

The Merrickville and District Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Fall 2007

Volume 5 Number 3

2007 Heritage Awards of Merit



Denis Faulkner and Mary Munnoch

The Merrickville and District Historical Society six years ago established an annual presentation of "Heritage Awards of Merit", in recognition of the efforts of individuals who have made significant contributions to maintaining and celebrating the heritage of Merrickville-Wolford. On April 24, 2006 the awards were presented at our annual Spring Dinner held in the historic third floor Baldachin Inn Ballroom .

Several years ago, the Historical Society was in crisis. Dozens of community members had made huge contributions of ideas and time to the Society, none more than our past president and recipient of our first 2007 Heritage Award of Merit, Denis Faulkner. But before Denis took over, membership had been failing and enthusiasm waning. It was time for rebuilding. Under Denis Faulkner's leadership the Society has been able to rebuild to regain its previous level of success.

A strategic plan was developed to clearly focus our on a few projects which were in our jurisdiction, were still reasonably achievable and desirable. An increased number of monthly lectures were held, the newsletter and posters were employed to keep members informed and a new highly successful web page was developed. Application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and a grant from the estate of Thomas Manning allowed our archives restoration project to begin. All of these actions were aimed at providing value to members and they responded in record numbers. For his leadership and continuous service to the Heritage community, The Merrickville & District Historical Society was pleased to present to Denis Faulkner, the Heritage award of Merit.

During the last five years, residents of Merrickville watched with interest the renovations at No. 306 Brock Street West. When acquired by the recipients of one of this year's awards, Charles and Elodie Watson in 1999 they became only the fourth holders of the title to the property in some 110 years.

Originally it was a double fronted frame house with central stairs, built on a full basement foundation of ashlar stone. At the back was a summer kitchen and behind it, near collapse, was a carriage house and woodshed. Restoration took close to five years with the able assistance of Charles's father a skilled professional carpenter.



No. 306 Brock Street West

In their renovations the Watson's have nobly addressed the dilemma of where to draw the boundary between restoration and modernization which dictates fire safety concerns. They have chosen to remain faithful to the spirit of the old building minimally adapting it for modern living. The woodshed is now heated by a gas fireplace with an 1820s mantelshelf, originally installed in an early stone house near Maitlaitland. Restoration of the

original clapboard of the frame house, clapboard cladding of the kitchen and woodshed and the final painting, in an attractive shade of yellow, was completed in 2004.

In recognizing Elodie and Charles Watson with the Merrickville & District Historical Society Award of Merit, we are also recognizing those who recognize, that acquiring a heritage home also means acquiring a responsibility to protect and preserve it, not only for their own use, but for the enjoyment of the ages.



David Hammonds presents Award to Elodie & Charles Watson

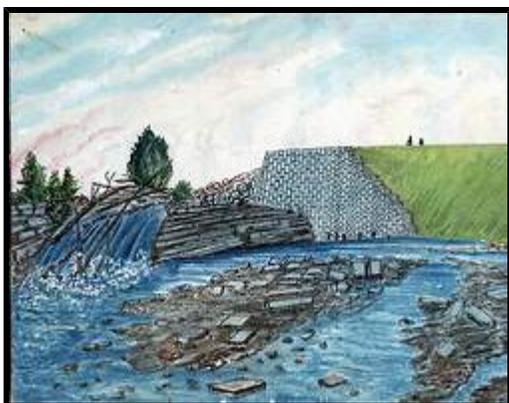


Millers of Merrickville

One of the oldest and most attractive stone cottages in the Village was acquired by Catherine and Bruce Gallop to open as their antique store, Millers of Merrickville. It is always a concern of the Heritage Community when an historic property such as this is acquired for commercial use. But, we need not have worried. With scrupulous attention to detail the Gallop's restored the ornate veranda, repaired and re-grouted the stone walls removing decrepit stucco. Repairs inside were similarly impressive. The old floor and rotting support members were replaced with period heavy pine, the windows and doors refitted retaining the character of the

original cottage. For the preservation of the heritage character of this historic building, Catherine and Bruce Gallop received a 2007, Heritage award of Merit.

Rideau 175 Lecture Series Update



Collapse at Hog's Back

Throughout the summer and fall we continued to be impressed with the story of the Rideau as told by our guest speakers. In the fourth Rideau 175 Lecture, "BUILDING THE RIDEAU CANAL", Mark Andrews described the varied complications involved in the construction of the Rideau Canal with the ingenious engineering of Colonel By's Royal engineers in employing the intrinsic strength of the arch to construct the enduring Jones Falls dam, at the time the largest masonry dam in the world.

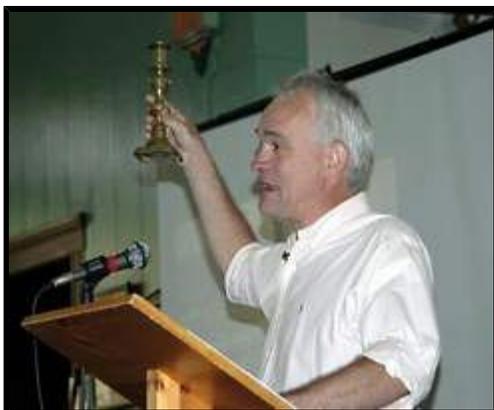
At Hog's Back it was the application of homegrown rough and ready dam construction by Philomen Wright that resolved a problem which had twice defeated the best efforts of the same Royal Engineers who triumphed at Jones Falls. And, at the eight entrance locks at Bytown it was not the Engineers nor Surveyors who determined the route, but rather avaricious politicians and land speculators that caused the canal to be constructed in perhaps the most difficult and inappropriate location.

Ironically, since it was completed, historians have invariably denigrated the Canal as a military white elephant and commercial flop. In



Robert Sneyd

the fifth Lecture Robert Sneyd refuted this representation by demonstrating the Rideau fulfilled its intended mandate as invasion deterrent well into the mid 19th century, and became the main path for commerce and immigration in Canada, competing with all American routes from 1832 until 1856.



Glenn Lockwood with precious family heirloom

In highly engaging lecture, "Ethnic Subterfuge", Glenn J Lockwood delved into his personal family history to demonstrate a largely unspoken distrust of the British in the recently arrived "Republicans" from the United States and the Colonial Government's ultimately successful plan to absorb these American newcomers into the largely British and mainly Irish Rideau population.

Mirick or Merrick?

Since we introduced www.merrickvillehistory.org, our web site, we have received many enquiries which we try to answer; not always adequately, like the one below.

*Dear Folks at the M&DH Society,
Just found your wonderful website and. Read with interest that the original name was "Mirickville" and that the man gave Colonel By some grief. (vol.3 No.4) Is it known why the name was changed?*

Dear Reader, You ask a question we have often pondered. The "Merricks" came from Wales, where their name was "Meyrick", and arrived on the east coast of America in the 1600's. Real pioneers, they migrated westward and by the time William crossed into Canada, around 1788, he had adapted the "Mirick" as his surname.

By 1856, the Mirick sons William Jr., Stephen and Aaron had built successful businesses, all of which advertised their services under the name "Mirick" . Then in July 1860 the Village was incorporated as "Mirickville", with Aaron Mirick as Reeve.

Until 1862 the spelling Mirick was used for the Village and in the "Mirickville Chronicle", the newspaper of the day. Then suddenly, the spelling "Merrick", began to appear. On May 23, 1862 the newspaper was published as "the Mirickville Chronicle". One week later on May 30, 1862, it appeared as "the Merrickville Chronicle". Simultaneously, advertisements for the family businesses now referred to "Merrick". At the same time, the spelling "Merrickville" was adopted for the Village. The change was swift and complete. "Mirick" was out, "Merrick" was in. . . . But your question ; "WHY?" remains.

A Bit of a Reach?

The family name Merrick and its many derivations goes back to ancient times. An early ancestor of William Mirick, Richard Amerike was appointed the King's Customs Officer for Bristol in 1486, 1490 and 1497. He became chief sponsor for John Cabot's expedition to Newfoundland in 1497 and it is suggested by some that the new land, "America" was named after him as reward for his patronage. Furthermore, his coat of arms, a shield of stars and stripes, could well have formed the basis of the American flag. From web page Merrick-Mirickfamily.com

Merrickville's Remarkable Foundry History (part three)

In the second part of this article, (Vol. 5 No.2 Summer 2007) we told of the maturing of the Merrickville Foundries and their achievements of the "The Percival Plow and Stove Company" in producing a line of agricultural plows that would make Merrickville famous. In this section we examine the Percivals' successful participation into the stove business and the new technologies which threatened its success..



**Percival stove Catalogue
c 1925**

While the Agricultural machines made by Percival Plow & Stove enjoyed an enviable reputation among the rural community, the Percival stoves also seem to have been as popular. Of these, the so-called "Elmwood Box Stove" of which there were four models was a ready seller.

Another popular stove was a cooking range called "Forest Beauty." * This was widely used as was the Percival "Home Perfection." These stoves with their high, deep ovens, water tanks and immense fire boxes are said to have replaced the old fireplaces and bake ovens of earlier days. Another stove, an example of which is in the Blockhouse Museum was the "Imperial Upright" heater with its isinglass windows in the doors and with a nickel-plated railing to support "cold feet."

The "Percival Pipeless Furnace" was another heater which came into quite wide use about fifty years ago and which can still be found in use. There were three sizes of these furnaces all modeled after the Heckla type but which bore the name of Percival.



Forest Beauty Stove plates

*Stove Photos courtesy James Nicholson, "Cast from the Past", Bourget, Ontario

When the Percivals were at their peak they employed up to 65 men in the foundry with 5 in the office, The hours of work were 7 am. to 12 noon and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m. with 1 hour less on Saturdays. And there were no "coffee breaks" in those days.

In 1916, after thirty-four years of operations the business was sold to the P.T. Legare Company, Ltd., of Quebec City. This company continued to turn out the same line of machines as the Percivals for awhile but offered an expanded business which included eight retail stores. An elaborate and costly catalogue was published which included, not, only the Percival products but a whole range of articles such as gas engines, threshing machines, vehicles of all kinds and even washing machines and player pianos.

There were actually about 30 different types of stoves listed and illustrated, all bearing the name Percival.

The Legare Company tried to carry on for almost 20 years in spite of the knowledge that public demands were rapidly changing. The advent of the tractor marked the beginning of the end for most of the farm machinery they were producing, while electricity, gas and fuel oil spelled the doom of the old cook stove and stove heater. They had fought a good fight but eventually Legare's were forced to close down and pass on their assets for other uses. In the late 1930's Legare's sold the business to Professor Riley of McGill. Riley was a former farm boy raised near Spencerville who had been a great admirer of the Percival plows. He ran the business until about 1941 when he sold a part of it to Mr. H. Tainsh, a Scottish engineer of outstanding ability, and part to the Heroux Industries Limited. In 1946, Mr. Heroux, Sr., bought out the company to establish the present Alloy Foundry operated by the personable and popular late Arthur Heroux, Jr.

In 1993 ownership was acquired by Karl & Linda Feige. Earlier, the old Percival "machine shop" was sold off and eventually became the business now operating as Aylings Marina while the foundry continued to be operated by the Feige's as the Alloy Foundry and Village Metalsmiths.

It is rare that any business operates continuously for some 165 years. To think that one did so in Merrickville is even more remarkable and is a tribute to the capability and enterprise of a succession of exemplary entrepreneurs. Ref L. H. Newman, 1969, MDHS archives



Linda and Karl Feige with a plaque cast and donated by Alloy Foundry and presented to speaker Victor Suthren at the Rideau 175 Lecture.

*******did you know*******

Any who have attended the Rideau 175 Lecture Series held in the beautiful Sanctuary of the Merrickville United Church will have noticed the magnificent pipe organ behind the altar. But did you know that the organ was installed in 1909, some twenty years after the Church was built. One half of the cost being covered by the Carnegie Foundation, the balance by the parishioners. Over the years the Percivals, strong supporters of the Church, and major valued customers of Carnegie Steel, were able to approach the Carnegie Foundation for support for installation of the beautiful organ, still in operating condition today.

BULLETIN! Trillium Blooms In late June

This Summer, MPP Bob Runciman and the Ontario Trillium Foundation congratulated the Merrickville and District Historical Society on receiving a \$25,000 grant. The three-year grant was made in July 2007 and is being used for equipment and resources to continue work to preserve archives in digital form, establish a secure accessible virtual archive and safely store valuable paper documents. The grant follows a 2005 Ontario Trillium

Foundation grant which allowed the Historical Society to begin its long held objective for ensured safe preservation and improved access to the Merrickville Museum's important collections.



Martha Thompson and Samantha Moyes

The archive preservation project is headed by Dieter Raths, a member of the Merrickville Historical Society and a computer engineer specializing in photography and digital photographic imaging. Historical Society Executive committee members Andrew McKay, David Hammonds, Pat Molson and Society President John Cowan are other members of the managing committee. Working full time for the summer on the project are Samantha Moyes and Martha Thompson. Both Samantha and Martha are students in Applied Museum studies at Algonquin College in Ottawa and both are returning from previous work assignments on our archives, Samantha for the fourth year and Martha for the second.

In accepting the award, Society President John Cowan said. "The continued preservation and improved public access through updated indexing and digital access remain the objectives of the project.," "Much has been accomplished with the first Ontario Trillium Foundation grant and since this current OTF grant covers funding over the next three years we are confident we can meet our objectives."

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative. The Foundation provides grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts and culture, environment, human and social service and sports and recreation sectors.

How's that again?

Speaking of names and pronunciation, is it possible the long time locals employ pronunciation tricks just to identify folks from "away"? Like me? Upon arrival I was darned if I could find North "Gore" on the map, nor a mountain south or anywhere near Mountain. And who would guess Clowes is pronounced "Clows", like "cows", or Kitley, as "Kittly or Irish Creek, Irish "Crick". Or how about Dwyer Hill, pronounced "Dyer Hill". Or that the Wickware brickyard in Easton's Corners was pronounced "Wickwire".

So if you find yourself asking for directions to Jellyby Rd. and are met with an indulgent smile and , "Do you mean 'Jellybye', you might as well have just said, "I'm new around here."

Celebrating Spring

In April we enjoyed our Spring Dinner in the Historic 3rd floor Baldachin Ballroom. A special guest was Sir John A MacDonald and his second wife Agnes who were reincarnated for the event. Following a delicious dinner, and encouraged by a little "Scottish Mist", Sir John A regaled us with some of his more memorable anecdotes and favourite songs. We are grateful to Brian and Renee Porter for their entertaining portrayals and amusingly patriotic 19th Century songs.

***** **did you know?*******

It is highly likely that on his frequent trips between Kingston and Ottawa, that Sir John A MacDonalld would have overnigheted in Merrickville. Can anyone of our readers shed any light on this likelihood?

Editor's Note:

As we approach the end of a very active year it is appropriate to again thank our supporters. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford for moral and financial support for our Archives project and Blockhouse Museum operation; the Patrons and Sponsors and the Merrickville United Church who allowed us to conduct a truly memorable 175th anniversary lecture series; Parks Canada for their upgrading and re-focusing of the Blockhouse Museum. (We will have welcomed close to 12,000 visitors this year – a new record.); Ken Watson for his generous donation of time and expertise in creating and maintaining for us a truly exceptional web page (www.merrickvillehistory.org).

In addition, assistance of the Government of Canada through various funding agencies, as well as the Province of Ontario and Ontario Trillium Foundation grants are gratefully acknowledged.

Of course special thanks to our hard working Committee members and to the volunteers who enabled us to conduct all our activities.

And most of all, thanks to you our members for your interest and generous support and encouragement through membership and participation.

Published by The Merrickville & District Historical Society
Copyright The Merrickville & District Historical Society, 2007,
John Cowan, Editor

[Return to Publications Page](#)

Merrickville and District Historical Society
PO Box 294
Merrickville, Ontario K0G 1N0

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Projects](#) | [History](#) | [Blockhouse Museum](#) | [Walking Tour](#) | [Links](#)

website design donated by [Ken W. Watson](#)

©2007 The Merrickville and District Historical Society