



# The Rideau Township Historical Society

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

## March 2012 Newsletter

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

### *Next Meeting*

**Date:** Wednesday, March 21, 2012  
**Time:** 7:30 pm  
**Place:** Holy Trinity Anglican Church  
2372 Church Street,  
North Gower, ON

### *This Month*

1. The February presentation on the T. Eaton Company
2. From the Pen of the President
3. News from the Rideau Archives
4. Coming Events
5. Minutes of the February meeting

***Bring a Friend, Light Refreshments***

### *From the Pen of the President*

Those who work at Dickinson House are constantly searching for information to clarify the relationship between John A. MacDonald and Moss Kent Dickinson and his family, and in particular the extent to which MacDonald was at Dickinson House during the 1882 and 1887 National elections when MacDonald was a candidate in the Carleton Riding. Of equal intrigue is what occupied MacDonald's attention during Canada's fourth Parliament when he was the Member for Carleton.

MacDonald purchased "Ernscliffe", now the British Embassy, in January 1883. It was perhaps the first real home he ever owned. It was comfortable, convenient and efficient. In June of 1886 he laid the cornerstone of what is now Fallowfield United Church. He thoroughly enjoyed planning for and celebrating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

Enormous challenges faced MacDonald at the National level during this Parliament. First was the construction and financing of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.). Second the Northwest Rebellion and Riel's capture and trial in 1885, and thirdly an array of what could be called Constitutional challenges. The financing of the C.P.R. and the military success in squelching the Rebellion were somewhat related. In the earlier 1870 Rebellion troops were months moving west. William Van Horne was the

***Topic:*** *Challenging the Myths Surrounding 1492*

***Speakers:*** *Stuart Rogers*

"In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" And he discovered North America, right? But, was he the first one to arrive on American soil? Maybe not!!

Stuart Rogers, a member of the RTHS, is going to challenge our beliefs about this event and take us on a journey that will perhaps inform us as to what may have really occurred in those early years.

All are welcome to join us for what promises to be an entertaining and enlightening presentation. Please feel free to bring a pillow to use on the church pews, or a few chairs will be available if you prefer.

general manager of the C.P.R. in 1885. He promised the government the C.P.R. could move 3300 troops, their horses, artillery pieces and supplies from Toronto to Qu Appelle, the rail point nearest to Batoche in ten days. The C.P.R. delivered, despite having to move the troops over four unfinished gaps totalling eighty-six miles on the railway line north of Lake Superior in late winter conditions. A grateful nation and Canadian Parliament quickly provided the necessary funding to complete the construction of the railway which was completed on November 7th, 1885.

Developments on the Constitutional side are more difficult to summarize. MacDonald was a centralist. During the 1880s he was confronted by ever more powerful and talented Provincial Premiers who wanted more power for the Provinces. They were appealing constantly to the Supreme Court, or by-passing it and going directly to the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC). These judges were commonly re-interpreting the British North American Act in favour of the Provinces. In many cases Judges were making the law rather than interpreting it. This judicial activism changed the Federation over time into one of the most decentralized systems in the world. This period in Canada's history is an important part of MacDonald's Legacy.

# *Presentation, February Meeting Timothy Eaton and the T. Eaton Company*

*Article by Lucy Martin*

Eaton's. Founded by Timothy Eaton in 1869, the company went on to become an iconic success story. By the time Eaton's ceased operations in 1999, most Canadians were familiar with shopping at an Eaton's store or ordering from the catalog. (Depending on brand loyalty, some would only shop at Eaton's.)



For our February meeting, three speakers fleshed out that 130-year-long saga before an appreciative audience of about 40 members and guests. Coral Lindsay summarized company's history and influence, supplemented with an extensive display of Eaton's related memorabilia, supplied by Lindsay and others. (By the way, Eaton's still owes Lindsay 27 cents in refund credits, but it would appear the debt stands as forgiven.) Brian Earl and Pat Grainger shared their distinct high school experiences as Eaton's representatives. Earl recalled that working there was akin to being "part of a very great family". Grainger counted her experience there as a "wonderful privilege".

Timothy Eaton was born in Northern Ireland, the youngest of nine children in a Protestant Scottish farm family. Timothy's father died just before his birth in 1834. The young Eaton left school by age 13. He was apprenticed to a relative on his mother's side who was a storekeeper and shipper. It was hard work and long hours but even then Eaton found ways to invent labour-saving efficiencies, a harbinger of things to come.

By the time his apprenticeship was successfully completed, his mother had died and many of his siblings had gone to Canada. Eaton decided to try his fortune there as well, arriving in 1854, at age twenty. Various moves, business ventures, conversion to Methodism and marriage (in 1862) followed.

Timothy Eaton and Margaret Beattie (1841-1933) had eight children, five of whom attained adulthood. In another connection of historical interest, one daughter, Josephine Burnside, and a granddaughter, Iris Burnside, were aboard the Lusitania when that ship was torpedoed by Germany off the Irish coast in 1915. (Josephine survived. Iris perished.)



*Coral Lindsay presenting.*

The store that made the Eaton family fortune opened on Toronto's Yonge Street, in 1869. It represented a bold move, away from the established shopping districts of the day.

Eaton's did not invent all the innovations they deployed, but over time the company popularized amenities later taken for granted. At Eaton's there was no bartering. Merchandise had one fixed price and was not sold on credit. Hard cash had been scarce in earlier settlement days. But Eaton's rise paralleled a broad transition to paid labour and increased urbanization. A large segment of the workforce now had regular cash wages. And a growing middle class wanted consumer products that reflected their new social standing.

Customers felt assured by the company's warranty "Goods Satisfactory or Money Refunded" and appreciated that stores were kept well-stocked. Eaton's was one of the first stores to offer a waiting room and washroom facilities for the public's comfort. Stores came to include a grill/lunchroom, and were early to use elevators and escalators, electric lights, telephones and offer the convenience of home delivery. Eaton's was a leader in reducing the work week to 5.5 days. Eaton's featured memorable win-

dow displays (draped over on Sundays) and sponsored much-loved Santa Claus parades for many, many decades, before costs forced the company to end that relationship. (The first being held in Toronto and Winnipeg in 1905, Montreal's began in 1925.)

Eaton's first mail-order catalog came out in 1884. It was of enormous benefit to a population that was still mostly rural, far-flung and otherwise unable to access the range (or more competitive prices) of goods available to city dwellers. The catalog sold almost everything – from clothes, books and toys. Eaton product lines came to include sporting equipment, musical instruments, groceries, drugs, furniture, farm equipment and even prefabricated houses. Broad as that sweep was, Eaton's intentionally eschewed selling liquor or tobacco.

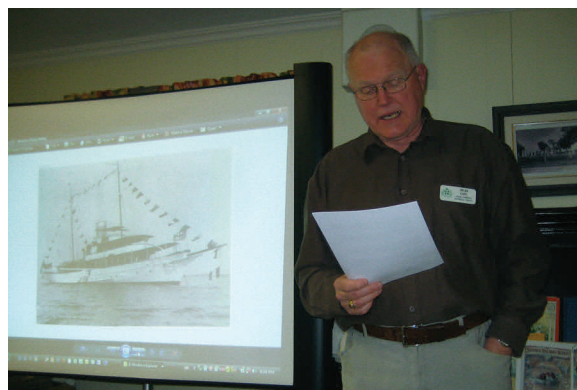
When Timothy Eaton died of pneumonia at age 73 in 1907, he was widely mourned as a genius who had revolutionized the retail business in Canada. His son, John Craig Eaton, proved a very able successor. Even before taking over after his father's death, J.C. Eaton was largely responsible for establishing the massive Eaton's store in Winnipeg, which opened in 1905. John C. Eaton went on to be knighted for his considerable war efforts and community service, before an untimely death in 1922 at age 45 (also of pneumonia).

A note about labour relations: The family-owned company tried to create an environment where employees would not wish to unionize. What emerged was mix of unique benefits, and strong sense of camaraderie – alongside modest wages. Men were paid more than women, though that was hardly unusual. Some 'sweat-shop' conditions among Eaton's suppliers generated criticism. Lindsay reports that Eaton's was black-listed by unions in the 1930's for the company's anti-union stance. How this issue is judged probably depends on the observer's opinion of unionization. Obviously, Eaton's fell short of utopia. Yet it the management style of its founders seems well-intended – even generous – in many ways.

Eaton's best leaders were its founding father and the son who followed. The company remained in family hands for several more generations, growing in size and complexity. But a combination of changes in the retail landscape and less-effective leadership contributed to the company's ultimate closure in 1999.

Along the way, Eaton's established a rather clever program: Junior Council (for young women) and Junior Executive (for young men). The few chosen from each area high school experienced an intriguing mixture of career training, public promotion and ordinary retail work. As described by co-speakers Brian Earl and Pat Grainger, participants might expect custom-tailored wool blazers which they got to keep, studio portraits printed in local newspapers and participation in parades and group meals with interesting guest speakers.

Overall, it sounded like a money-losing proposition for Eaton's! On the other hand, it made being part of Eaton's 'cool' and desirable. Eaton's could also access what we now call focus-group feedback from actual teens – all of



*Brian Earl presenting.*

which helped market the company as “The Store for Young Canada”. It also produced a prospective pool of well-trained employees, for those who wanted that option.

Brian Earl is a former Eaton's Junior Executive in Winnipeg, a retired artillery officer and an active volunteer at the Canadian War Museum. So Earl made a point of paying tribute to Eaton's unusually supportive policies for employees who went to war.

Earl reports that four employees served in the Boer War and the company kept them on the payroll. In WW I, over 3,000 male Eatonians enlisted. Married men who volunteered continued to receive their full private-sector pay (in addition to their army wages). Single men got half-pay. At war's end previous jobs were restored or something equivalent was created. Eaton's did their best to employ returning amputees and disabled veterans too.

If that much financial support sounds unsustainable, by WW II it was. Still, Eaton's 'topped off' the difference between what a married employee had earned before going into uniform, in an effort to spare families financial hardship for a breadwinner's war-time service. Single employees were topped off at two-thirds of their peacetime wages.

Earl listed other Eaton's wartime outreach efforts. Company newsletters were produced and distributed. Photos of employees in uniform were displayed where they worked. Eaton's European offices served as overseas banks for Eaton service personnel and the Swiss office ensured that monthly care packages were delivered to Eatonians held in POW camps. Stores held events for returning veterans and paid tribute to those killed on company plaques in Toronto and Winnipeg. (The Toronto plaque is at the War Museum.)

In World War I John Eaton donated the family yacht to the war effort. Asked to assist the army modernize, he helped establish and largely funded an entire machine gun battery. (As mentioned earlier, J.C. Eaton's contributions

were so notable that he was knighted.) In World War II John David Eaton donated the company's airplane to the war effort. In both world wars, Eaton's returned profits on war contracts to the government. All in all, a commendable record of exceptional support for military service and shared national endeavor.

Pat Grainger was a Toronto area Eaton's Representative for Georges Vanier Secondary School from 1968-1969 and she still has the studio portrait to prove it! Grainger vividly remembers marching in a lengthy November Santa's Parade as a 'Martian' and nearly freezing in her thin costume. She was also coached to model in a fashion show. After the hairdresser and make-up artists were through, her own mother couldn't pick her out on the runway! Grainger and her fellow high school models got to keep the featured clothing too. She reports very happy memories and being treated in a way that was generous, even lavish.

Brian Earl says he didn't get the individual studio portrait, but he was selected from Winnipeg's Churchill High School as a Junior Executive 1957-58. Earl has a nice newspaper ad that pictures him as a Senior Executive the following year – an honour granted to just one young man from the previous year's crop. Saturday mornings were spent on training and various tours, afternoons were spent working as sales help. (Eaton's was, of course, closed on Sundays.) Lloyd Axworthy was one of the young men Earl worked with in '58-'59.

Lindsay concluded her talk with a list of alternative uses for Eaton's catalogs: cut up as paper dolls; used as a colouring book or to practice drawing; tied on as hockey

pads; heated and used as a bed warmer; soaked in salt water, rolled, dried and burned as a Yule log; decorative doorstop; fire-starting paper; outhouse material for reading and toilet paper.

Immigrants used the handy combination of images and text to learn Canada's official languages. Last but not least, Queen Mary is said to have used Eaton's catalogs to teach the young princesses Elizabeth and Margaret about Canada.



*Pat Grainger presenting*

The Eaton's story is long and interesting. To learn more I recommend articles found in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online. Our thanks to everyone who contributed to a most enjoyable evening of information and displays.

## ***Watson's Mill***

The Mill is located at 5525 Dickinson Street, Dickinson Square, Manotick. Free parking on-site.

Web Site: [watsonsmill.com](http://watsonsmill.com)

**1. March Break Day Camp:** "A Bag of Tricks" : Monday, March 12th, 9:00-4:00pm: \$25/child, or \$20/WMMI members. At the Carriage Shed. \*Children must be pre-registered.

\*\*The camp is a go and there's still space left—register your child or grand-child today!

Camp has never been so fun! Camp Date: Monday March 12 2012; Cost: \$25 (\$20 for members) includes one small snack, bring your own lunch.; Time: 9:00am- 4:00pm; Ages:6-12 years. Don't miss out! Space is limited, so register now! To Register, or for more details: Phone: Cam at (613) 692-MILL (6455); Email: [watsonsmillprograms@rogers.com](mailto:watsonsmillprograms@rogers.com); Or drop in at our Offices, 5524 Dick-

inson Street (the Carriage Shed across the street from the Mill)

**2. Watson's Mill Presents...** "It Starts Here: One Person's Experience in Making Change" : Wednesday, March 28th, 6:30-7:00pm: \$5/person, or \$2/WMMI members. At the Carriage Shed.

Mitch Kurylowicz, a grade 3 student who responded to the horrors of the Indian Ocean tsunami and humanitarian needs in Kenya, tells his inspirational story of making a difference. From local fundraising to developing action plans, Mitch will reflect on his journey to Kenya and his subsequent return in 2011.

**4.Spring Cleaning Bee:** Saturday, April 21st : from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. All are welcome!

In the spirit of Volunteer Week (April 15th-21st), the Watson's Mill Team welcomes community members on Saturday, April 21st to come help get the Mill ready for the upcoming season.

## ***Communications Sub-Committee***

At an earlier meeting the RTHS Executive has identified a need for a “communications” sub-committee to assist with the promotion of the RTHS programs and to spread the word about what we do. The sub-committee would perform this function for both the Society and the Dickinson House project.

The following are the proposed terms of reference and duties for this group. It is hoped that both members of the executive and the general membership might consider volunteering to help with this important activity.

So please think about whether you can help us. There will be a sign up sheet at the March meeting.

*The sub-committee is to develop, implement, and manage a communications plan to accomplish the following.*

- *Prepare and distribute the monthly newsletters, including defining content and distribution.*
- *Maintain web sites for the Society and the Dickinson House including defining content.*
- *Recommend the “events” at which the Society will participate (e.g. Heritage Day) and the type of participation at each.*
- *Promote and advertise the work of the Society, encourage membership, and attendance at meetings.*
- *Promote and advertise the Dickinson House, solicit volunteers, and draw visitors to the House.*

## ***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).***

## ***Coming Events:***

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

## *Minutes of the February 15, 2012 Meeting*

*by Owen Cooke*

Rideau Township Historical Society met in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kars, with 42 members and guests present. Maureen McPhee, the Vice-President, opened the meeting at 7:30 pm. sharp.

### Reports

Minutes – Moved Marguerite Rogers, seconded Doug Culham, that the minutes of the January meeting, as published in the Newsletter, be accepted. Carried.

Finance – The Treasurer, Colin Wright, stated that our bank balance was about \$16,000. He introduced Sandy McNiece, who read the auditor's report (copy included in original minutes) and stated that he was satisfied with the accounts. Moved Susan McKellar, seconded Ron Wilson, that the auditor's report be accepted. Carried.

Membership – Pat Earl reported that we had at present 12 life members, 4 complimentary memberships and 64 annual members, not counting any who had renewed that night.

Communications and Digital Applications – Ron Wilson noted that the website was up to date. He said that he will form a small committee to discuss communications issues, such as the website and the newsletter; getting notices in both the EMC and Messenger newspapers; getting Lucy Martin's stories into local newspapers; and putting notices of events on local bulletin boards.

Publications – Ellen Adamsons outlined some possible productions other than printed books, such as video or digital works. We have some projects largely completed now for such a project – the barns project and Dickinson House video, for instance. Village histories and oral history are also possible future publications. In the short term, however, the goal for this year is a revised edition of Iona Joy's book on cheese factories. As well, the Society will be present at Heritage Day, 21 February, with some members in costume, and to sell books, as well as at the Ontario Genealogical Society Genealogy Day on 21 April.

Program – Ruth Wright announced the remaining meetings for the spring session:

- March – Stu Rogers, "Myths of 1492", possibly at Christ Church Anglican, North Gower;
- April – Ellen Adamsons on writing family history, at the Rideau Archives Branch, North Gower;

- May – Robert Henderson on the War of 1812, at the Pierces Corners RA; and
- June – an outing.

Youth – Cam Trueman is moving forward with the establishment of a scholarship as recommended in the strategic plan. He is negotiating with both South Carleton and St. Mark's high schools.

Dickinson House – Maureen McPhee has submitted one grant application to get students during the summer, and Cam is working on another. The Committee is developing a policy on acquisitions.

### Evening's Program

Ruth introduced Coral Lindsay, who was so well-known to the members that she needed only "Here's Coral!" She spoke on Timothy Eaton and the Eaton retail empire. Lucy Martin has reported in detail in the newsletter on the presentation. Coral was assisted by Brian Earl, who spoke on Eatons' contributions to the war effort in two World Wars, and on being an Eaton "Junior Executive" in Winnipeg in the 1950s. Pat Grainger provided her reminiscences on being an Eaton "Junior Councillor" in Toronto in the 1960s. (Girls were "Councillors", boys were "Executives".)

Ruth thanked Coral and Maureen adjourned the meeting at 9:45 pm.