

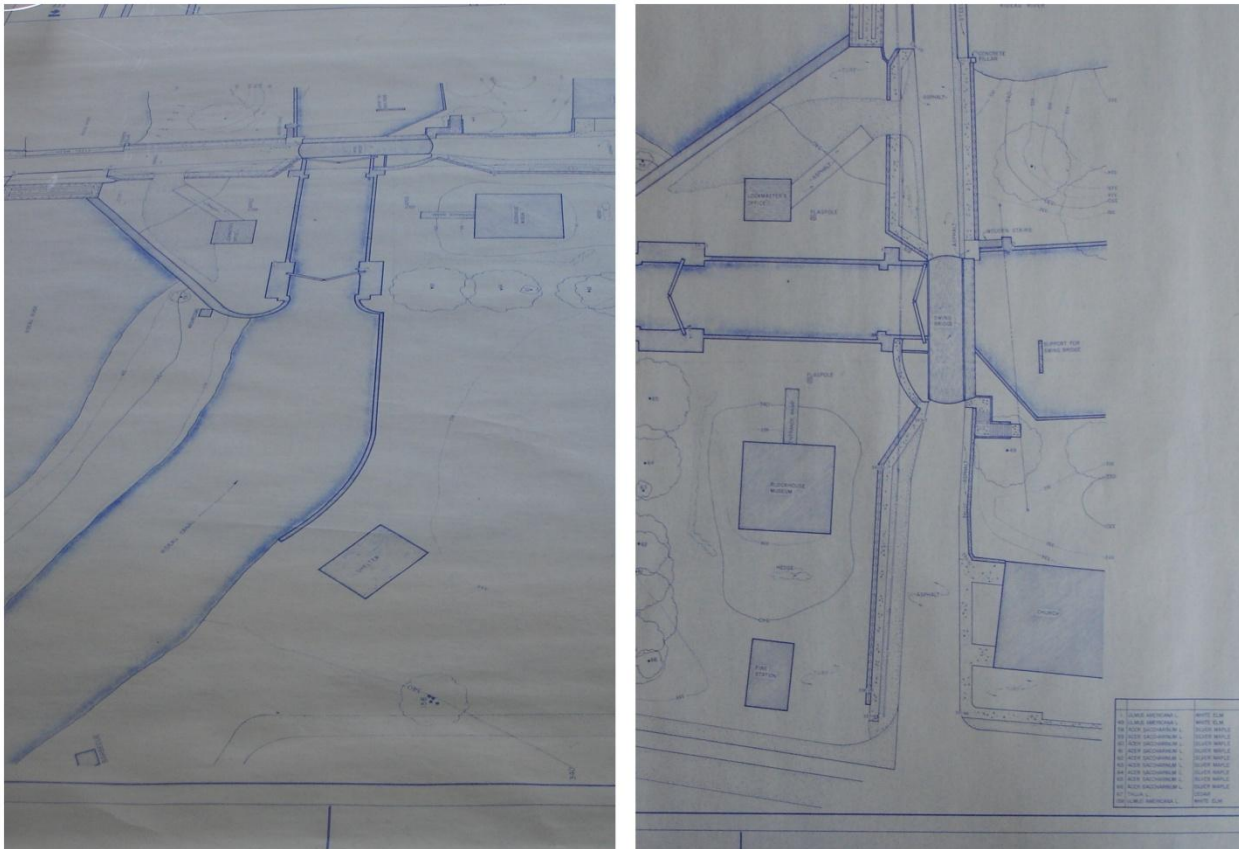
Merrickville and District Historical Society

Archival Update, Spring - 2015



So here we are on the first day of spring, March 20th with our 2015 Spring Issue of the Archival Update. After February's record breaking low temperatures it is a joy to see the first signs of spring's arrival; after all, we have moved the clocks forward, the spring bulbs will be next and before you know it we will be complaining about mowing the lawns.

You may recall from our last issue that we had acquired from Mrs. Gillian Hammonds sketches of the blockhouse museum that her late husband, David, the Blockhouse Manager had done. Well lo and behold, now we know where he got the information from. Gillian located and donated a set of blueprints - nine in all - that were commissioned by Parks Canada from the Architectural Engineering Company of Dominik, Thompson, Mallette and Proctor in March 1984, titled "Stabilization of the Merrickville Blockhouse Rideau Canal, Blockhouse and Surrounding Area".



These are just two of the blueprints that were produced by Indian and Northern Affairs; they measure 39 X 28 inches and are undated. They are presently being stored in the Archives, unfortunately in a rolled up cardboard container. And yes, you guessed it, I am now looking for a map cabinet large enough to hold all nine of them on a flat surface. Anyone know where I might find a second hand cabinet?

From the Archive Collection

Here we have two beautiful Indian Deerskin vests. They were donated by Mrs. George Gill of Merrickville on July 4th 1974. They would have been catalogued and then placed in the Blockhouse Museum. In 2006 both garments were taken from the Blockhouse to the Canadian Museum of Civilization for assessment and evaluation by Mr. John Moses.

The original description on the first vest reads: “Deerskin Vest with Cree Beadwork – Sauteux work specializing in flowers. From Fort Indian Head, Saskatchewan”.

Photographs of the front and back of this vest are shown below. It has a deerskin front surrounded with green woollen trim, the back is of red silk brocade. There are two pockets in front and it fastens up with brown button holes, and is stitched with red thread. The glass beadwork on the deerskin is of a floral design in green, red, pink, yellow, blues etc. The collar is surrounded by black velvet. It is a Plains Cree design, specifically Sauteux, from Southern Manitoba/Saskatchewan and was essentially used as “Sunday Best” for community events.

An assessment in 1992 indicated that the leather was worn but the beadwork was still beautiful. It was trimmed with capping around the bottom which has gone from the front near the buttons. Mr Moses dated this vest in the late 1880's to early 1900's.

The second Vest is described as deerskin, Plains Cree Sauteux, from Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan and is dated as 1890.

It is a deerskin jacket stitched with a horse head and pipe as well as some designs in quill. It has a bib fastening the quill work on the front, and on the breast pocket and yoke behind. The jacket is finished like a shirt on the bottom with ragged edges. Many of the edges are cut to look ragged. There are tassels along the sides and back. There is a fringe along the under seam of the sleeves, shoulder seam, and side seam of the jacket as well as a yoke along the back.

Based on the cut of the vest, John Moses assessed it as possibly Métis. He also noted that “most of the quill work is destroyed by wear and insects – still present....and recommended that it be kept frozen for forty-eight hours to kill varmints, bugs, etc.”



We very much appreciate the historical items that are donated to the archives; so should anyone have anything that the society might find of interest to the archival collection, please contact us at ndonald@growthconnections.com, we would be only too happy to pick them up. Also the archives are open to the public by appointment, again just contact us and we could arrange to meet you at the archive premises in Burritt's Rapids and help you with your enquiries you have or just show you around.

Harry F. McLean Exhibit Blockhouse Museum

This summer the Society will be opening a new exhibit in the Blockhouse, "The Harry McLean Room". This will display the life and times of one of Merrickville prominent residents. The exhibit is quite extensive and, since Mr. McLean was very involved with the building of our Nation's Railways, part of the exhibit will be a display of some photographs of the Merrickville Station - we do also have one of the original station signs.

The Merrickville station was often referred to as one of the Grand Stations erected by the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and the photographs certainly do prove that. Unfortunately have not been able to determine the dates when the station was constructed and when it was demolished. We do know that the station was open and operating in November 1914 from a picture post card, from the collection of Mr. Jim Skelding. Another postcard from his collection, which is also of the station, unfortunately is not dated. It does however refer to the early 1970's which apparently was just prior to the station being demolished.

Unfortunately, on contacting the CPR Archives, we were advised that the department was closed due to cataloguing so they would not be able to help us. Other resources such as the Archives, library, train and rail web sites, and members of our community (whom I might add had some wonderful stories to tell), were unable to assist.

Can you help? If anyone has any related knowledge or suggestions on these dates we would appreciate hearing from you. Just email me at ndonald@growthconnections.com - Thank you.

Interesting Envelope

We recently received a very interesting photograph of an envelope from Mr. Bruce Crow who has a Philatelic/Stamp/Postal History company in Calgary. He had sent the photograph through to our member and the Society Web Manager, Mr. Ken Watson, who forwarded the photograph to us for the archives. The original I believe is still in Mr. Crow's collection.

It is addressed to Mr. John Newman, late lockmaster, Merrickville, Ont. It is a registered letter from the Pension Office in Ottawa. There is a date stamp on the front which indicated that it was sent on the PM, Ap.....9, 72 (perhaps 1872). Unfortunately not all of the date is clear so it is difficult to determine the exact year it was sent. The reverse also has a date stamp showing Kemptville, and one would assume this was the routing the mail took before reaching Mr. Newman, but then again the date is unclear. There are two stamps on the front, one for three cents and another for two cents. (A tad cheaper than today's registered mail!) and there is also a change of mailbox number from 485 to 585. On the reverse is a wonderful seal - in red wax - presumably this would apply to Registered Mail. Unfortunately we cannot distinguish the marking on the seal. Would anyone know? One sign we don't see any more is O H M S (On Her Majesty's Service, that would have been Queen Victoria in the late 1800's) on the top of the envelope. It is a pity that we don't have the original for our archives, but just having the information and photograph keeps our history alive.

A brief note on John Newman: He was born on February 5, 1804. With his wife Esther he had seven children, Thomas, Julia, Sarah, William, Jane, John and George. (I guess he didn't spend all his time working the farm and operating the canal locks!). He was formerly with the Royal Sappers and Miners, before becoming the lockmaster at Burritt's Rapids from 1836 until he was transferred to the Nicholson's locks in November 1847 where he retired in 1871. He died on April 18, 1895.



For those new members I would like to remind you that thanks to the efforts over the last several years of many Historical society volunteers, some 3000 such records can now be accessed for observation and research at the Merrickville Public Library. The Library has established a special "heritage" room within which the computer records of the Historical Society and the genealogical records of Alice Hughes are now accessible.

Members of the Public are invited and encouraged to view the Historical Society Archival Data Base in the Library and to dig a little deeper into Merrickville's history. Merrickville Public Library Librarian, Mary Kate Lapin, will be delighted to show you the Heritage Room and to assist you with accessing the Archives.

Don't forget to renew your membership. The annual membership runs from November 1st to October 31st - \$10.00 for single, \$15.00 for family. Life memberships are \$100.00 for a single and \$150.00 for a family. This can easily be taken care of when either visiting the Archives or attending the monthly lecture meeting when our membership committee member Art Hackett will be only too happy to take care of you. Or just send a cheque to the Merrickville and District Historical Society, P.O. Box 394, Merrickville, Ontario. K0G 1N0 and your membership card will be mailed to you.