

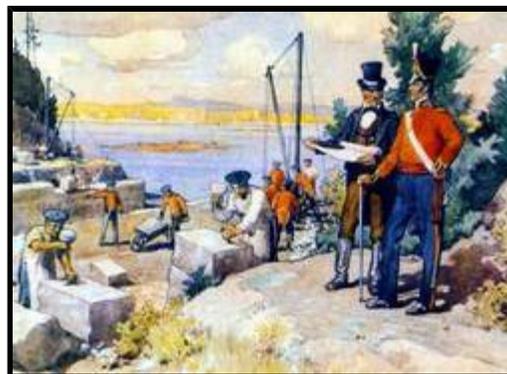
The Merrickville and District Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Fall 2006

Volume 4 Number 3

Rideau 175 Lecture Series

Next year marks the 175th anniversary of the opening of the Rideau Canal. In celebration of this historic event, your Historical Society has organized a truly signature event. Starting in March 2007 and continuing each month through November, a series of lectures by renowned authorities will describe the history of the Rideau Canal from its inception to the present. The list of speakers for the series is truly impressive and includes recognized authors and authorities on the all aspects of the Rideau.



Colonel By with canal contractor

The opening lecture will present an overview of the series and will set the stage for the coming presentations. First will be a look at the Rideau and Cataraqui landscape before Colonel By's canal was constructed.

Next we will hear of the near loss of British North America in the war of 1812 motivated the Duke of Wellington to demand development of an alternate line of defense and supply for the British Canadian colony.



The Rideau Queen

Then Colonel By is assigned the near impossible task of constructing a canal through the Canadian wilderness. Against any reasonable expectation he succeeds, and for twenty years, Colonel By's canal, although not used for defense, becomes the most important route for commerce and immigration between Montreal and Kingston and the immigration route to the developing Canada West.

But, the canal's period of commercial prosperity is relatively short. Railways and alternate water routes usurped the Canal as preferred navigational routes, but, the canal's vitality

survives as it begins to develop as an idyllic destination for luxury leisure travelers. As the series concludes, we look at the hidden relics of ages past and conclude with the emergence of the Rideau as a National treasure and a probable UNESCO world heritage site. We feel the series offers, one of the most comprehensive descriptions of Rideau Canal history ever presented. All of the lectures will be presented at 2:00 pm on Sunday afternoons in the Merrickville United Church, starting on March 18, 2007 and continuing each month until November. (The specific dates and topics are listed below.)

- **March 18 - HISTORICAL OVERVIEW** by Professor Brian Osborne
Introduction to series and overview the history of the Rideau Canal
- **April 15 - THE RIDEAU ROUTE** by Ken Watson
A view of the landscape of the pre-Canal waterway.
- **May 27 - THE WAR of 1812** by Victor Suthren
The war, the troubled peace, the decision to build the canal.
- **June 17 - BUILDING THE CANAL** by Mark Andrews

Colonel By's innovative adaptation of European techniques to wilderness construction.

- **July 22 - BOOM CANAL YEARS** by Bob Sneyd
The story of the years of great Canal success and prosperity 1832-1856.
- **Aug. 19 - ETHNIC SUBTERFUGE** by Glenn R Lockwood
Social life of Rideau corridor 1830-1930.
- **Sept. 16 - THE ROMANCE OF STEAM** by Coral Lindsay
The age of leisure steam boats and the canal's survival through troubled times.
- **Oct. 21 - ANOTHER RIDEAU WORLD** by Jonathan Moore
The underwater archaeology of the Rideau Canal.
- **Nov. 18 - THE RIDEAU as LIVING HISTORY** by Doug Stewart
The Rideau's 20th Century evolution and its future promise.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Brian Osborne is Professor Emeritus, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario. Professor Osborne is a historical geographer whose recent work has addressed the role of art, literature, and communications (canals, railroads, postal systems) in the development of Canadian national identity. He is currently Past President of the Ontario Historical Society.

Ken Watson has explored the Rideau through his research and has shared that research through the Internet and publications, notably, "A History of the Rideau Lockstations", published by Friends of the Rideau. His most recent research examined the early Rideau surveys and the pre-canal Rideau/Cataraqui corridor between 1783 and 1832.

Victor Suthren is a writer and historian with an interest in colonial history of the 18th and early 19th Centuries. He served as Director General of the Canadian War Museum from 1986 to 1997. He has written twelve historical books, fiction and non-fiction including one recently published on the War of 1812.

Mark Andrews - As a Professional Engineer and author of the definitive book on Colonel By, "For King and Country". Mark Andrews is uniquely qualified to speak on the incredible technical accomplishment of building the most advanced canal system in the world through the wilderness that was Canada in 1832.

Robert Sneyd is a retired history teacher from Smiths Falls whose roots go back to the early days of settlement on the Rideau. He has developed a comprehensive interest in and knowledge of the Canal and its use during the boom era from 1832 to 1850 when it was the main transportation for commerce and immigration route from Montréal to the new Canada West.

Glenn J Lockwood was raised along Irish Creek, part of the original route proposed for the Rideau Canal in 1816. He has served on the executive of The Ontario Historical Society, and was chair of the City of Ottawa Cultural Leadership Committee and has written ten books about the social history of the larger Rideau corridor region.

Coral Lindsay - The Lindsay family operated "the Lindsay Wharf" in Kars for over 100 years. During this period it became a key stopping point for the steam vessels that plied the canal, carrying cargo and passengers up and down the busy waterway. Over the years Coral Lindsay has collected a remarkable assembly of pictures from this era which she will share with us.

Jonathan Moore is an underwater archaeologist with Parks Canada who specializes in the world hidden beneath the Rideau waterway. He will tell of some of the interesting discoveries beneath the surface we travel over.

Doug Stewart is the Director General of Parks Canada, National Parks and was instrumental in initiating the application of the Rideau Canal to be considered as a UNESCO World Heritage site. He will speak on the 20th century Rideau, its decline, rebirth and conservation and recreational use, and its present and future vitality as a

heritage tourism resource.

Ticket Information

Pre-paid complete series tickets with assured seating are available to the public at a cost of \$25 per person.

In recognition of the ongoing support of Society members, series tickets will be available to current members at a discounted cost of \$20.

This special deal will be available for paid up members. We would appreciate your completion and mailing of your order (which is attached to the enclosed brochure), together with a cheque payable to the Merrickville & District Historical Society.

Tickets for individual lectures at a cost of \$5 per person per lecture may be reserved by phone and paid for on arrival at the door.

For additional information

Telephone Gillian Gray

613-269-4236

or

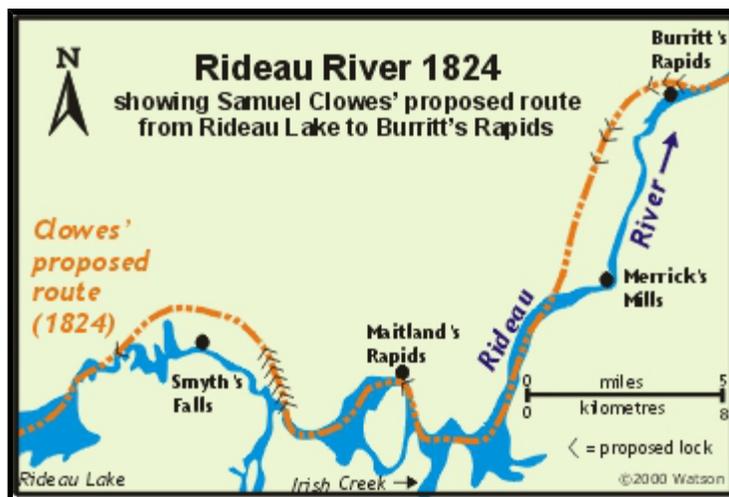
email info@merrickvillehistory.org

Rideau Canal to Bypass Merrickville?

It is interesting to contemplate how Merrickville would have developed if the original proposals of Canal surveyor, Samuel Clowes and Colonel By had been followed. The following is drawn from Ken W. Watson's, *"A History of the Rideau Lockstations"* (available through Friends of the Rideau) Rideau Canal surveyor, Samuel Clowes' recommendation in 1824 was to bypass the Rideau River in its entirety between the foot of Burritt's Rapids, to the still water above Merrick's Mills. The route would have gone through the lands to the west of the river and would have required six locks and a great deal of excavation work. Fortunately for Merrickville, Colonel By abandoned this plan in the very early stages, opting instead for his slackwater system of drowning rapids by building dams in the main channel of the Rideau. The original tender in early 1827 called for "Three Locks, of 8 feet 4 inches lift each, with considerable Rock and Earth Excavation in Merrick's Snie. On close examination, Colonel By realized that if he built his locks in the snie, it would force all the water to go through Merrick's sluiceways. By felt that spring flood would surely damage the mills, and that Merrick would likely sue for damages.

In his 1830 report, By, in commenting on the changes he had made to the original plans, stated that, *"it appears that the Canal might judiciously be carried to the East of the Snie, and that by placing the Locks separately, according to the nature of the Ground, with Basins between them, the increase upon the Original Estimate would not Amount to more than £4000, and this mode would also prevent any Claims for Damages to the Mill, the Original Channels of the River not being interfered with the Dam being placed at the head of the Rapids, and considerably above the Snie in question, and as this latter mode appeared to me the judicious, and the one that would most probably be attended with the least Expense, I have according adopted it ..."*

Thus the locks were constructed in the positions we see them today. . . . (for those interested in the history of the Rideau, Watson's *A History of the Rideau Lockstations*, and the Friends of the Rideau web page, www.rideaufriends.com are highly recommended.)



Originally proposed Rideau Canal Route indicating a bypass around Merrick's Mills

Reference: Ken W. Watson's, "A History of the Rideau Lockstations"(available through Friends of the Rideau)

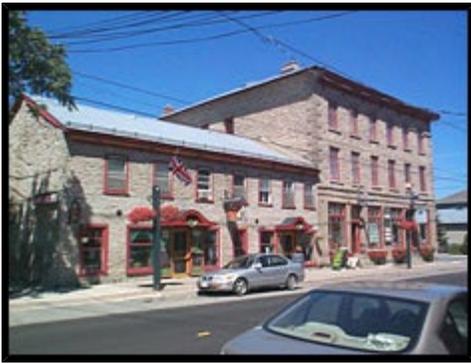
Another Celebration

As if not sufficient in celebrating the 175th Canal Anniversary, Merrickville has another reason to celebrate. Our own Merrickville Public Library this year is celebrating its 150th year since its formation. In many ways this is equally significant to the events to be celebrated next year, for the Merrickville Library, begun in 1856 as the Mechanics Institute and Library has a history that makes it one of the earliest such organizations in eastern Canada.

As the Industrial Revolution gathered steam in the early 1800's the knowledge of the classics which had been the basis for the education system was of little value to managers and workers dealing with the new technologies. In order to bridge this gap Industrialists in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1800, sponsored a free course of Saturday evening lectures to artisans, intended to familiarize them with some of the scientific principles underlying the employment of tools and machinery. The class met with immediate success and the concept of sponsored free adult education quickly spread around the industrialized world. These self-improving working men's adult education colleges were often funded by wealthy local industrialists.

By 1856, Merrickville, with its woolen mill, iron foundry and numerous manufacturing operations had surpassed its pioneer rural roots and had become a major industrial complex. It became an ideal candidate for the Mechanics Institute concept of adult education and in 1856 became the first Mechanics' Institute in the Counties of Leeds' and Grenville. According to Ruth McKenzie's "History of Leeds and Grenville," Institutes were later organized at Brockville, Prescott and Kemptville. These are considered the forerunners of our modern extension courses and our public libraries. As in the British precedent, the Merrickville Mechanics Institute was financed by leading industrialists. A certificate reprinted in the Merrickville Chronicle of September 20, 1856 recording its formation reads "By-Laws of Merrickville Mechanics' Institute and Library Association". It was incorporated by an Act of Parliament on February 4th, 1857. The trustees were Aaron Mirick, John Muir J.C. Lonsdale, C. Leggo, M.D. and Samuel Langford. Twenty other members are listed with contributions "in English money" to the amount of twenty-three pounds.

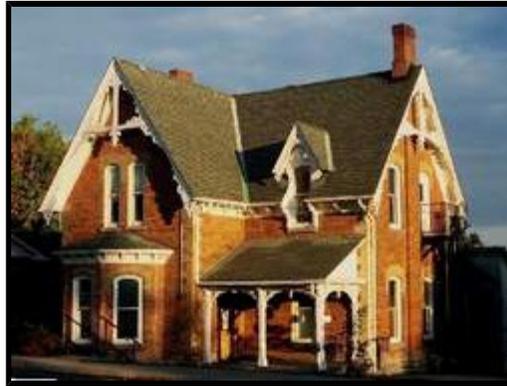
The first formal location of the Merrickville Institute/Library was in a two story stone building



The Mechanics Institute, founded in 1856 found its first home within the two story stone building now operated as the Gad's Hill Restaurant

on St Lawrence next to the Arron Merrick commercial block. You will recognize this building today as the charming Gad's Hill Restaurant. In 1911, the Library was combined with the Merrickville post office and moved south on St Lawrence to the attractive polychrome brick building, the present location of "Country Bumpkins".

In the year 1938, the late Miss Mary Pearson, daughter of Pearson Foundry owner, Mary Pearson, (and granddaughter of Lockmaster John Johnston), made a gift to the town of a fine red brick home on Main Street to be used as Municipal Offices. Miss Pearson was a progressive and cultured lady with a great love of books and arranged for a room on the main floor to be used by the Library. When the Municipal offices were moved, the Library expanded to its present use of the whole building.



Merrickville Public Library

We are fortunate in Merrickville to have use of, not only the most historic Library in the district, but, for its size, one of the best.

Reference: the Merrickville Public Library - 1856-1984 Hazel Ramsbottom & Alice Ogilvie

Archives Update

There is more progress to report on the project to make our valuable archives more accessible. The Historical Society has leased from the Heritage Merrickville Foundation the lower floor of the Old Town Hall for our archives. Not only will this location provide a secure and environmentally safer environment for our valuable records, but, it will also move us a step closer to being able to make these records available for examination and research by the public. Many records and images have already been indexed and recorded on computer disks and by the end of next year, it is our objective to be in a position to welcome interested visitors.

The Historic Wolford Chapel

Next spring you are on your way to pick strawberries at McGrath's berry farm off Kilmarnock Road, before you make the left turn stop at the beautiful white church, known as "the Wolford Chapel", pause to absorb an important part of our history. As with so much of our local history we owe this record to the research of Alice Hughes who composed this record in 2002 .

"The Wolford Rural Cemetery is on Lot 26, Concession A, Wolford Township, in the County of Grenville, Ontario. This lot was deeded to Dean Carleton from the Crown on May 17, 1802, but he does not appear in the lists of settlers of Wolford and was likely an absentee owner. Joseph Haskins (1745 - 1823) settled on Lot 25, Concession A and had 25 acres cleared by July 29, 1797. When Joseph died in 1823 he owned part of Lot 26, Concession A also. In 1832, Joseph Haskins Jr. sold 11/2 acres to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 100 pounds. Methodist circuit riders came to the area as early as 1804, and in the 1820's the Wolford Chapel was built. According to a drawing and description made by Henry Rose in 1921, the Chapel in its early days was very much like Hay Bay Methodist Chapel, but it underwent extensive changes in 1859 and again in the 1890's to "modernize" it. The siding put on in recent times has further modernized it.

The cemetery was first used in September 1805, for the inscription on the tombstone of Samuel Dow reads as follows: "Samuel Dow, born at Newburyport, Massachusetts, Died at Montague, C.w. Sept. 16, 1805 aged 37 yr. and was the first person that was buried in this burying ground." Many pioneers of Wolford and Montague townships are buried here, as well as later settlers and succeeding generations. The first group of settlers were loyalists from the United States. These are represented in the cemetery by names such as Haskins, Olmstead, Arnold, Barber, Brown, McIntyre, Smith, Pearson, Street, Wickware, Livingston, Cross, Coolidge, Edmunds, Putnam, Tallman, Shatford, Chester, McCrea, Brundige, Dillabough, Rose, and Hutton. Next were soldiers discharged and granted land after the Napoleonic Wars, represented by the names McCarthy and Maitland. Then in the 1818 to 1850 period came many Irish families, such as Ferguson, McGrath, Rathwell, McCaw, Connor, Empey, Johnston, Kennedy, Grenville, Bradford, Devitt, Reynolds, Willoughby, McMillen, Bates, Pryce, Hanna, White, Phillips and others.

Representatives of Scottish families in this cemetery are Carnochan, Shields, Moir and Ballantyne. There is at least one French Canadian family - Belrose - and from England came the Milburn and Brocklebank names. Of settlers who came after World War II there are the names Janthur and Vanderdrift, Voogt, Oberman, Jansen and Spoelder.

Both Wolford Rural Cemetery and Wolford Chapel are now held in trust for the United Church of Canada by a Trustee Board appointed by Easton's Corners United Church. Other denominations also use the cemetery.

Membership Matters

As we approach the end of the year we would like to thank our members for their support. Current paid membership is 142 individuals, up 12% from last year and including 14 new life members. While we don't pretend to do everything right, we do take your support as an encouraging indication we are on the right track.

Please take advantage of our early ticket purchase offer. Not only will you achieve a significant saving, but, you will be assured of being part of this exciting event.

We are able to offer this series at this reasonable cost because of the generous financial support of special Patrons, **Lenore Newman**, the **Village of Merrickville Wolford**, and the **Heritage Merrickville Foundation**, as well as the generous support of the sponsors from Business and the Community:

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Newsletter - John Cowan

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