



Summer 2012 **newsletter** VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2

PREZ SEZ... **Welcome to the summer**, and what a glorious summer so far. We started off our year with our annual Spring Dinner which was held at the Goose and Gridiron with speaker John Scott, who captivated us with his presentation on stone, in fact stone walls from around the globe, their creation and their construction. The presentation went on a little longer than usual and although the seats may have started to get a little hard, everyone seemed to be enthralled.

Another beautiful day for the Blockhouse Opening which once again was a great success. The Mayor was on hand to officiate the ribbon cutting, the entertainment in the park kept visitors busy and of course the students were out in great numbers to find out just who had won the prizes for the School Essay and Art Contests.

This year we welcome Heather Johnston, Genevieve Peever and Sarah McLean as interpreters in the museum.

David and Gillian Hammonds, Janet Glaves and summer student Cora Heikkila will resurrect the Rural Historic Sites Project which unfortunately has been dormant for the last few years due to a lack of manpower. This does include actively pursuing historic sites, properties and buildings. Interviewing, documenting, photographing and cataloguing information for our archives and make them available for publication. A daunting task, but with the help of a grant from the Ontario Summer Experience Program we have been able to hire Cora for a seven week assignment.

We are also in the final stages of finding a new home for our Archives. As you may recall we had to rather swiftly vacate our previous premises and we have been actively searching for the past 18 months or so for a new location, and I am happy to say we are almost there. We are looking forward to retrieving all of the archival material and setting up a work area where we can continue to catalogue and digitize all of our outstanding collection.

Have a great summer.

A New Sign for the old Wickware Brickyard and Tannery

Back in the fall of 2011, while driving along Highway 16 between Easton's Corners and Merrickville, Wayne Poapst noticed that the old Brickyard and Tannery sign was in a shambles, in fact, it had fallen down and was covered in brush. After stopping in and talking to Blair McGrath, the present owner of the property, it was thought that perhaps the Historical Society might think it would be a worthwhile project to have a new sign made to show the significant importance of the location of the Wickware Brickyard and Tannery. A photograph of the old sign was located and arrangements were made to have a new sign made. This was completed in the spring of this year and the new sign was erected by Blair. Here, Wayne, Blair and Clayton (the dog) are shown at the new sign. Also the old tanning stone, which was discovered in the 1960's, has been placed in approximately the same spot by Barber Creek where it was used nearly 200 years ago. You can find more information on the Brickyard and Tannery in a previous newsletter which can be found on our web site at www.historymerrickville.org under Publications, Summer 2006, Volume 4, Number 2.



Phyllis Walker, 1912-2012

With the passing of Phyllis Walker in her hundred and first year, the Historical Society lost one of its strongest and enduring supporters and Merrickville lost a piece of its history. She spent her youth here when Merrickville Village was barely 50 years old. During a fascinating career in the nursing profession, which took her all over the world, she always called Merrickville home.

Phyllis often spoke proudly of her military experience. Thus the May 20th tribute held in the Cenotaph, adjacent to her Walker family home was particularly apt. She rests in Union Cemetery next to her beloved parents, Dr. MJO Walker and Evilera (Drummond) Walker.

Harry McLean's Railway coach

In professional circles Harry Faulkner McLean, who died in 1961 is recognized as one of Canada's great Canadians. A builder of railways, tunnels, navy docks and electric power plants, to mention a few, his name will always be associated with gigantic construction projects, both in Canada and in the United States. Harry McLean, fondly nick-named "Big Pants" by the men who worked for him (he wore jodhpur like pants on the job) was much liked by his crew because of the respect he had for the tough jobs they were doing. They were his "Sons of Martha". And on most locations where they worked he built a cairn in memory of those injured on the job.

Following his retirement, he took up full time residence in Aaron Merrick's house in Merrickville and developed a reputation for kindness and generosity to the citizens of the town, but also a reputation for eccentricity. It is for this eccentric and sometimes extravagant behaviour he is most often remembered by the citizens of Merrickville.

Harry "Big Pants" McLean

In 2005, Historical Society member John Beamish sent us the following vignette.

"Mr. McLean had his private railway coach, (which he named "Renee"), moved up beside the river, and enlisted Dad to re-paint it. (*During his active days he had built his own well furnished railway coach which traveled with him to his many construction sites.*) Dad used a blow torch to remove the old paint but, unknown to Dad, the insulation was combustible. Dad sat down to have lunch and realized the coach was on fire. Somehow he got word to the Merrickville fire department. George Burns the fire-engine driver shouted to my brother Vince to work the siren and away they went. Vince related when they got to the coach there was complete confusion! But it was decided to throw one hose in the river and use the other hose (on the truck) to fight the fire. "Let her go" rang out, the valve was opened but alas they forgot to attach the river hose to the truck. The coach burned down.

Dad explained the disaster to Mrs. McLean, who decided to take H.F. for a drive. She had planned to tell H. F. as they drove along. (They owned a Packard – sales pitch "ask a man who drives one".)

Mrs. McLean pulled into Graham's service station to get gas. A local came along and said to H. F. "Can I have your junk?" Mr. McLean asked "What junk?"

"Your coach" replied the local, "it burned down."



The War of 1812

This is the second 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 first segment we related background of the disputes between the Americans and the British which led to the declaration of war by the James Madison on July 18, 1812. In this second section we learn of the frustrating often bungling progress of the war. (for part one, see the Merrickville and District Historical Society Newsletter, Fall 2011)

“A mere matter of marching”

To the War Hawks, the declaration answered all their hopes: the militia of Kentucky alone could overmatch the total number of British regular troops and Canadian militia. The war would offer a prospect of a destruction of Indian resistance to westward settlement, the expulsion of British authority from the continent, and an unlimited expansion that would have as its first prize the rich farmlands of Upper and Lower Canada, desirable at a time when the American prairies were considered unsuitable for farming.

The American Congress faced serious opposition to this new war from new England, and the classic Champlain Valley invasion route to Montreal was considered risky in the face of possible New England reluctance to support a major military and supply effort. That misgiving was not misplaced: the New England states carried on a thriving trade with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia throughout the war, and 200 teams of oxen hired in Vermont and New Hampshire helped move British supplies up the St. Lawrence from Quebec, while British troops marched in boots made in the same states. President Madison’s cabinet decided to focus its attack on Canada farther west, on the Detroit and Niagara frontier where support for the war was more reliable.



The “mere matter of marching” predicted by Jefferson turned into a military embarrassment in the initial 1812 campaign, as poor American leadership, inexperienced or reluctant troops, and a vigorous defence of Upper Canada (Ontario) by the military commander there, Major General Isaac Brock, supported by Tecumseh’s native warriors, led to the disastrous surrender of a powerful American army at Detroit, and the defeat of a second invasion attempt across the Niagara River on the slopes of Queenston Heights.

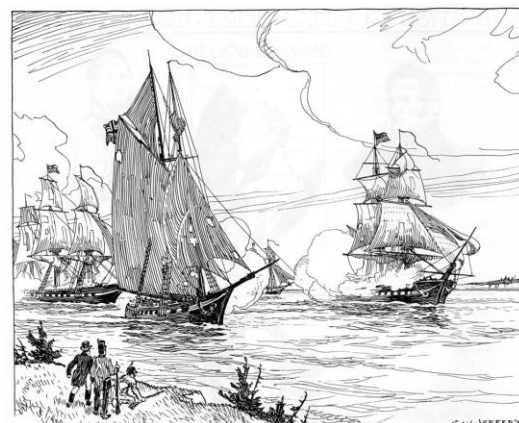
General Brock and Native Warrior, Tecumseh at Queenston Heights

Brock was killed in this last event, but his aggressive leadership and a surprisingly effective defence mounted by a few overworked British regulars, Indian warriors, and Canadian militia---many of whom, ironically, were American in origin---meant that 1812 ended with British North America intact and an American campaign plan in tatters.

The Americans had some things going for them, however. On the high seas, their small but excellent frigate force had inflicted some humiliating single-ship defeats on British vessels, and American flotillas on Lake Ontario, Lake Champlain and Lake Erie made the control of the Great Lakes a serious competition with the British Provincial Marine and, after 1813, the Royal Navy itself.

British and American Ships Battle on the Great Lakes during the War of 1812

Illustration by C. W. Jefferys



In that year, American strategy would be to seize what they could of British posts west of Kingston, then descend the St Lawrence for a final and decisive strike at Montreal and Quebec. The St. Lawrence artery, vital highway of supplies for the British from Montreal and Quebec to Kingston, York, Niagara and westward, would now become an invasion route to Canada's heart

The initial elements of the 1813 campaign went well. At Newark (later Niagara-on-the-lake) Fort George was taken, and most of the Niagara peninsula. As a prelude to that success, York (Toronto) had been seized, and public buildings and a half-built ship destroyed. To the west, the USN Lake Erie flotilla of Oliver Hazard Perry won a victory at Put-in Bay over the RN flotilla of Robert Barclay, allowing a force of mounted Kentuckians to strike deep---if temporarily---into southwestern Ontario, killing the charismatic Indian leader Tecumseh near London, Ontario. Eastward, the final campaign of 1813 would feature a 5,000-man army under General Wade Hampton marching up the Champlain Valley to rendezvous with 12,000 men descending toward Montreal from Lake Ontario under James Wilkinson. The future of British North America looked bleak indeed.

In the Fall of 1813, both American armies got underway. Hampton's army moving toward Montreal from Plattsburgh turned back south of the city after a spirited resistance by French-Canadian troops on the Chateauguay River. The huge American army of James Wilkinson on the St. Lawrence, stung but not defeated by a rear guard's loss against a small following force of British and Canadians at Crysler's Farm, gave up its descent on Montreal on receiving news of Hampton's reversal, and moved into winter quarters in New York State. The most serious threat to Canada of the war was over.



Battle of Chateaugay, Fall 1813

..... **Continued in Newsletter, Fall, 2012**

45th Official Blockhouse Museum opening

The Official Opening of the Blockhouse Museum was held on Saturday June 16th in Merrickville Blockhouse Park. It was a glorious day, the weather was perfect, and the ceremonies went off without a hitch. There were many villagers and visitors who gathered to join in with the festivities with lots of picture taking going on. Mr. Michael Durant piped in the ceremonial opening, with Mayor Doug Struthers delivering a speech on the historical importance of our village and its heritage buildings. Nina Donald, Historical Society President and Mayor Struthers presented the Merrickville and District Historical Society "Heritage Award of Merit" to Mr. Wayne Poapst in recognition of his long service to the Society and the preservation of Merrickville's history.

Prizes and certificates were presented to the winners of the Student Essay Contest as well as the Art Contest which was added this year. In total, 62 entries were received comprising 42 essays and 20 pieces of art. The judges had a number of very difficult decisions to make because the submissions were excellent and all the students were true winners. At the end of the contest the judges awards were as follows:

Essays, Grades 7 & 8 - 1st prize Sarah Telford, 2nd prize Aston Cavanaugh, 3rd prize Rachel Howarth; **Grades 5, 6 & 7** - 1st prize Donald Weatherall, 2nd prize Katie Tougher, 3rd Prize Timothy Dunning. **Artwork, Grades 7 & 8** - a tie for 1st place between Sarah Telford and Darion Wrong; **Grades 4, 5 & 6** - 1st prize Josh Nickerson, 2nd prize Melissa Nickerson, and a tie again for 3rd prize between Maxwell Mulrone-Cote and Xan McMullin. All of the winning entries will be displayed in the Blockhouse Museum during the summer following which copies will be displayed for everyone in the Library along with the previous year's winners.

The opening ceremonies were followed by wonderful entertainment in the park. The ladies from the Rideau Valley Boots and Baskets had a display of their beautiful rug hooking, and were available to answer the many enquiries about their craft. Don Green, rope maker, explained the art of rope making and made lots of rope samples for the children and also the odd adult. Henrietta Verway, blacksmith, was busy firing up the coals for the making of metal tools and telling stories of how they were made in the past. And there was some beautiful music and singing from the M&M Folk Duo.

A splendid day was had by all, and the Historical Society volunteers and staff look forward to welcoming you and all of your visiting friends and family this summer at the Museum.



Mayor Struthers and President Donald preside over the ribbon cutting ceremonies, officially opening the Blockhouse, as winning student contestants look on.

Then and Now

H. D. Smith Foundry.

Henry Dolfus Smith was born 1819 on a farm in Woford and came to Merrickville around 1853 when he acquired the earlier foundry of Messrs. Lilly and Hogg, the first of Merrickville's famed foundry men. By 1861 his foundry operated in the location of the present liquor store where William Pearson was his bookkeeper. One of the most prominent men of his time, by 1861 he also owned a blacksmith shop and a tannery located on the southeast corner of Lewis and St Lawrence and had an ownership in the W. H. Magee foundry, north of the river. (Later to become the Magee & Pearson Foundry, still operating as the Alloy Foundry)

H. D. Smith became the Reeve of Merrickville and was a controversial member of the Provincial legislature until 1871 when he was defeated for his legislature seat by Henry Merrick.

The original foundry on Elgin was burned but the roof was rebuilt and the building was probably used as a blacksmith shop and later for storage until it was restored and renovated and was opened as LCBO Store #119 in the late 1970's.



Upcoming Events

The schedule of events for the fall and winter season is beginning to come together, so far we have arrangements for:

September, William Knight - "What is environmental history?"

October, Joy Forbes - One Room Schoolhouses

November, Doug Hendry - Part Two, "Gods Tartan Soldiers" (to be confirmed)

November's meeting will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting at 7:00PM

Nominations are now being accepted for the Executive and Board of Directors of the Society and submissions should be sent to ndonald@growthconnections.com

December - due to the festive holiday season, there will be no lecture meeting

Heritage Award of Merit

Back in 2002 the Historical Society established the presentation of a Heritage Award of Merit to individuals within our community for their contribution to the preservation of our history and heritage. Once again this year we will be honoring one or more individuals for this prestigious Award. This award is issued in recognition of the efforts of individuals who have made significant contributions to the preservation, restoration, recognition or celebration of the History and Heritage of the Merrickville-Wolford community. This year's recipient was Mr. Wayne Poapst. Wayne has been a member of our community since 1951 and has had a very active and colourful career, but more importantly it has been his dedicated volunteer work within the community that we honoured him with this award.

Back in 1978 Wayne was responsible for putting together the first steam show in the area. He has been a member of the Fair Board these past 19 years and was President in 1995/96. Over the past 15 years Wayne could, and still can, be seen with a group of visitors with their walking tour booklets in hand. He escorts them around the village with detailed explanations of the who, what, where and when of Merrickville life, both past and present. He has been an active member of the Historical Society for many years and has been on the Executive Board since 2005. In the past the Society has received hundreds of enquiries from people from far4 and wide in search of their ancestry and Wayne has played a very active and important role as the Society's genealogist. Without his dedication and hours of research, there might be a lot more people out there still wondering just who their ancestors were and where their descendants might be today.

We are very proud and honoured to bestow this honourable award to Wayne.



Pictured here receiving his award are Wayne Poapst, Merrickville and Wolford Mayor Doug Struthers, MDHS President Nina Donald and, in the background, MDHS Secretary Treasurer Dick Hegan.

Further to our Spring Newsletter we have been advised by Wayne Poapst that:

"Sub-note to **The Merrickville Battle** - because of that skirmish Clowes Locks is the only locks along the Rideau Canal that is situated on that side of the river - the farmer that didn't get paid would not allow the building on his side of the river....."How about that"

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 re-join 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:

**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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MERRICKVILLE and DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dear Friend of the Historical Society

The annual Membership fees are now due. Please send your cheque for \$10 for an annual individual membership, \$15 for a family or \$100 for an individual life membership. Please make your cheque payable to the Merrickville & District Historical Society and return this form to:

**MDHS, Membership
BOX 294 ,
MERRICKVILLE
ONTARIO, CANADA, KOG INO**

Name Box No Email

We thank you for your support