


**June Event**

## Rideau Township Historical Society *Presents*

*An Excursion to*  
**SMITHS FALLS**  
*with Guided Tours of*

**June 17  
2023**



**Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario**  
**Heritage House Museum**

**10 A.M.  
to  
4 P.M.**

*Your day will include:*

- Guided tours of railway artifacts and train cars, with a special ride on the Railway Museum's short line on a 1960s Caboose!
- A group lunch at the Lockmaster's Taphouse (optional, participant paid);
- A guided tour of Victorian period rooms in the heritage home of 19th-century mill owners;
- Tea and dessert on the lawns of the Heritage House Museum; and
- A short guided walk to nearby Old Slys Lock, highlighting local geography, flora and fauna.

*Society Members ~ \$35; non-members ~ \$40*

For full details and to register, visit the RTHS website at [rideautwphistory.org](http://rideautwphistory.org), or scan the QR code.



**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

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

## President's Message

One of the more interesting aspects of the work that we do as a society are our monthly presentations. Our guest speakers come to us with research, stories to tell, and images to illustrate the presentations. Our last two speakers, Richard Van Loon and Alastair Sweeny, through their images and maps transported us from our 21st century view of life to that of earlier times.

Mr. Sweeny brought over 200 images related to the life of Thomas Mackay, an initial builder of Rideau Hall. We have all heard of the places and people Mr. Sweeny talked about, but nothing serves better than a picture or image to illustrate the point of his story. Mr. Sweeny has given the Society full access to his presentation and images. These images will be available through the website of RTHS for those interested in learning more about Thomas Mackay.

June, of course, is excursion month. As I mentioned last month, and as the poster on page 1 of this newsletter illustrates, on Saturday, June 17th we are going to the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario and the Heritage House Museum in Smiths Falls. Lunch between the two visits will be at the Lockmaster's Taphouse and Patio on Beckwith St. Registration for the event is available on the RTHS website and the poster and instructions on how to register has been sent to all members.

There are no meetings during the summer, but we will return in September with a presentation titled "Steamboats on the Rideau" by a local author (one of our own RTHS members) whose work grew out of initial research by Coral Lindsay. An accompanying booklet will be available for purchase. Further details will be available in August.

If I do not see you in Smiths Falls, have a great summer and I look forward to getting back together in the fall.

*Doug Culham*



## In Celebration



*Photo credit for image on right: lauraleephotography.ca*

The Rideau Township Historical Society would like to recognize William and Georgina Tupper as they reached an auspicious milestone on May 20th when they celebrated their **70th** Wedding Anniversary. Many family members travelled across Canada – from Whitehorse to Halifax (and numerous places in between) – to join them and participate in this joyous occasion.

Georgie and Bill tied the knot on May 20, 1953 at Georgie's family home in Salmon River, Colchester County, Nova Scotia. They have participated actively in many community events since moving to Thunderwood Farm near Kars.

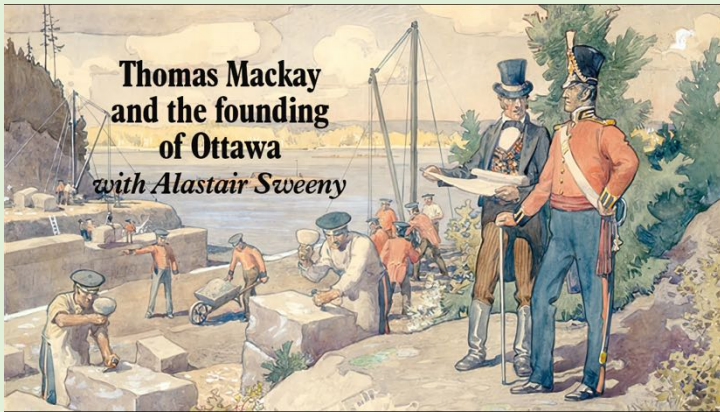
Georgie and Bill were founding members of the Historical Society. Georgie was instrumental in establishing the Rideau branch of the Ottawa Archives in North Gower and Bill can be seen meeting and greeting visitors at Dickinson House in Manotick each Sunday during the summer.

They have both received well-deserved community awards for their volunteerism. Their contributions to the community are immeasurable and they continue to make a positive impact. Their legacy will live on as 70 trees were planted in their honour by the family on Thunderwood Farm. May these trees grow straight and strong and be as enduring as Bill and Georgie's marriage.

Congratulations and best wishes, Georgie and Bill! Wishing you many more years of happiness together!!



## Report on Our May Event

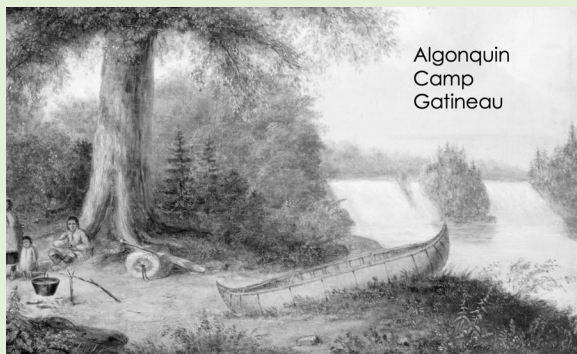
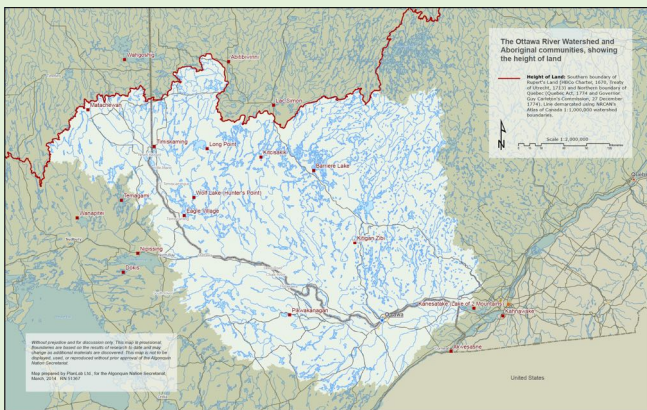


Report by Robin Craig

Alastair based his presentation around many wonderful old photos and paintings, elaborate sketches and drawings, maps, and even some cartoons. As Thomas Mackay left no papers, Alastair used many other sources to research his history, becoming the first historian to document the life of this important figure in Ottawa history.

### Origins

Alastair began with a discussion of the evolution of settlement in the Ottawa region, beginning with the location of aboriginal communities within the Ottawa River Watershed. A drawing depicted a typical indigenous family camp across the river from the Rideau Falls (likely dating to about 1848).



Algonquin Camp  
Gatineau

One of the first permanent settlements in the Ottawa Region, Wrightstown (later Hull and Gatineau) was established by Philemon Wright, an American who came to Canada in 1800. Wright had supported the American Colonies during the War of Independence, but decided to emigrate to Canada and swear allegiance to the Crown when the US taxes went up 10x more than they were under the British. Wright's intention was to focus on agriculture. He hired 25 lumbermen to clear the land, and he set up 3 or 4 farms.

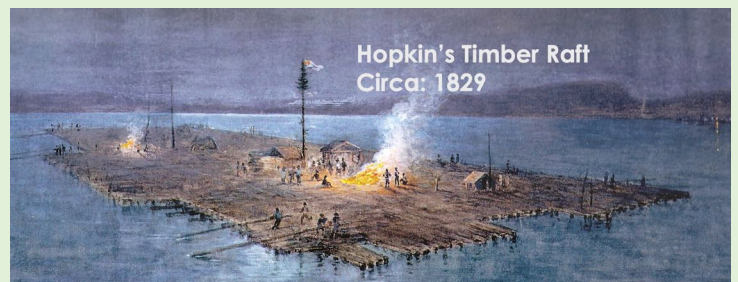


Wrightstown c.1823

By 1806, needing additional income to support his growing community, Wright entered the lumbering sector, and that year he floated the first raft of square timber from Ottawa to Quebec City. At Quebec, the timbers were loaded on ships destined to Liverpool.



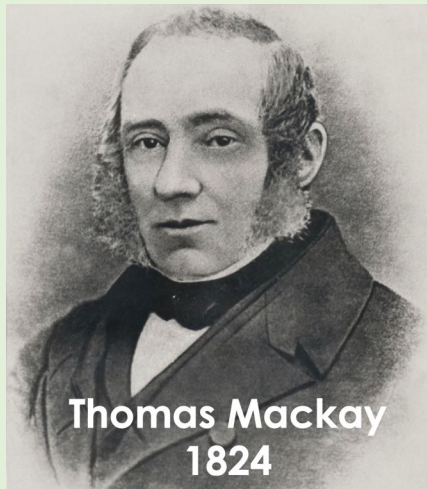
Tiberius Wright's First Raft circa: 1806



Hopkin's Timber Raft  
Circa: 1829

### Thomas Mackay

Thomas Mackay was the son of a stone mason who lived in the town of Thurso, Scotland near the traditional Mackay clan territory at the northern tip of the Scottish mainland. When Thomas was a young boy his family moved to Perth, Scotland, a town of stone buildings. Here Thomas followed in his father's footsteps and became a stone mason. When he heard that work was to be had building stone houses in Montreal, Canada, he decided to emigrate.



He sailed to Quebec City in 1817, and took a Molson's steamship from there to Montreal. A photo of him in 1824 showed a handsome young man at age 32, who was making a good living for his family. He had strong religious principles and was active in the Presbyterian Church.

### Forts and Canals

Queen Elizabeth 1st, nicknamed the "Pirate Queen", sent Sir Francis Drake with his pirate friends to capture Spanish trading ships in the Caribbean. Britain became very rich with Mexican silver and gold booty, which helped to finance its growing empire. Mexican silver coins in chests and barrels were shipped to Quebec, to be used to finance the defence of Canada from US invasion. Alastair's research led him to discover that Mackay, and John Redpath, his partner in several construction projects, were paid with these coins, solving the mystery of how the building of the Rideau Canal was financed.



During the War of 1812 with Britain, the British had a formidable sailing ship built in Kingston, Upper Canada. It was larger than Lord Nelson's HMS Victory, and it had 102 guns. Alastair suggested that because the Americans did not have the resources to compete with this ship, they agreed to sign a peace treaty.

Colonel Durnford, head of the Royal Engineers, was tasked to improve the fortifications of Canada to keep Americans out. He built the Citadel in Quebec City, and hired Thomas Mackay to acquire stone material and build a stone fort on Île Ste-Hélène, in the St. Lawrence River across from Montreal.



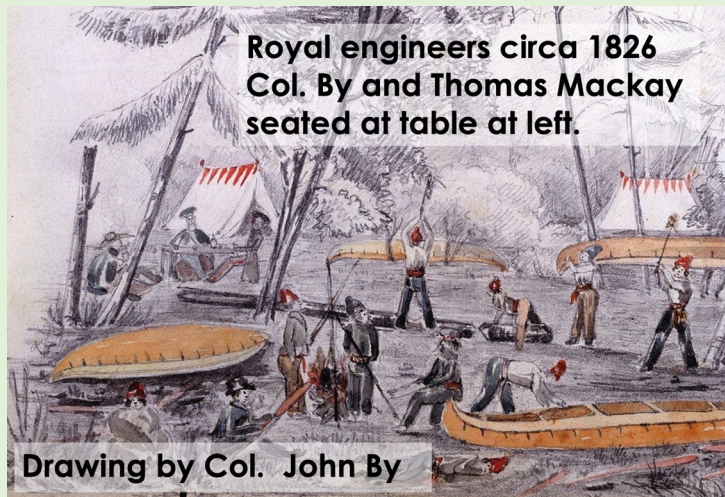
Mackay was also commissioned to construct Fort Lennox on Isle-Aux-Noix in the Richelieu River, and with John Redpath as his partner to build locks for the Lachine Canal in Montreal. Mackay also supplied stone for the construction of Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal, and the pediment for Nelson's statue in Montreal.

### Building the Rideau Canal

During the War of 1812 with Britain, the Americans realized they should have attacked Montreal, rather than Niagara, because Montreal was poorly defended. Knowing this, the Duke of Wellington determined a canal from Kingston to the Ottawa River was needed to protect Montreal. Lord Dalhousie, one of Wellington's wartime generals who became Governor General of Canada, knew there should be a fort at the Ottawa River end of this canal to match Fort Henry at the southern end of the canal. To this end he bought land along the Ottawa River, that had been previously acquired by speculators, for his proposed Ottawa Citadel.

Dalhousie commissioned Lieut. Col John By to construct the canal. Col By wanted competent and trustworthy stone masonry contractors for the work, so he approached Thomas Mackay and John Redpath.

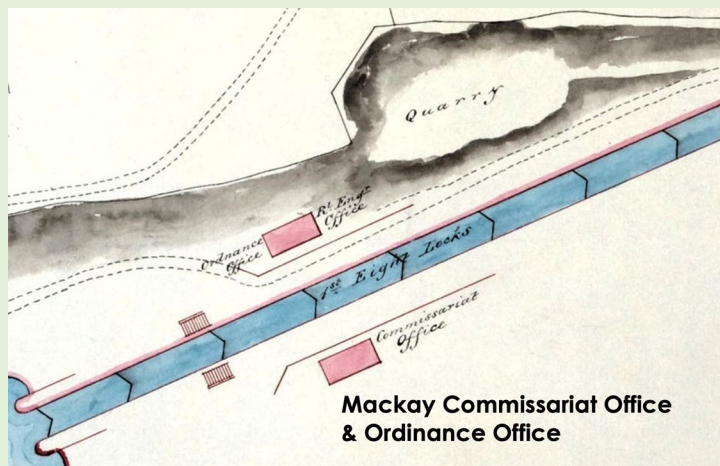
After Col By and Mackay had worked out the details of a contract to build the Rideau Canal, Lord Dalhousie presided over the signing ceremony.



Royal engineers circa 1826  
Col. By and Thomas Mackay  
seated at table at left.

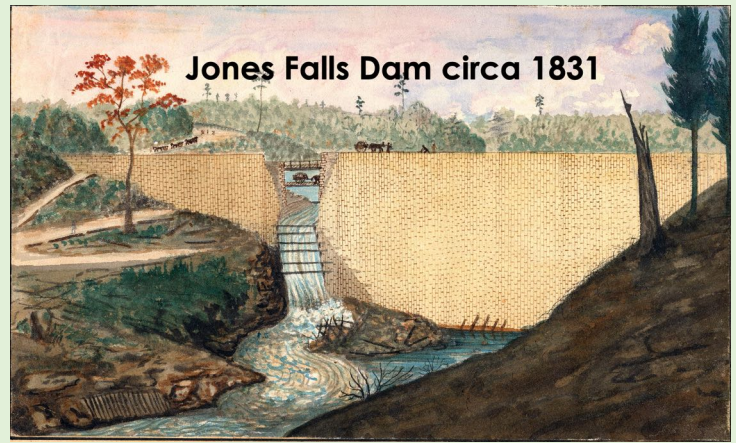
A regiment of soldier labourers, referred to as the Sappers and Miners was raised for the canal building project. They assisted the stone masons hired by Mackay to carry out the work. The first stone was laid at the Ottawa locks in a ceremony attended by the explorer Sir John Franklin, who happened to be in town at the time.

We saw the Commissariats building, beside Ottawa Locks, in an early map. It was noted to be MacKay's headquarters, and is one of Ottawa's oldest buildings still standing now.

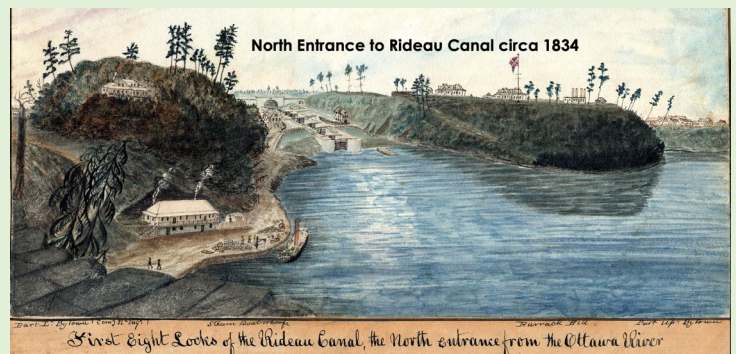


Mackay Commissariat Office  
& Ordinance Office

Mackay constructed the 8 locks at the Ottawa river, the Hartwell lock at Hogs back, and the canal through Ottawa including dredging out Dow's swamp to become Dow's lake. Mackay also built soldiers quarters on Barracks Hill, which later became Parliament Hill. Mackay's partner John Redpath built the largest dam in North America in 1832 at Jones Falls.



Two early dams at Hog's Back Falls had been destroyed by spring run-off. Mackay and Philemon Wright's sons got involved to build an artificial falls there, and then with cribs and rubblestone rocks the final dam. John Redpath caught malaria and had to cut short his involvement in the construction of the canal.

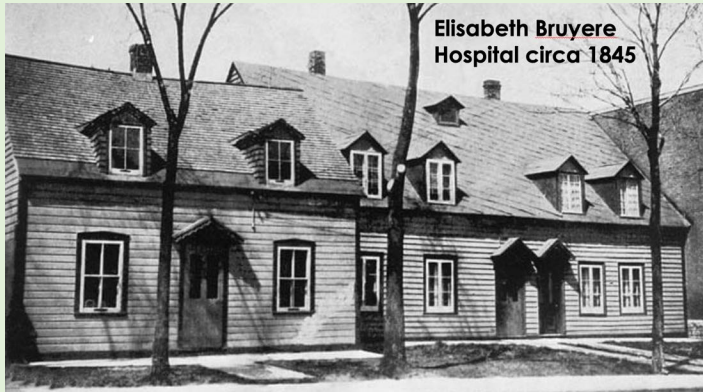


Mackay was very well paid, at £32,000 for his work on the Rideau Canal, about 1/25th of the total cost, and £10,000 pounds for the Lachine Canal. His fee would be worth about \$40 million today. With some of these profits he established the village of New Edinburgh, and built a saw mill, a grist mill and a brewery along the Ottawa river beside Rideau Falls.

### The Growth of Bytown

Bytown grew on land owned by Whitehall, and it was the one case in history where the British Government owned outright a village in a colony in its empire. Col. By set up a Town Council in 1828, and Mackay was one of the first Town Councilors. He also served as Colonel for the Russell and Carleton volunteer militias.

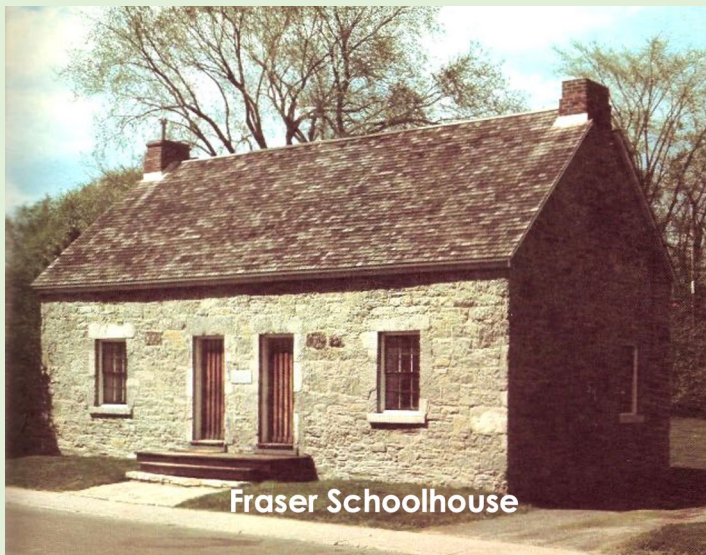
After Col By left Bytown, Mackay became MP at Queens Park, arranged for provincial funds to set up Élisabeth Bruyère hospital, originally a small wood frame building, to deal with cholera and tuberculosis epidemics. Some of Mackay's children contracted TB, possibly transmitted from white-tailed deer. His eldest daughter Elizabeth died from TB at age 40.



Mackay established the Bytown New Edinburgh Shintie club for a game which he had played as a young man in Perth, Scotland. This is similar to ball hockey played with clubs, as depicted on a Shintie Medal (below) awarded in 1852. This is one of the earliest hockey type medals.

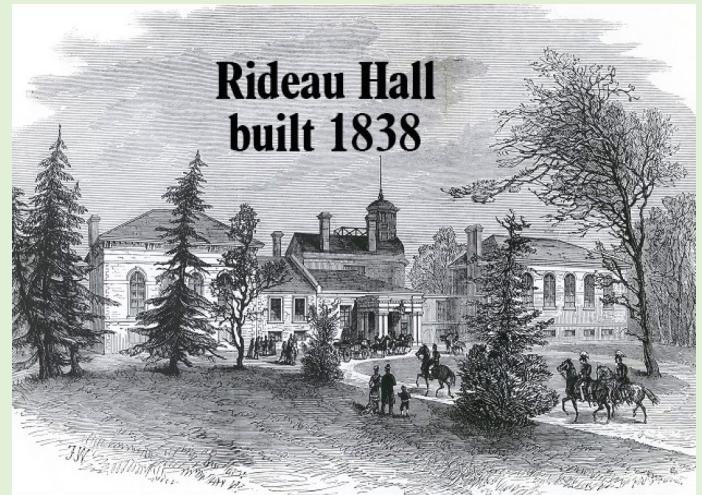


Mackay valued education and hired a schoolmaster, Mr. James Fraser. He constructed a stone school house that still exists across from the French Embassy, and is now owned by the National Capital Commission.



A medal was awarded to the New Edinburgh cloth factory for quality blankets at the Great Exhibition in London. The Bytown Mechanics Institute was constructed in

1853, which is the origin of the Ottawa Public Library. Mackay built a 3-storey stone mansion, surrounded by a working farm with livestock, for his family at the edge of New Edinburgh. It was named Rideau Hall by his daughter. Bytown was incorporated as the City of Ottawa in 1855.

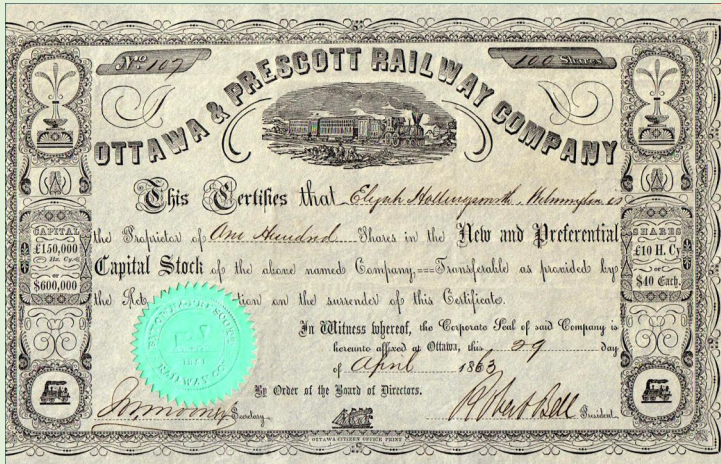


After the Irish potato famine, the economy suffered and there was a movement for free trade with the USA. The British instead imposed tariffs which caused a depression. John Redpath, now an old man, along with James McGill, became leaders of the Annexation Movement to join the US. A riot in Bytown, Stony Monday, was quelled by the few soldiers left at Barracks Hill, but the parliament buildings in Montreal were burned to the ground. Finally Lord Elgin, the Gov Gen at the time, negotiated the Reciprocity Treaty, a free trade agreement with the USA, which calmed things down.

### The City of Ottawa

Railroad Mania started in Canada with the Montreal to Lachine Railway, the 1st public transportation in Canada. Mackay had been promoting Bytown as the capital of Canada, and Governor General Metcalfe told him that to be the capital, the town must have a railroad. Mackay took this to heart and invested heavily in the Bytown to Prescott Railway, which the investors expected would transport timbers and farm products to the St. Lawrence River, where they would be shipped to the USA and Montreal. Construction started in 1851, and the first train ran on Christmas Day 1854.

The trade didn't materialize, and the railroad was a financial disaster which ruined Mackay's wealth. In a picture taken of him at age 53 after the railroad fiasco, Mackay looks a little worse for wear. He died at age 54 in 1855. The railway was sold for a pittance of the cost, and in 1884 it was leased to the CPR for 999 years.



When the time came to select the capital of Canada, Governor General Head crafted a scheme to convince Prince Albert that Ottawa should become the capital, rather than the other cities that were also vying for the honour. Prince Albert then proposed Ottawa as the best choice for the capital to Queen Victoria.

Thomas C. Keefer, Mackay's son-in-law, was an engineer who wrote a book titled "Philosophy of Railways" which became very popular. Keefer became chief engineer for the construction of the Brockville to Ottawa River (at Arnprior) railway. Mackay was a director for this railway. Keefer engineered the construction of the Ottawa Fleet Street water pumping station and the horse drawn Ottawa City Public Railway. He became Minister of Public Works.

Samuel Keefer, Thomas Keefer's half-brother, created a contest to choose the best design for the new Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

Thomas Keefer, acting as Mackay's estate manager, rented Rideau Hall to the government as residence for the Governor General. The government spent so much on constructing the parliament buildings there was not enough money left to build a residence for the Governor General. It was later sold to the government and much enlarged to the stately palace it is today. Keefer divided the rest of the property into lots to become village of Rockcliffe.

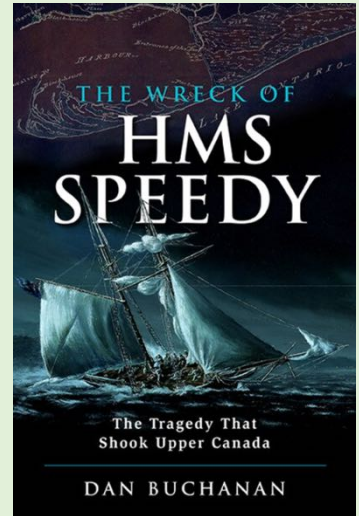


## Book Review

Dan Buchanan, *The Wreck of HMS Speedy; the Tragedy that Shook Upper Canada*. s.l.: Milner & Associates, 2020. 259 p. \$23.95, or \$16.95 for e-book.

Reviewed by  
Shannon Jaspers-Fayer

*This is the third in a series of reviews on newer books available on the shelves of the Rideau Archives Library. Members of Rideau Township Historical Society are invited to borrow these and other books from the Rideau Archives Library and members of the public are welcome to come visit any Tuesday to consult the library materials.*



*Shannon Jaspers-Fayer is just completing a work term assignment at Rideau Archives. She is a senior student at Redeemer Christian High School in Nepean, and her family lives near Kars. Shannon's theatre reviews of Cappie productions have already been published in the Ottawa Citizen.*

In an October 1804 gale, His Majesty's Provincial Marine schooner Speedy disappeared off Presqu'île Point in Lake Ontario. Lost with the vessel were some of the élite of the infant Upper Canadian society – among them the judge of the Court of King's Bench, the High Constable of the Home District, members of the colonial Assembly, and, of interest to us, John Stegmann, the man who did the initial surveys of North Gower, Nepean, Gloucester and Osgoode Townships.

Also in the hold of the schooner was a prisoner, the source of all this official interest. Ogetonicut, a member of the Indigenous Mississauga band, stood accused of the murder of a trader at a post on Lake Scugog. The authorities at York, now Toronto, wished to avoid tension by holding the trial elsewhere, in the capital of the Newcastle District, now Brighton, Ontario. Thus, the judge, prosecutor, defence, jailer and expert witness all travelled together in HMS Speedy, an aging 55-foot (17 metres) two-masted schooner gunboat, into the weather of the autumn lake.

The Speedy never arrived at her destination. Pieces of her presumed wreck were found on the southern shore of Lake Ontario soon after she disappeared. The tragic deaths left behind a scrambling York, devastated by the loss of so many influential people in one blow. Almost two centuries later, in 1989, explorer Ed Burt found a wreck on the floor of Lake Ontario that he believed to be

the elusive Speedy. The second portion of Buchanan's book describes the search for the wreck and the evidence supporting the belief that it is the missing ship from 1804.

Dan Buchanan is well-suited to investigate the Speedy. The author of two previous books on local history, he was born on a farm near the village of Codrington, north of Brighton. He has now retired to his home area, where he is known as "The History Guy" and maintains a genealogical website. He has contributed to the development of digital archives and is a co-founder of the annual Brighton History Week. The story of the Speedy was not a new passion for Buchanan when Ed Burt's documents and notes appeared on his doorstep. With access to Burt's vast collection and detailed research of his own, Buchanan became an expert on the Speedy.

Buchanan's book spins a story out of fact; it saunters along the fine line between the fictional and the historical. Under his pen, historical events become a mystery novel that begins with murder and ends with shipwreck. Chapter by chapter, Buchanan examines the history, character, family members and beliefs of the persons involved with the Speedy. Not only the people but also the setting receive their due notice. His scrupulous attention to the mechanics of Upper Canada clarifies the elaborate reasons behind the decisions of October 1804, including the choice to send the dubious Speedy out onto Lake Ontario on what was to be her last voyage.

Though Buchanan at times imaginatively describes the emotions of characters, other details are meticulously laid out. The descriptions of late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> century "Muddy Little York" are delightful. Much of his portrayal hails from historical maps and survey reports with diligent annotations following close behind. Presqu'Île Bay is similarly well depicted, including detailed explanations of the entrances to the harbour.

Those interested in undertaking further research will be pleased to find an extensive notes section and bibliography in the closing section of the book. Here, Buchanan details his use of letters, journals, newspaper articles, testimonies, diaries and military and naval records. Indeed, for the instances that Buchanan's descriptions are based on historical documents, his sources are clearly laid out and easy to follow, resulting in a compelling and earnest narrative. Limited illustrations and maps enhance the understanding of the text, especially in the second portion of the book.

Buchanan's book is informative and detailed, while also using poetic license to narrate the personal side of the story. It is interspersed with descriptions of fictional scenes followed by fastidiously researched passages with

quotes from journals, letters and reports. Nonetheless, the same imagined passages that might interrupt an academic reader's enjoyment make the book more approachable to an audience that wants a compelling story as well as a historical account. Members of Rideau Township Historical Society are welcome to borrow *The Wreck of HMS Speedy; the Tragedy that Shook Upper Canada* from Rideau Archives Library, and it is available for public research at the Archives any Tuesday.

## RTHS Online

### RTHS Website

Be sure to stop by the RTHS website to keep up-to-date on RTHS activities and browse new content.

This month we are featuring "British Home Children in Canada ~ Part 1" an article originally published in the RTHS newsletter in 2011.

### RTHS Facebook Page

The RTHS Facebook page continues to add new posts daily (Monday to Friday). A sampling of posts this past month include:

- Grand opening of Manderley Gold & Country Club (1964)
- The challenges of roadbuilding in the 1800s and early 1900s
- The Manotick Tea Room
- S.S.#6 Marlborough (Goodstown) – 1964-65
- 5-School concert in North Gower town hall (1932)
- Johnston's Hotel/McCurdy House/Bide-A-Wee (North Gower)
- Beckett's Landing ~ A River Runs Through It (2008)
- Great turnout to Manotick fair (1962)
- SS#5 North Gower (Arbourdale) (1943)
- The Presence of the Past in North Gower: the Postmaster's house (Kars)
- The first house built in North Gower Village
- New bridge prompts retirement of Kars Bridgeman (1961)
- S.S.#10 North Gower (Manotick Public School) (1938-39)
- The end of the road for the Manotick Cheese Factory (1948)

Click on the links under "How to Connect with RTHS" on the next page to check us out.



## Community



Maureen McPhee and “assistants” Giulio Maffini (above) and Doug Culham (below) at the RTHS table for Dickinson Days



## How to Connect with RTHS



<https://rideautwphistory.org/>



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

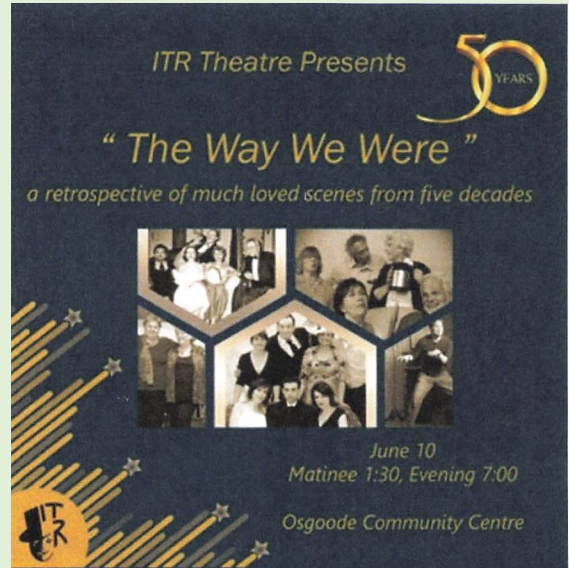


[rideautwphistory@gmail.com](mailto:rideautwphistory@gmail.com)



<https://twitter.com/RideauTpHS>

## Historical Performance by ITR Theatre Company



This show includes excerpts from our first show, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, a song from one of our Christmas concert vignettes, and scenes from *Boeing Boeing*, *See How They Run*, *There Goes the Bride*, *Perfect Wedding*, *Alone Together Again*, *Steel Magnolias* and *The Foreigner*. Some original cast will be returning accompanied by some of our other talented actors.

For more information and tickets visit [www.itrtheatre.com](http://www.itrtheatre.com). Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$16 for seniors and students.

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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*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!**

