



Fall 2012 **newsletter** VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3

PREZ SEZ...

I guess it's time to say farewell to summer, but what a wonderful summer it was, sunny, hot, humid and yes a little dry at times, but for all our complaining we might want to reflect about the joys that summer brings next February when the snow might just be knee deep..

The society was busy this year, although we do take a short sabbatical during July and August from many of our volunteer duties, the work never stops. David and Gillian Hammonds oversaw the running of the Blockhouse Museum, which is open seven days a week from 10am to 5pm.

An excellent job was done in resurrecting the Rural Historic Sites Project by David & Gillian Hammonds, Janet Glaves and Cora Heikkila and, although we have some ways to go yet, a searchable data base was created, digitization of the 2005-6 work was entered and an additional 27 structures were added, bringing the current total to 93 properties. Congratulations to all!

We finally found a new home for our archives at the Burritt's Rapids Community Hall. The move went successfully with a few volunteers on hand to help unpack. We just need a little time now to put things in order. I think an open house in place of one of our future lecture nights might be an excellent way for you, our members, to see just how much the Society has done over the years in the collection and cataloguing of the artefacts.

Our summer newsletter had a number of wonderful articles, but I am afraid to say that I am guilty of a couple of major omissions. The excellent photographs that were taken at the old Wickware Brickyard and Tannery were taken by our Executive member Gillian Gray and somewhere along the way I neglected to give her the credit she justly deserved. Similarly, I also neglected to mention that all of the original research on the McGrath family, their homestead, their business and their lives was done by Alice Hughes, a school teacher, historian, and also a relative of the McGrath family. We are very fortunate that Alice was a very active member of our Society. She spent endless hours over the years in researching the families and history of Merrickville-Wolford and surrounding areas, compiled numerous volumes of hand written research papers, and wrote several books. In fact it was Alice who, at her own expense, paid for and erected the original sign at the Tannery. My sincere apologies go out to Gillian and the families of Alice Hughes for my omissions.

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

That William Mirick, having had difficulty with the operation and ownership of his original 1793 mill site at "the Great Falls" in Merrickville abandoned the site and in 1797 petitioned and was granted rights to 400 acres in the vicinity of Andrewsville for construction of new mills. But, fortunately for Merrickville, he found the site received unsuitable. Returning to his original abandoned site at "the Great Falls", the persistent William Mirick reconstructed a new saw mill and grist mill, this time successfully, and, although he did not actually receive legitimate title until 1804, the rest, as they say, is history.

Reference: Industries and Industrialists of Merrickville, 1792-1979, by Richard Tatley, 1979 Parks Canada Manuscript Report 423 – Digital Edition, Friends of the Rideau, 2011

The War of 1812

This is the third and final part of the story of the War of 1812 and its effect on the Rideau Canal and Eastern Ontario, as narrated by author and historian Victor Suthren during the 2007 Rideau 175 Lecture series. In the first part we learned how the seeds of war were planted and grew into the Battle which literally defined Canada as a Nation 200 years ago. In the second segment we learned of the brave but frustrating, and often bungling progress, of the war. In this final segment we learn of the consequences of the war which, politically and geographically, accomplished virtually nothing, but which resulted in the confirmation of Canada as a nation and the construction of our Rideau Canal. (for parts one and two, see the Merrickville and District Historical Society Newsletter Fall 2011 and Summer 2012 editions)

“Born in War, Nurtured in Peace”

Following the signing of the Treaty of Peace, on Christmas Eve 1814, in Ghent, Belgium, peace between the two Nations was established and the borders were reestablished essentially as they had existed before the hostilities began. Most now consider the war to have been fruitless.

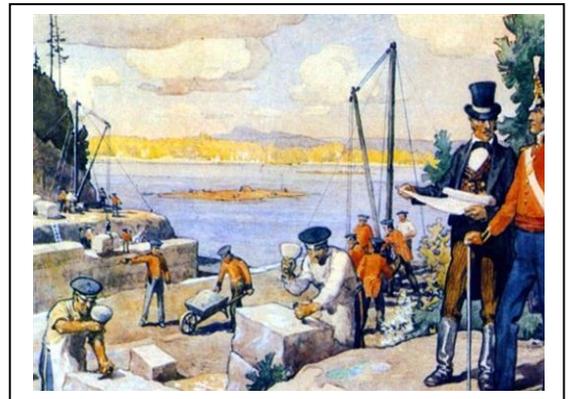
But the war was not without consequences, particularly for the new Canadian nation.

The threat to Canada had been perilously real, and at a dinner after the war, American General Jacob Brown, said to his Canadian and British hosts that the first objective in the ‘next’ war would be the severing of the vital St Lawrence artery between Kingston and Montreal, where for long stretches it fronted American territory, as everything above that point would have to surrender for lack of supplies. British authorities, including the Duke of Wellington, saw the need to find an alternative supply route between the secure posts of Montreal and Kingston if the American intention was to be thwarted.

As early as the American Revolutionary War, British surveyors had examined the Cataracqui and Rideau rivers, and the myriad lakes between them, as possible transportation and settlement routes. American loyalists and “late loyalists” from New England and New York had already created small settlements along the potential route, such as at Merrickville, where rapids allowed the construction of sawmills and grist mills. Gradually a concept developed for a military waterway that would avoid the risky St Lawrence route altogether. From Montreal, boats (and eventually steamboats) would travel up the Ottawa River to a small settlement where the Rideau River emptied into the Ottawa. A canal would allow passage south along the Rideau River into the lakes in the interior, where a channel would be laid that brought the route down to the headwaters of the Cataracqui, and thence down to Cataracqui to Kingston on Lake Ontario where British naval superiority could be established.

Brown’s warning was heeded, and the British government commissioned Lt. Colonel John By of the Royal Engineers to build this ambitious canal system, which was completed at great cost in both sterling and lives over 1826-1832. An extensive fortification system, though not as elaborate as originally planned, was then built to defend the canal, of which Fort Henry in Kingston remains the most impressive. The principal motive, therefore, for the construction of the canal between 1826 and 1832, and the subsequent construction of protecting fortifications such as Fort Henry (1832-1836) was entirely military.

But with the diminution in tensions between Great Britain and the United States, and the transition of the relationship between Canada and the United States from enmity to warm alliance and friendship, the Rideau Canal never was used for the military purposes of its construction, serving instead as a pathway for settlement and commerce, and finally as a recreational waterway as commerce declined and moved elsewhere. Conceived in war’s aftermath, it is now a venue of enjoyment for both Canadians and Americans alike, a fitting fate.



“The principal motive, therefore, for the construction of the canal between 1826 and 1832, and the subsequent construction of protecting fortifications such as Fort Henry (1832-1836) and the various canal blockhouses, was entirely military. It is one of the pleasanter ironies of history that an undertaking originating in the prosecution of war should have at no time been involved in such activity, but became instead a vital artery for the peaceful creation of new communities in Upper Canada.”
Victor Suthren, May 27, 2007

For a more comprehensive description of the War of 1817, see the proceedings of the Rideau 175 Lecture series, May, The War of 1812, and The Rideau Canal. By Victor Suthren.

“I think I know what a Miner is but, what is a Sapper?”

This is a question often asked of the volunteers and summer employees of the Merrickville Blockhouse Museum. The term derives from British Military which recognized the necessity of having specialized troops and equipment to conduct war in the 1800's. An important element of European military conflict at that time revolved around military fortifications. The Royal Sappers and Miners, formed in 1813 consisted of skilled miners, stone cutters and masons, blacksmiths, carpenters and construction experts. They were used by the British military throughout the world for construction of some fortifications and the destruction of others. This style of warfare involved zigzag trenching or tunneling towards the fort in an action called sapping, -- and then when close enough, “mining” under the fort to plant explosive mines. Thus these specialized soldiers became known as “Sappers” and “Miners”



In this 1825 drawing by George Campion, we see Sapper officers and enlisted men posed against a background of such a siege operation. The two men in the left foreground are shown in their dress uniforms, while on the right and in the distance are men in the uniform of enlisted men.

In the background is the fortification target of the attack and the gabion lined trenches being constructed to get close to mine or bombard it.

**Illustration, George P Campion, Drawing Master, Royal Military Academy, Woolrich
Text from “John Johnston Lockmaster”, Presentation, Historical Society, 2010
Presented by John Cowan**

Andrews and Nicholson Partners in History of “The Flats”

By this printing, the debate over whether or not to retain the Andrewsville Bridge, in some form, will perhaps have been resolved, hopefully in favour of retaining passage between the pioneer village of Andrewsville and the Nicholson Locks. But, these two sites are linked by more than a road. Although they probably never even met, the names of Robert Nicholson and Rufas Andrews are enjoined by the history of this area old timers call “the Flats” and by the frail chord of that same Andrewsville bridge, now being threatened with extinction.

The Locks at Andrewsville are named for United Empire Loyalist, Robert Nicholson Sr. who was farming near Albany, NY in 1775 when the American Revolution broke out. For widely proclaiming his refusal to join “the damn Rebels”, as he called them, he was thrown in jail and his lands and livestock were confiscated. From Albany he was taken to a prison ship on the Hudson River and then to Sopers, NY on the Hudson River, (now Kingston, NY), from which place he escaped to Canada. He immediately joined Jessup’s Loyal Ranges under General Haldimand serving for the British with distinction as a sharpshooter and scout.

At about the same time another a Protestant loyalist refugee from the American Revolution, Hezekiah Andrews and his wife Yatty Earls had also escaped to Canada and arrived eventually in North Augusta. There they established a farm and a family, with a son Rufas Andrews born 4 July, 1804 and a brother Silas shortly after. Nothing at the time would have indicated the farm boys would be responsible for their family name to be recognized in perpetuity in a village named for them.

After 1784 when the Corps was abandoned, thirty-six year old Robert Nicholson was granted for his service a lot in Augusta Township. From there in 1795 or 1796, he moved to the Rideau River and acquired 350 acres on the south side

in Wolford Township. There he successfully re-built the farm he had lost in Albany and together with his wife Catherine farmed for the next 30 years at what became known as Nicholson's Rapids at Merrickville. On his property he built a small stone cottage. Only a few crumbled stone walls remain of the original Nicholson farm home, once speculated to be the oldest stone dwelling in the region. (It was recently demolished to make room for the renovations to the brick home which was later built when Andrews purchased the Nicholson property.)



The Nicholson name is linked closely to other aspects of the district history. One of his daughters, Phoebe Nicholson as daughter of UEL Robert Nicholson, received in 1820 a Loyalist grant of 200 acres, upstream from her father, above the rapids. She first married, John Lehey and after husband John's death, then married Miles McGuigan after whom the pioneer cemetery on her property is named.

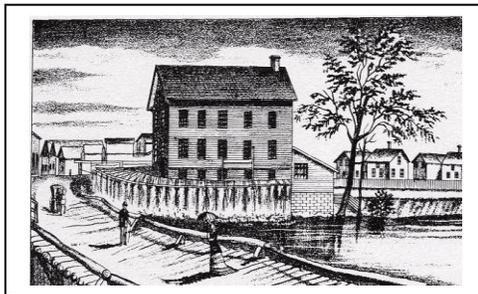
Robert Nicholson provided his property and name for Colonel By to build two lock stations, now Upper and Lower Nicholson Locks but he did not live to see the Rideau Canal completed, nor the Locks installed at his Nicholson's rapids. He died on Aug. 20, 1829, at the age of 81 and is listed as buried in McGuigans Cemetery in Merrickville.

The young Rufas Andrews became an entrepreneur and a visionary. Having inherited from his father the UEL designation Rufas was eligible for the free acquisition of "Clergy Reserve" land on the north side of the Rideau in 1847 opposite the by then well established Nicholson Locks.

Rufas and his brother Silas operated a farm on their parcel of land but had grander schemes for the area. By 1855 they had a saw mill and grist mill already operating in the area to serve the needs of a growing pioneering community but the Andrews brothers saw a need for further mills.

Local researcher of "the Flats" history, Dr Robert Newman, in an address to the Merrickville Historical Society in 1967 personally recalled the latter days while Andrewsville was still thriving.

"The grist mill was built in 1861 for Rufas Andrews, who owned the adjacent farm, [and] from whom Andrewsville got its name. Mr. Andrews apparently was quite optimistic regarding the future of the Village as he had it surveyed and laid out in 40 foot streets with lots 100 feet by 100 feet".



By 1870 Rufas Andrew's vision had become a reality. The following year Benjamin and Thomas Cook would add wool carding mill and cloth dressing operation. A village store and a tavern/hotel are now functioning. A blacksmith manufactures agricultural implements as well as shoes for horses. A daily stage runs to Kemptville and Merrickville. The population is around 200 and the town is booming.

In 1877 the Cooks sell their mills to Margaret Ryan for \$4,000.00. It becomes one of the most successful operations in the Village and dominates the landscape with its presence. The grist mill can grind 500 bushels of flour per

day. The flour is of high quality and wins prizes at local fairs.

But, continues Dr Newman " . . . with the passage of time, the development of large scale milling enterprises gradually pushed these smaller mills out of business and in due course, the Old Andrewsville Grist Mill came to be included in the casualties. Having passed to several owners from the Andrews it was dismantled in 1917. Similarly the Carding mill which had been situated just west of the Grist Mill closed for lack of sheep, the Andrews saw mill was converted briefly to a harness hame factory, then in 1899 converted into an electric power plant."



Reference. "Andrewsville and Adjacent Properties", Dr. Leonard Newman, Archives of the Merrickville and District Historical Society

Now, nothing remains of these once prosperous Andrewsville enterprises, except the pilons from the original Andrewsville dam, the source of power for all the mills. They can be still seen protruding from the water in the river just upstream from the present (endangered) Andrewsville Bridge. Throughout this period, the Andrews family prospered, ultimately purchasing Robert Nicholson's property on the south side of the River and building the elegant red Georgian brick home with an arched entrance facing the River Road, and a duplicate façade facing the Canal. The gracious home remains but, having minimally met current severance requirements the property has been chopped into three lots upon which two additional nice but historically unimportant homes have been built.

Having seen his dream realized, Rufas Andrews, visionary and entrepreneur, died on January 1, 1879, while his creation, Andrewsville was at its prime. He is buried in Merrickville's Protestant Union Cemetery. He must have died with considerable pride and satisfaction in having seen his vision of a successful village accomplished and before witnessing its inexorable decline.



Sources : <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/> Family Journal of John Chester
<http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/history/locks/h18-19-nicholsons.html>

Reference: Industries and Industrialists of Merrickville, 1792-1979, by Richard Tatley, 1979 Parks Canada Manuscript Report 423 – Digital Edition, Friends of the Rideau, 2011

Friends of Andrewsville Bridge push for re-opening

The Friends of Andrewsville Bridge group formed in reaction to the potential permanent closure of the bridge to vehicular traffic on February 21, 2012. Since then, we have made presentations to councils, both municipal and county, written articles and garnered media attention from the EMC/Advance, Brockville Recorder & Times, Ottawa Sun and CBC radio and TV. Hundreds of area residents have put lawn signs up and over 2,000 signed a petition in support of re-opening the bridge which has been kept 'temporarily closed' since the swing bridge at Upper Nicholson's lock was damaged by a transport truck on May 4th. **To date, we still do not know the fate of the bridge.**

If the bridge is closed, we will lose the connectedness to our neighbours and an important transportation corridor for residents, area businesses and tourists. The Andrewsville Bridge's proximity to the Upper Nicholson's Lock station alone should be justification for its repair and maintenance.

To quote Don Marrin, Superintendent, Parks Canada:

This historic bridge contributes to a strong sense of place for both the community and the lock station...the bridge and the views from it are critical to the protection of the heritage setting...which is itself an integral component of the heritage character of the Rideau Canal.

Please contact the Friends at andrewsbridge@hotmail.com if you can help in any way.

Visit <https://sites.google.com/site/saveabridge/> or save andrewsville bridge on facebook for information. *Polly Beach*

HERITAGE SURVEY OF WOLFORD

In mid-June the Society was in the unexpected and fortunate receipt of an additional grant from the Ontario Summer Experience Program, (OSEP). Advantage was taken of the money to advance the work completed in written form, on 66 entries for the Heritage Survey of Wolford. The Survey, begun in 2005, (see Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 2 & 3, 2005), had been left in abeyance at the end of 2006.

The society engaged one of last year's blockhouse interpreters, Cora Heikkila, for a 7 week assignment. A recent history graduate, Cora will be following a graduate programme in History/Heritage at a university in 2012/13. Under the supervision of Society members, including Janet Graves, who had worked very hard on the original survey, a **searchable** data base was created. Cora carried out digitisation of the 2005-6 work, and then surveyed and entered data for 27 new structures. By the end of her assignment, the text of 93 items had been entered in the database.

The addition of the old and new digitised images into the printout for each entry proved to be more challenging. In mid-August a solution was found that means that, with a modest degree of instruction, new entries could be added by any survey participant.

Entry into the database, of the images selected to accompany the text already entered, is expected to be completed by mid-October 2012. Although great progress has been made, at least 50% of the identified heritage structures remain to be surveyed. Volunteers for field survey work, additional research at the Ontario Land Registry office in Prescott, data processing and data entry are welcome to join in the work. Watch this space...

Submitted by
Gillian and David Hammonds
Sept 4, 2012

The Lois McClure came to town on Thursday, August 9th

This wonderful full scale replica of an 1862-class sailing canal schooner began construction in 2002 at the Lake Champlain Transportation Company's Burlington Vermont Shipyard, and is now used as floating museum. The Lois McClure glided majestically through the Rideau Canal system toward a two night stopover in Merrickville. I was fortunate to board her in Burritt's Rapids as she waited to go through the locks. As the boat is not licensed to take passengers I had to sign up as crew, take safety orientation and don a lifejacket. As a non swimmer this was something I was very anxious to wear. Following orientation, I was introduced to Captain Roger Taylor, 1st Mate Erick Tichonuk, Tug Boat Captain Art Cohn and the rest of the crew as we continued to ease our way out of the locks.

Navigating the Rideau Canal is no easy task for the Lois McClure since it has no engines and relies solely on wind power for its sails. However, while the boat was travelling through the canal system it has to lower its main mast and therefore has no sails. Consequently she has to rely on a tug boat for maneuverability, until she gets out into the open waters of the Great Lakes and sails can once more be raised.

Travelling through the canal locks takes a lot of coordination between the two Captains, as the tug gently pushes the boat into the lock and the Captain of the Lois McClure keeps her "on an even keel". Consequently there is little room for error since the locks are 90 feet long and the Lois McClure takes up 88 feet. Also while the locks are 26 feet wide and the Lois McClure is 14 feet wide plus the tug boat must also ride alongside. So it's still a fairly tight squeeze. With the Lois McClure not having an engine and being, therefore, without braking capacity, the tug boat has control of the speed at which the boat is travelling and has to ensure that she stops within 2 feet of the end of the lock. There were times that I didn't think we were going to make it, but then how could I doubt the magnificent crew. They were so relaxed that they even took turns eating lunch while all this was going on!



Travelling between Burritt's Rapids and Lower Nicholson, we passed by my own property, and I expected to see my husband out there with camera in hand waiting to take my photograph as we sailed past. To my absolute astonishment he was not there. Probably in his office as usual! Alas, I lost my big photo op!

At Clowes Locks while waiting for the level of the water to be raised I noticed four beautiful cabin cruisers on the other side of the locks waiting to pass through. Their crews were all very excited to see us and stood on the side of the lock chatting away and taking lots of photographs. This was all very wonderful until it was pointed out to them that they were all moored, in the correct location I might add, but due to the size of the schooner and the tug boat, they were all very much in the way. There was a lot of scurrying around and engines were abruptly started

as they all moved back into the bay and out of harm's way. As we sailed past, our Captain saluted them with his horn as a show of appreciation for their co-operation.

Unusual for this summer, it then started to rain. Upon arriving in Merrickville we were well and truly wet, but thanks to many of you, there was a welcoming committee waiting for us. The Captain had to travel through the locks and out and around into the basin to dock for the night. Although I expected that they would be moored in the area of the Blockhouse Park for easy access to the visiting public the following day, this was not possible since the electrical hookups were not readily available. These hookups are indispensable since whenever they can, all batteries must be recharged to ensure there is sufficient power for cooking, lighting etc. (While on board I also noticed that there were no showers so I had to presume that they swim in the waters they are sailing in for that purpose? Maybe an experienced member can answer that question for me?)

A small private reception was held in the Blockhouse that evening for the two Captains and their crews, and surprising enough everyone showed up looking spick and span and dry. After refreshments and a couple of speeches they retired for the evening; not to sleep but to ready the boat for the visiting public the next day. As you can appreciate this is a working vessel and the crew lives onboard during the duration of the voyage. Space is a tad tight and, as I'm sure you will appreciate, every available space is utilized to the maximum. Behind every shipping crate, tea chest, and stack of wood, there is a cupboard. I was fascinated to see the difference between the 'working' and 'living' vessel and the viewing 'museum' vessel. We should all be so organized.

On Friday, Merrickville residents and visitors did the Lois McClure proud and came out in droves, despite the wet weather, to see this magnificent canal schooner - I was told there were over 500 visitors. The crew was delighted by the interest shown by all of the visitors, and surprised by the wide range of questions that were asked of them. They said that Merrickville was the best stop on the tour so far. I wonder if they say that to everyone?

Submitted by Nina Donald

MDHS Archives finally finds a new home

Back in February of 2011, after spending 5 years as tenants of the Old Town Hall in Merrickville, the archives had to vacate the premises due to a change in ownership. Having exhausted the possibilities of finding a suitable location within a short timeframe, and fearing we would be out on the street, we were fortunate enough to have the North Grenville Historical Society step forward and offered us space in their archives. They rearranged their own material to make space and allow us to store our many boxes and artifacts at one end of their premises. Not wishing to overstay our welcome or to abuse their hospitality, the Society has spent the last eighteen months looking for new digs.

This is not an easy task as space is limited and at a premium in Merrickville-Wolford. With the assistance of the Village Council, we were offered the facilities at the old Municipal Building in Easton's Corners but unfortunately, upon inspection, the premises were found to be unsuitable. Further searching found us at the Burritt's Rapids Community Hall where in the lower level there was a large empty space just waiting for us. After completing negotiations and with approval of the Village of Merrickville, a lease was signed and a moving date of August 21st was arranged.

Many thanks go out to the volunteers who along with the moving company helped to successfully move and unpack the many boxes without any mishaps. Thanks also to Janet Graves for donating a new computer screen, keyboard and mouse to replace one of our aging pieces of equipment, Inga Van Gemenen for three bookcases, which will now allow us to display a large number of our reference material and books, and a new filing cabinet. This could not have been done without such help and the support of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford.



A great deal of work now has to be done to organize and assemble all the books, files, photographs, CD's and numerous other items that have, in the past due to lack of space, been hidden away in boxes and filing cabinets. Now these can now be put on display for such times as we can offer an open house first to our members and then the general public. Anyone wishing to help out with this project would be greatly appreciated. Just contact the Historical Society at 613-269-4289.

Work Crew Needed – On Saturday October 16th a few people will be getting together to paint the trim (windows and doors) of the McGuigan Cemetery Interpreter Centre. If you think you might like to join the group, we should get it done in a day (weather permitting) call 613 269 4289 to sign up.

Merrickville & District Historical Society
Box 294, Merrickville, Ontario K0G 1N0
2012 Executive

President - Nina Donald

First Vice president - David Hammonds

Second Vice President – Ellen Hackett

Secretary/Treasurer – Dick Hegan

Past President - John Cowan

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Membership Matters

Membership in the Historical Society is renewed annually from December to November at a present cost of \$10 per person or \$15 per family. Life memberships are also available for \$100.

We welcome new members and hope present members will want to rejoin our Society. If so, it will be helpful if you can submit your cheques early to allow us to fund our ongoing works.

Your membership will assist us in continuing to celebrate the history and heritage of our community.

Thank you.

MDHS Membership, Box 294, Merrickville, Ontario K0G 1N0