

The Merrickville and District Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Lenore Newman, A Great Life Lost

Lenore Newman passed away peacefully at the Ottawa Civic Hospital on Thursday, August 7, 2008 following a fall on the porch of her beloved Rideau family cottage.

The following tribute was written by Gloria Beek:

Lenore was my friend. She was an intelligent inspiring person who never let grass grow under her feet. She was one of a kind and I will miss her. The community will miss her. She was a daughter of a famous father, part of a pioneer family, a lockkeeper's descendant, a graduate of McDonald College, a world traveler, a government worker, an RA activist, a person who put family first, a historian, a horticulturist; definitely a person with an exceptional life story. When I first met Lenore about 12 years ago, I knew nothing of her illustrious past. I was involved in the Hall at the Merrickville Fair. Lenore was always interested in the competitive events involving flowers, crops, home crafts and foods.



**Lenore Newman Patron Rideau Rideau 175
Lecture Series**

As the Fair Board struggled with declining participation, she was a tireless worker often behind the scenes. She volunteered to help me with the Hall. How many people got a kind prod from Lenore to enter their beautiful flowers or fabulous pies or marvellous crocheting in the Fair, we will never know. Who else would worry about where the signs to advertise the Fair should be placed or if the items in the hall were going to be sufficient, or if the rain would wash out events?

Lenore was a fount of information on all aspects of the Merrickville Fair, in particular the flowers that she dearly loved. Many an hour we spent together, perfecting every aspect of the competition. She could proofread and spot a problem in an instant. But it wasn't just flowers that we discussed. I was given an unbelievable history of the neighbourhood, the plans for the barn that she wished to protect, her own family's contribution to the community and her future projects. She always had projects in mind. Those future projects would have exhausted a woman half her age. Her memory and encyclopaedic knowledge never failed to amaze me. We were out to lunch just a few weeks before her death. As we passed along the roads from her home to Oxford Mills, she had information on almost every farm along the way. We visited the Esmond White gardens and again I got another personal horticulture lesson from Lenore.

We were all welcome at Lenore's cottage. One never visited Lenore without a quick trip through her perennial garden and a discussion as to how to rid her property of varmints or how her latest project was doing. The last time I saw her garden it was absolutely glorious. She was planning to enter some of the blooms in the Fair and had volunteered to assist with the flower judging held last Friday.

Lenore's big heart and love of her community extended far beyond flowers and fairs. She

was willing to give support to any individual, event or association that needed her help. You would be hard pressed to find anyone in the area that does not recall her kind telephone call and willingness to give a job, advice or service to anyone or anything that supported her beloved community.

Lenore Newman left each of us something special to recall and some big shoes to fill. She will be missed. Written by Gloria Beek

Editor's Note: Lenore was a great friend of the Merrickville & District Historical Society. She was an early proponent of the Rideau 175 Lecture Series and its first Patron. Thank you Lenore. JC

The Remarkable Family McCrea

When you visit the McGuigan Pioneer Cemetery and search towards the rear you will find the fading tombstone of Samuel McCrea who died in 1806. Beside him is buried his wife Jennet. While this final recognition of McCrea is modest, the architectural monuments left by his descendants in Montague and Wolford are permanent tributes to the legacy of this remarkable pioneer.

Samuel McCrea was born in Connecticut in 1750 and moved with his young family to a farm near Stillway, New York. During the 1776 American Revolutionary wars, the McCrea family, suffered significant property, crops and animal losses. Samuel himself was seriously injured and partially blinded. Following the hostilities the family escaped to Canada, arriving first in Maitland in 1793. After the war, the British Government, in order to encourage settlement in Canada offered land to non-combatants which by 1788 had been increased to 200 acres for each family member. Samuel McCrea, his wife Jennett and their ten children were quick to take advantage of this major opportunity. They drew lot 5 consisting of 1200 acres in what became the Marlborough settlement being developed by Stephen Burritt and his family.



**Samuel McCrea, 1750-1806
McGuigan Cemetery**

As it turned out, Samuel McCrea was quite fortunate in his draw. When they arrived at their lot in 1798, they found to the north, the river rapids which would eventually power the mills of the village of Burritts Rapids. And the creek which ran through their property would some 30 years later become part of the Rideau Canal. For the McCrea property consisted of virtually all of the land which is now the Village of Burritts Rapids south of the Rideau. It appears the McCrea's were not long realizing profit from the sale of parts of their property to their neighbour, pioneer Stephen Burritt, whose original property was on the north/east side of the river. By 1803 Samuel McCrea's sons, had moved on, taking up homesteads in the former Montague; John, Thomas and Edward settling on property near Merrickville, while 19 year old Alexander had moved still further west to Wolford near Easton's Corners.

Edward McCrea acquired a 120 acre lot just west of Merrickville, near the road named for his family. Here he built a log cabin and began farming. Apparently he was successful for in 1820 he built the charming rubble stone home you can still see facing highway 43. Being built before the construction of the Canal, it is one of the oldest stone homes in the district. Thomas and John McCrae also



**Rubble stone house built by Edward McCrea
c 1830**

farmed and built homes in the area.

Many stories are told of Thomas McCrea's great strength and prodigious accomplishments. Most famous is the occasion when, in order to brighten a stark new log home with a few amenities, he

carried on his back 1 ½ bushels of wheat 30 miles through the bush to Brockville where he exchanged his load for a dozen white bowls, some cutlery and supplies and then headed back. Unfortunately on the way home, to his dismay, he lost his footing crossing a stream on a log, fell and broke all of the bowls. For the Story of the Blue Edge Bowls", See "A History of Leeds and Grenville" by Thadius Leavitt, also reprinted in the Friends of the Rideau Newsletter, Spring, 2008

On McCrea Road, around 1845, Edward McCrea Sr. also built a handsome stone house for his son, Edward Jr. who became a Justice of the Peace for Merrickville, using this home as his Courthouse.

It is interesting to note the advances in technology and the prosperity in the construction of the two stone homes. The 1830's house had a simple rectangular recessed door and is constructed with rubblestone. Originally it was built without a gable. The 1845 home is larger, sports the popular "Loyalist" door, had aligned and shaped stones with fine ashlar stone coins and was built with the attractive gable.



**Coursed stone home built by Edward
McCrea c 1845**

Homes along the River Road between Merrickville and Burritt's Rapids are also said to have been built by the enterprising McCrea sons.

Meanwhile in 1803, nineteen year old Alexander McCrea had moved further west to Wolford near Easton's Corners where with his father Samuel's help he acquired and cleared a lot and set down his roots. In 1809 Alexander married Anna Edmunds, daughter of Rideau pioneer William Edmunds for whom Edmunds Locks are named. The McCrea's of Wolford prospered and Alexander, his sons and daughters became respected citizens of the township and built several stone houses in the area. But Alexander's home stands out. By 1830 had built a stunning large brick home on his property, the most attractive and remarkable in the district. Truly remarkable in that no brickyard existed in the area at that time, (the Wickwire Brickyard did not come into operation until nearly 30 years later.)

Alexander and his family, taking advantage of the stream running through his property and the clay banks that abutted it, hand fashioned and baked thousands of bricks that went into the unique home. In the Wolford census of 1830 the structure is listed as a 2 ½ story home, and 21 years later, according to the

census, it was still the only brick home in Wolford. How astonishing must have been the sight to early travellers coming upon the fine large brick house in the Wolford wilderness. Today, as you head for Easton's Corners on county road 16, just past the site of the former Wickwire brickyard, you will see on the left this still beautiful 2 ½ story polychrome brick home, built by Samuel's sons, Alexander McCrea.



The brick home of Alexander McCrea 1830

Unfortunately, Samuel McCrea did not live to see many of his family's achievements. As a result of his war experience in the American revolution, his health was already poor when he came to Canada and by the time he died at the age of 55 he saw little of the legacy that would follow him, either in Burritts Rapids, Montague or Wolford.

He died in 1806 at the age of 55. He is buried in the McGuigan Cemetery, the first person interred there. His wife Jennett, died 10 years later and was buried beside him. On their tombstones are engraved trees with spreading boughs. Very prophetic for this important pioneer couple whose branches spread across the breadth of the Rideau settlement and ultimately, according to the McCrea family website, across most of North America.

Ref. Samuel McCrea of Ontario, Waldo McCrea, 1974 Brockville Recorder & Times, June 7, 1979

A Visit To Merrickville, 1829

The Gazette - May 15, 1829
IMPROVEMENTS ON THE RIDEAU

"THE VILLAGE OF COLBORNE IS BEAUTIFULLY SITUATED ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE RIDEAU RIVER, AT THE PLACE FORMERLY KNOWN BY THE NAME OF MERRICK'S MILLS. A FEW MONTHS AGO THIS SCENE OF BUSTLE CONTAINED BUT A FEW STRAGGLING HUTS, SINCE WHEN, NO LESS THAN 56 HOUSES HAVE BEEN BUILT, AMONG WHICH ARE SEVERAL MERCHANTS' STORES, AND THREE OR FOUR RESPECTABLE TAVERNS, THE PRINCIPAL OF WHICH IS KEPT BY A MR. TAYLOR. THEY ARE ABOUT BUILDING A CHURCH FOR ESTABLISHED RELIGION, AND ONE FOR THE METHODIST PERSUASION - A FALL OF THE RIVER IN FRONT OF THE VILLAGE HAS AN IMPOSING EFFECT, AND THE SURROUNDING SCENERY IS PICTURESQUE BEYOND DESCRIPTION. THE SUDDEN IMPROVEMENT AND THE CONSEQUENT INCREASE OF THE VALUE OF PROPERTY IN THIS PLACE, IS OWING TO THE GRAND PROJECT OF THE RIDEAU CANAL, WHICH LET IT NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, IS A WORK CONDUCTED SOLELY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE BRITISH NATION, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CARIAD AS THERE ARE THREE LOCKS CONSTRUCTING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND MR. STEPHENS AND HIS CO-ADJURORS, WHO HAVE THE CONTRACT FOR THAT PART OF THE CANAL ARE CONDUCTING THE WORK WITH SUCH ABILITY AS HAS "NOT BEEN SURPASSED IN ANY PART OF AMERICA. "

COLBORNE WILL PROBABLY BECOME A MOST FLOURISHING PLACE, UNLESS ITS PROSPERITY SHOULD BE RETARDED BY A WANT OF PUBLIC SPIRIT IN SOME OF ITS

PRINCIPAL LANDHOLDERS. THE ROADS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ARE EXCELLENT - THE POPULATION IS RAPIDLY INCREASING - THE INHABITANTS HOWEVER FEEL MUCH INCONVENIENCED FROM THE WANT OF A POSTOFFICE, WHICH THEY THINK MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO ANY OTHER PART OF THE PROVINCE BY MAKING COLBORNE A PART OF THE ROUTE FROM PERTH TO MONTREAL. - THE SUBJECT WE FEEL CONVINCED WILL NOT ESCAPE THE OBSERVANCES OF THE GENTLEMAN AT THE HEAD OF THAT DEPARTMENT."

Editor's Note: The use of "Colborne" is a result of the application made in 1828 to change the name of "Merrick's Mills" to Colborne after the then Lieutenant Governor. The application was denied as there already existed two other communities named "Colborne" Also note the reference to lack of "public spirit" in some principal landowners, undoubtedly referring to the Merricks who were capitalizing on their significant land holdings as well as their influence in the Village.

Tough Town

ANY PERSON WHO SHALL FISH ON THE SABBATH DAY WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE INCORPORATION OF THE VILLAGE OF MERRICKVILLE SHALL FOR EVERY SUCH OFFENCE FORFEIT AND PAY THE SUM OF NOT LESS THAN ONE SHILLING NOR MORE THAN 5 SHILLINGS.

ANY PERSON OR PERSONS WHO SHALL BE GUILTY OF WHAT IS KNOWN BY THE NAME OF SLIDING DOWN HILL WITH ANY KIND OF SLEIGH OR OTHER VEHICLE IN ANY OF THE STREETS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THIS CORPORATION; ANY AND EVERY PERSON WHO SHALL PLAY AT ANY GAME OR BALL, OR KNOCK, OR KICK, OR THROW ANY BALL IN ANY OF THE PUBLIC STREETS OF SAID VILLAGE, AND EVERY PERSON WHO SHALL SKATE ON SUNDAYS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE SAID CORPORATION SHALL FORFEIT AND PAY PENALTY OF NOT LESS THAN TWO SHILLINGS AND SIX PENCE

18TH AUGUST, 1860 BY-LAW NO.4

Goosed Again

It is fall and the sky is filled with the beautiful sight of waves of Canada Geese heading south to their winter feeding grounds.

Have you ever noticed and wondered why one wing of the "V" is always longer than the other wing? A noted Toronto ornithologist explains. "One wing is longer because there are more geese in that wing."

Merrickville Scouts 100th Anniversary

A fantastic weekend hosted by 1st Merrickville in honour of the 100th anniversary of Scouting in Merrickville, the first Boy Scout Troop in North America. 250



1st Merrickville Scouts Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Scouting in Merrickville

youth and 75 leaders took in the festivities. The celebration was particularly significant, given that the Merrickville is recognized as starting the first Boy Scout troupe in Canada.

2009 Historical Society Executive

At the Annual General Meeting of the Merrickville and District Historical Society, President Nina Donald reported on another active and successful year. The spring dinner at which we recognized Alice Hughes with an honorary membership, was a sell-out. The Blockhouse being open seven days a week allowed attendance to remain close to last years record while donations were slightly ahead. Six monthly lectures with interesting speakers were held in the Spring and Fall. Current membership reached record levels with 154 current members including 54 life members. Financially we achieved our goal of operating close to a break even position.

In her remarks Nina concluded by thanking all who contributed to a successful year; the Village of Merrickville-Wolford for moral and financial support for our Archives project and the Blockhouse Museum operation; Parks Canada for help in staffing the Blockhouse Museum during summer hours; particular thanks to the Volunteers who manned the Blockhouse and allowed us to stay open during the Spring and Fall; Ken Watson for his generous donation of time and expertise in updating our web page www.merrickvillehistory.org (Note change .ca to .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.

The Executive positions elected for 2009 were.

Past President-John Cowan
President- Nina Donald
First Vice-President -Victor Suthren
Second Vice-President - Gillian Gray
Secretary /Treasurer - Dick Hegan

Committee members

Blockhouse – Gillian and David Hammonds
Bookkeeper - Sharon Parkinson
Membership – Sheena Cowan
Archives – Dieter Rath
Liaison – Wayne Poapst
Volunteers – Ellen Hackett
Hospitality – Janet Glaves
Program – Victor Suthren
Members at large – Denis Faulkner, Andrew McKay

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