



# The Rideau Township Historical Society

*Preserving and Promoting local history for the former Rideau Township*

## June 2011 Newsletter

Newsletter Editor: Ron Wilson (rideauarchives@ottawa.ca)

### June Excursion

Schedule Saturday, June 18

**9:30 a.m.** Bus leaves Client Service Centre, 2155 Roger Stevens Drive, North Gower

**10:30 a.m.** Arrive Fulford Place, 287 King St. East, Brockville

**12:00 p.m.** Bus leaves for lunch at Brockberry Café, 67 King St. East, Brockville

**1:30-45 p.m.** Bus leaves for Lyn

**2:00 p.m.** Arrive Lyn Heritage Place, 19 Main St., Lyn, ON

**3:00 p.m.** Bus leaves for North Gower

**4:00 p.m.** Arrive North Gower

### **Bus Excursion to Fulford Place, Brockville and Lyn Heritage Place**

As has been customary the June meeting will be replaced by an excursion. This year the excursion will be a bus tour to 2 historic Eastern Ontario sites.

**Fulford Place:** On Saturday, June 18, we will travel by bus to Brockville to visit Fulford Place. A magnificent Edwardian mansion overlooking the St. Lawrence River, it was built around 1900 by Senator George Taylor Fulford. It contains original tapestries, paintings, statuary and ceramics and is surrounded by elaborate gardens. The cost of the bus will be paid by the RTHS, and admission to Fulford Place will be \$4 plus HST.

**Lunch – Brockberry Café:** As Fulford Place is not running a tea room this year, we will have lunch at a nearby restaurant, and will be driven there by bus. The cost for the meal including tax and gratuities will be \$20, or \$25 with dessert. To save time there will be one bill; please pay Susan McKellar on the bus, and she will pay the restaurant. The meal includes beverage, sides (soup, fries or salad) and main course (Crepe Chicken Divan, Neptune Pasta Bake, Prime Rib Philly Melt, or English Style Fish). Dessert is pie or torte. Please let Susan know by Jun 11 if you will not be having lunch, if you wish dessert, or if you have dietary restrictions (613-489-3961 or susan.mckellar@rogers.com ).

**Lyn Heritage Place:** Lyn was the major mill town in Upper Canada with its rail, road and waterway systems. Museum exhibits include models of the town, its waterways and machinery recovered from a historic stone flour mill as well as hundreds of pictures from the village's past. Heritage Place Museum is housed in a beautifully renovated 19th century building with a two storey addition. Admission is by donation.

### This Month

1. The June Excursion
2. The May Meeting
3. From the pen of the President
4. The Dickinson House
5. News from the Rideau Archives

### **From the Pen of the President**

Spring is a time of renewal, in many ways it marks a new beginning. Birds return, trees leaf out, the countryside turns green, everywhere there is new growth. Spring and early summer are also a time for Church Anniversaries, especially in rural communities. These anniversaries may commemorate the first organized meeting of the congregation or parish or the beginning of construction of a new church. Both mark a new beginning. Why are these anniversaries concentrated in the Spring and early Summer? I would speculate that the congregation had a long winter to plan, and when Spring

arrived, the frost was out of the ground and crops planted they were ready to start to build the new church.

These anniversaries are very special occasions. The organizers go all out to invite former pastors and members, develop special music, include a special speaker and share their historical documents and photos. This is always concluded by a lunch with ample food and a delightful social time. They are a times to rejoice, give thanks, and like Spring, a time of renewal and opportunity to re-engage.

## *From the Presidents Pen (continued)*

In recent weeks we attended Anniversary Services in Merivale and Fallowfield. Both were all of the above. They are Congregations which over the years have extended to us many courtesies and the hand of fellowship. Fifty years ago I was privileged to lead a Young Peoples group from both congregations. It was an indescribable and special emotional moment when one or more of these young people came to shake hands or give a hug, all the while reminiscing about those pleasant times so many years ago.

An opportunity to attend one of these Anniversary services is on June 12 at 10:00 A.M. at Trinity United at Kars

when Professor, the Reverend Tom Sherwood, Ph.D. will be the guest speaker. Tom came to Kars fresh out of Divinity School many years ago and had a successful and productive ministry. This was followed by another successful pastorate in Orleans. From there he moved to Carleton University to become an Ecumenical Chaplain where the students loved him and the faculty respected him. Along the way he found time to complete his Ph.D. Two years ago he left the Chaplaincy to become a Professor of Sociology at Carleton. You can be confident that the message, music, food and visiting will all be very enjoyable.

## *News from the Rideau Branch, Ottawa Archives*

**Hours:** *The Rideau Archives is open every Tuesday from 9:30 am to 4:30 p.m., and at other times by appointment. (613-489-2926).*

**Doors Open Ottawa** - The Rideau Branch, City of Ottawa Archives has participated in Doors Open since the event began nine years ago. This is an opportunity for Rideau Branch to receive city wide profile and introduce our resources to the larger community. Visitors came from Nepean, Osgoode, Orleans, Centre Town Ottawa, Shawville, and Peterborough, as well as local residents. Several were interested in researching their family, property or community.

The tour consisted of an introduction to North Gower Township's first Town Hall built in 1876, the history of Rideau Branch, the current exhibits on the Post Offices and Home Children along with a tour of the vault.

## *Coming Events:*

August 2: **Colonel By Day** at Bytown Museum/Ottawa Locks

September 21: **Dr. David Shanahan**, president of the North Grenville Historical Society, will speak about the history of Kemptville at the September meeting of the RTHS.

September 16 - 18: **BIFHSGO**, 17th Annual Conference of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa), Library and Archives Canada 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0N4

### Dickinson House Events Summer 2011

June 5 - Heritage Gardening

June 25-26 - Quilting

July 16-17 - Domestic Skills (making butter, laundry, ice cream)

August 20-21 - Carpentry (Tools & Techniques)

September 17-18 - Cloth Making (Spinning & Weaving)



The picture on the left is from a place mat used by the Stewart's Green Valley Restaurant at a time not known. It is a painting of Entrance Bay, in the year 1841.

The RTHS gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the City of Ottawa

# *The Story of the Home Children*

**Article by Lucy Martin**

Who settled Canada? Of course the answer involves countless individual stories from many countries – and continues to this day. Until the May meeting I was unaware that as many as five million present-day Canadians are descended from an ancestor sent from Great Britain as a 'Home Child'.

The Home Child movement arose from mixed motives and produced mixed results. The basic concept reflected the reformer's vision of genuine progress. It was a reality of the day that uncounted children in the dense slums of England and Scotland faced great risk of hunger, abuse, crime, disease and early death. In some cases, what better solution than to send some such children to land-rich but labour-hungry commonwealth countries overseas? In a period where poverty was often seen as a personal moral failure, removal was one form of rescue.

It was thought that places like Australia and Canada could provide training, employment and the chance for a better future. This would spare overburdened parish resources and keep children from bleak incarceration in the local workhouse. A more critical view might contend the movement thrust vulnerable children into unpaid servitude, commodifying them as a problem to be disposed of, with little regard to their fate.

Interpretations vary, as did the outcomes. But the facts remain: from 1869 to the late 1930's over 100,000 such children, typically between the ages of 4 and 15, were shipped away to work in Canada, under the sponsorship of over 50 social or benevolent organizations.

Not all Home Children were full orphans, but nearly all came from severe poverty. Even for those whose material circumstances were greatly improved, it must have been a traumatic experience. The children lost proximity to all remaining friends and relatives as well as the communities they had known. Those with siblings were usually separated as well.

The luckiest were adopted into loving families. The majority worked hard for their keep, in conditions that ranged from fair and wholesome, to harsh, exploited serfdom. In the very worst cases, which could include starvation or sexual abuse, relief only came from running away, suicide or death. Not until age 18 did each have the right to make a life of his or her own.

Cruel as this may seem to modern sensibilities, that era was harsh in general. Modern social 'safety nets', and the more coddled childhood considered normal today, were decades away. Most people did work hard, from childhood onward. Diligent toil was equated with respectability

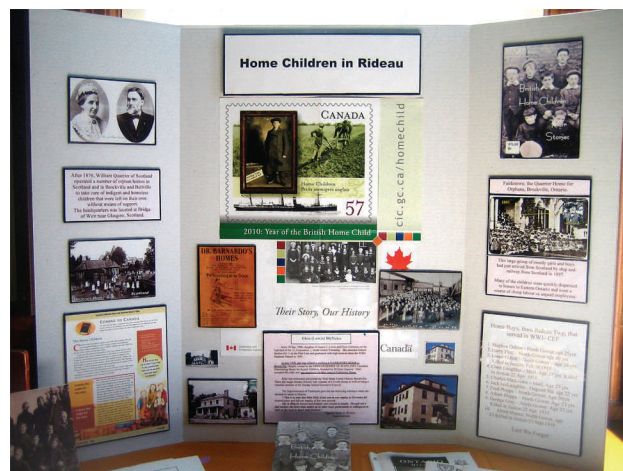
for all but the idle rich. And while few would endorse outright cruelty or exploitation, even today many would agree that a good work ethic builds character and creates more successful nations.

According to Wikipedia, Australia formally apologized for that chapter of history in 2009, as did Great Britain in 2010, in recognition of the mistreatment and suffering involuntarily endured by many. To date Canada has not opted to apologize, perhaps in the belief that most Home Children did benefit by coming to this country.

2010 was declared "Year of the British Home Child in Canada" thanks to a private member's motion from Brant MP Phil McColeman (the nephew of a Home Child) which attained rare unanimous support in Parliament.

Efforts continue to better publicize and understand this topic. Library and Archives Canada has records of basic details such as a child's name, age, year of arrival, ship taken, sending organization and placement in Canada. Volunteers from the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSHGO) have undertaken the significant task of indexing the names of juvenile migrants found on passenger lists.

Both the RTHS and the Rideau Branch of the Ottawa Archives have taken an interest in the home children. The May meeting of the RTHS featured a presentation on the home children including a number of speakers descended from home children who described the experience of their ancestors as passed down to them. The Rideau Branch has prepared a display on the home children of Rideau Township. More than 150 names have been identified and are listed in the display. The display can be viewed at the North Gower site on Tuesdays between 9:30 am and 4:00 pm.



*Home Children Display at the Rideau Branch*

# *The May Meeting*

## *Home Children of Rideau*

**Presenters:** Coral Lindsay, Georgie Tupper, Barbara Ann (Hannaford) Smith, Joan (Taylor) Melancon, Barbara Dillon, Ruth (Irvine) Shurtliff, David Hayes, Bill Buchanan

Article by Lucy Martin

2010 was declared “Year of the British Home Child in Canada”. From 1869 to the late 1930's over 100,000 such children, typically between the ages of 4 and 15, were shipped away to work in Canada. Many were orphans, some came from families who were unable to feed them, and some came for various other reasons.

To help understand this national and family heritage, RTHS presented an evening of heart-felt personal remembrances from local residents with Home Child connections. The community hall in Pierce's Corners was filled with just over 50 in attendance along with relevant displays brought by the speakers and Archives volunteer Shirley Adams.

At the meeting, Georgie Tupper explained how every year the Rideau Branch of the City Archives picks a topic for further research and displays. The 2011 focus is on Home Children, the large majority of whom settled in Ontario. Using census records for this area, Tupper found 60 probable Home Children in 1901, a number that rose to 150 by 1911.

One of Manotick's founding families, the Dickinsons, hosted a Home Child, Sarah Devlin. Home Children Jack McLaughlin became a bridge master in Kars and Harry Watson went on to own Watson's Mill. North Gower's Recreation Centre is named in recognition of the many contributions made by Home Child Alfred Taylor (more on Taylor later in this article).

Space does not permit doing full justice to the stories shared that night. What follows are summaries of lives that encompassed heartache and triumph over adversity.

Barbara Ann (Hannaford) Smith spoke about being a 6th generation Dillon on her maternal side, but only knowing her paternal grandparents had come from England and Scotland and seemingly had no relatives. She did not discover both had been Home Children until after their deaths.

Smith's grandmother, Margaret Strang Watters Penman, was the eldest of 6 and endured an impoverished home with a neglectful father. After being in and out of the poor house, Margaret and four siblings were removed from their mother's custody and ended up separated in Canada after arriving as Home Children.

Smith eventually managed to trace her grandmother's siblings and learned their stories from descendents of her newly-discovered relatives. Smith was left deeply impressed by her Grandmother's life-long fortitude and natural kindness, in the face of such great personal hardship.

Joan (Taylor) Melancon spoke about her father, Alfred Taylor. He became a pillar of the North Gower Community, much honored for a life that included a meritorious military career along with strong support for sports and community volunteerism. But Taylor was also a Home Child.

He began life in a happy, secure family in England, but ended up shuttling among relatives after his mother died of cancer and his father abandoned their three sons. The two oldest brothers ended up in a dismal work house. Taylor was eventually sent to Canada just prior to his 15th birthday as a farm worker. Some of his placements were good. Others were bad.

During the dirty thirties when times were hard and jobs were scarce, Taylor ended up in North Gower, where he found work and fell hard for a beautiful teacher, Madeline Craig, daughter of a well-established family, headed by long-time town reeve, Howard Craig.

Against those odds, the two fell in love, married and went on to enjoy 50 years of happiness, family and community service before Madeline's death. Taylor told his children he tried to do something good and productive each and every day of his life. In his own words, for a boy who came to Canada “with nothing”, he had a wonderful life.

Barbara Dillon's father, George Ferrar, was born in 1889, the youngest of five in Scotland. He was fully orphaned by age 5. His older siblings could not sustain the remaining family on their meager wages. So George and one sister were signed over to an orphanage called Quarrier's, a noteworthy organization that housed children in home-like cottages with a mother & father figure for each. Pressing need forced Quarrier's to make room for more orphans by shipping some to Canada. Initially deemed too undernourished and frail for the journey, one year later, in 1896, George and his sister Jenny were sent abroad.

George had to work hard but was well treated on the farm of John McIntire, on Donnelly Drive, near Kemptville. Jenny was sent to a Moffit farm in the Winchester area. Barbara says her Dad “was one of the lucky ones”. He finished grade 8 and married Alice Crawford in 1917,

where he and his wife continued to work on the farm. After Mcintire died in 1941, George learned he had been adopted and would inherit the farm.

Dillon recounted her father's return trip to Scotland in 1949 where he was warmly welcomed with open arms as a member of Quarrier's Village. (1937 had been the last time orphans were sent away from Quarrier's, after that they were kept in Scotland and taught trades.)

Brabara Dillon returned to Scotland herself where she enjoyed a number of tours that explored her family's history and the role of Quarrier's in the lives of so many. She recounts what she learned and experienced first hand left her most grateful for the humanitarian work of Quarrier's.

Ruth (Irvine) Shurtliff spoke about her father, Henry Irvine. He was born in Glasgow in 1902. The youngest of 5, all orphaned when both parents were felled by disease, several years apart. By age 8, with no place else to go, he and his siblings ended up in Quarrier's Village. After some years there, Henry came to Canada in 1915 at age 12. He was placed with a childless couple, Robert and Leticia Pierce, who were described as good and kind. They left him the farm when they died. (The meeting place, Pierce's Corners Hall was the end of their farm and was where Ruth grew up.)

In 1928, Henry married Myrtle Goth and raised a large, close family. He sold the farm and moved to Manotick in 1957. Shurtliff has been back to visit Quarrier's in Scotland twice (in 1997 and 2009) traveling with fellow home-child descendant Barbara Dillon.

David Hayes spoke about his father, Samuel Hayes, a home child born in 1893 in Liverpool, England. In 1907 Samuel and one brother arrived in Canada in a voyage that exposed them to deep cold, some children had to be hospitalized on arrival. The brothers were separated in Canada. One sister arrived a year later, and was reportedly well-treated and adopted. Samuel was mistreated at a farm in Almonte and ran away. He ended up on a McDermont farm in Almonte, who took good care of him.

At 16, he went on the Dominion Express and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary force in 1914. He served in Europe in 1915 and served abroad again in WW II with the Veteran Guards of Canada. He married in 1916, and was surprised to discover he and his wife had both been born in the same house, a year apart.

Bill Buchanan spoke about his paternal grandmother. She was born in either 1880 or 1883. Her father, James Reed, was killed in a construction accident, leaving at least 4 children to care for. His widow tried to carry on but could not manage the financial burden alone. Under the auspices of the Quarrier's Society two siblings were sent from Glasgow in 1886 arriving in Quebec.

Buchanan's grandmother came to live with Isaac and Elizabeth Pratt, just south of Drummond's on River Road. By all accounts she was treated well, she was sent to school. She either came as a 3 year old or a 6 year old. She is listed in the 1901 census as the adopted daughter of the Pratts, age 18. Buchanan joked she was likely older.

She worked hard all her life, though that was normal. She was never formally adopted, but she was always treated well and remained devoted to the Pratts for all her days.

Separated from her brother John Reed on arrival in Canada, his story is less well known. They had very little contact until John came to find her 60 years later in Manotick, for a visit. Buchanan thinks his grandmother had a very good life, before passing on at 89 (or 92!). He looks forward to learning more about the Quarrier's Society.

We thank the speakers for sharing their personal memories. It certainly expanded our understanding of what Home Children went through and contributed to Canada. If you would like to learn more about Home Children, there are many ways to do so. All are also welcome to explore the regional aspects of this migration by dropping by the Archives in North Gower on any Tuesday from 9:30 to 4:30. Donations of archival material are also most welcome.

## *The Dickinson House*

### ***Doors Open and Dickinson Day:***

As in previous years the Dickinson House was open for Dickinson Day and the Doors Open weekend. The RTHS volunteers were assisted by several additional volunteer from the Doors Open program.

For the weekend we counted about 950 visitors, many of whom were very complimentary on the experience. We received compliments such as;

*" This doesn't look like a museum. It looks like people live here."*

*"This is the best we have seen on the Doors Open program and we've been going since 2002."*

We were also quite pleased that some visitors expressed a wish to become volunteers at the house in order to help out and to learn more about the history of the region. More help is always welcome.

### ***Tours***

In addition to the regular open days, the RTHS also provides tours to groups at other times. Two such tours this summer include:

*The Presbyterian Church Women of St. Andrews Church in Kars.*

*The Home Economists Association.*

### ***Donations and Loans***

The house has been furnished with furniture and artefacts that have been either donated or loaned by RTHS members and members of the community.

A recent donation is the 19th century courting couch pictured on the right. It has been donated by Diane Saxburg. Thank you very much Diane. It is a beautiful piece. We really appreciate it.



*A 19th century courting couch donated to the RTHS for the Dickinson House.*