Dr. Woolf as we consider how we can recognize, acknowledge and work with "human" factors in the understanding and recording of historical events.

Join Us Via ZOOM
March 16th, 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.

Preview of Coming Attractions

While we don't know yet if our May event will be in-person or virtual (ZOOM) we are hoping to conduct a panel or roundtable discussion on the topic, "How Do We View History?" To this end, we are seeking individuals (RTHS members or non-members) willing to participate by sharing their thoughts on such matters as:

- What attracted you to history as an area of interest, research, writing, etc.?
- What particular aspects of history interest you?

- How has your personal life experiences influenced your perspectives on history?
- Is there a legacy you would like to leave as a result of your work with history and heritage?

Your participation in the panel or round table requires no prior experience in public speaking; think of it as a fireside chat, or a conversation over a liquid refreshment of your choice. We will also provide further information and guidance prior to the event to ensure everyone has an enjoyable and valuable evening.

If you are interested, or just want more information, please contact myra.mcfarlane@icloud.com

News from the North Grenville HS

Location Change: The North Grenville Historical Society has been located in the Court House in North Grenville for more than 10 years, but this building is about to be converted into affordable housing units. So the Society is moving their Archives to 148B Prescott Street, a storefront location next door to Bubba & Bugs coffee shop. They are hoping this location will enable them to reach out more effectively to families, students and visitors to the community.

Membership Matters

Our Membership Director Owen Cooke reminds members that our membership year began in January, and encourages those who have not done so to renew your membership using the instructions on the membership form attached to this Newsletter. Your continuing support for the work of your Society is very much appreciated.

Archives News

Rideau Archives is a branch of the City of Ottawa Archives located in North Gower. Although the Archives are not part of RTHS, the present team of volunteers who operate the facility are all RTHS members. This team needs help - more members. For anyone who would commit to spending their Tuesdays at the Archives, here is an opportunity to join an enthusiastic group of volunteers in a worthwhile endeavour and enhance your knowledge of

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

our local history. The staff, and the City, will provide any training necessary.

If you are interested, please let us know at rideau-archives@ottawa.ca.

Report on February's RTHS Event

Rhythms in Time *an exploration of the deep connections between history and music* with Chris Rodgers

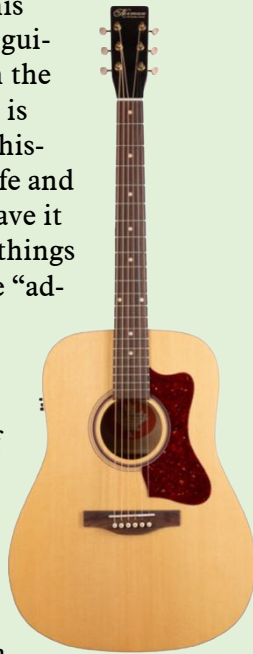
To steal a phrase, and perhaps repurpose slightly “oh what a night!”

RTHS asked Chris Rodgers, local musician and amateur historian, to reflect on how history has influenced his approach to music. We were treated not only to some very personal reflections on the subject, but a mini concert that illustrated each of his points.

Chris began by sharing with us that his guitar was a Canadian made Norman guitar, (pictured here) which for those in the know, is pretty significant. The point is this: like our music, this guitar has a history, and embodies a certain way of life and approach to music. The writer will leave it to those who know more about these things to comment on the significance of the “adjustable neck”.

He then went on to tell us that he likes songs that tell stories about people and that one can get a “glimpse of the past” through music. No kidding! After a rousing rendition of Stompin' Tom Connors' *Big Joe Mufferaw*, Chris went on to tell us the story, and the back story of Joseph Montferrand, a legendary Ottawa Valley lumberjack, on whose story the song was based.

And now came the reflection: Chris posed the question about why history was so important to him, on a personal level. Here in Canada, everyone is from somewhere else, and everybody has a personal story to tell. Chris posits that if we know each others' backstory, then we are well on the way to the empathy we need in this country. Chris, who spent a year in Scotland, thinks that the Highland Clearances are part of everyone's history, whether they were born in Scotland or here in Canada. History is personal, and as William Faulkner said, “The past is never dead. It's never even past”.



Moving forward and eastward on our chronological and geographical timelines, Chris then shared the story behind *Farewell to Nova Scotia*, which it turns out, is a major crowd pleaser for RTHS members, and that beautifully evokes the anticipation and the dread of a young man going off to the First World War.

A key question in any discussion of music and the arts - any art, is how important the literal truth of the matter is. For Gordon Lightfoot, when composing *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, it would seem to have been very important; so much so that when research came to light after the song was written that called into question the actual time of day of the sinking, Lightfoot actually changed the lyrics in live concerts.

But how important is the “literal truth” in musical representation of historical events? For Chris, it's important to get the story out. So here is a link to the story of the Nursing Sisters of the Canadian Army Medical Corps, also known as the Bluebirds. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-army-medical-corps-nursing-sisters>

And there is a song, called *The Belle of Isle Royale*, which tells the story of a nursing sister who is just as heroic as the men we read about, and just may fill a gap in the standard history. Was the Belle a real person? Does it matter? It's a wonderful representation of what might have happened somewhere. Could it be a local story? If you look at the Spencerville Cenotaph, you will see the name of at least one nursing sister who came back from the war and then died likely of the Spanish Flu, perhaps as she was nursing in a local hospital?

Music is a powerful force - its sounds and rhythms can reach us in ways beyond words, and when nothing else reaches us, often music will, hence the discipline of music therapy, which we see administered in cases of brain injury and often in dementia.

Music is universal and the 12 notes in all of music, and 5 notes excerpted in the pentatonic scale can tell almost any story. But of course, the voice isn't the only instrument! We were treated to demonstrations of no less than six instruments, and a little about their history - including the bagpipes!



So, some wonderful music, a little folk history, and then what? In preliterate times music was often “the news”. It

still functions as “the story” and because it reaches parts of the brain that language cannot, it serves as a powerful catalyst for the feelings that help us preserve our history, perhaps learn from it, and maybe even act on what we have learned.

Chris’s final song was a testament to his point - music can tell the story and get all our cylinders firing so that we are primed to remembrance and possibly action. Think about *Wheat Kings*, by one of Canada’s folk poet laureates. When you have time, have a listen and tell this writer if you will ever think of David Milgaard and the miscarriage of justice the same way again?

Thank you again, Chris for sharing with us your research, your musical talents and your innate understanding that music makes history accessible, which is what we’re all about here at RTHS.

Myra McFarlane



“Try to imagine life without music. No rock ‘n’ roll, no blues, no country, no classical, no rap, no jazz, no folk. No way! Music does not just entertain or refresh us; it also helps to establish who we are. According to ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl, ‘One cannot really understand a culture without taking into account the almost inevitably great importance of its music.’” (Alex Zukas: Different Drummers: Using Music to Teach History)

How to Connect with RTHS



<https://rideautwphistory.org/>



www.facebook.com/rideautownshiphistory



rideautwphistory@gmail.com



<https://twitter.com/RideauTpHS>

How to Connect Dickinson House Museum



<https://dickinsonhouse.org/>



www.facebook.com/Dickinsonhousemuseum



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:

Email:

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!