



LIMELIGHT

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2000

NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back after a full summer of local historical events: the annual Sir John A. commemoration on 6 June; the celebration of Kingston's "capital day" on 15 June; the 75th. anniversary of the operation on the Murney Tower Museum on 1 August; and the fine programme for the commemoration of Cataraqui Cemetery's "Charter Day" -- its 150th. anniversary -- on 12 August. What a rich calendar.

In my last newsletter of last year I rambled on about the surprising difference between the number of members in the Gananoque Historical Society and our own, and I issued the challenge to bring in new members for the autumn session. How's it going?

I am pleased to report success on one membership front. Not only have most of last year's sponsors continued their support, but three new members have joined us: Cooke's, Novel Idea, and S&R. KHS extends a warm welcome to the newcomers, and thanks to our veteran group for their continued loyalty.


I had the opportunity to visit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Historical Society this summer. Their Society is two years our junior (formed 1895), and it's interesting to note how different a route their society has taken over approximately the same time frame as ours. Many aspects are similar: their aims or purposes are virtually the same; they have approximately the same number of members, (260); comparable annual dues (\$30 for families); a monthly newsletter; and a vigorous historical plaque programme. Also, the history of the area is remarkably similar to ours.

Where their Society differs is in their primary aim, which is the operation of the Niagara Historical Museum. They built the museum in 1906, a short nine years after their inauguration! Their Constitution describes the Museum as "a community institution created for the purpose of acquiring, conserving, studying, interpreting, assembling and exhibiting to the public for its instruction and enjoyment a collection of records, documents, and artifacts of historical interest." These words should have a familiar ring for our KHS. It is a particularly well-presented and exciting display of archival material from the region's history, and a significant aspect of the area's tourism. I found this an appealing approach, because it has afforded the Niagara Historical Society a good deal of influence in matters historical and how these issues interrelate with the region's Cultural and Heritage Strategies. I mention this because we may wish to consider the possibility of a site that our Society can call home. Food for thought.

The millennium book sales have been very good, with the first 400

almost sold out. Any member who does not yet have a copy should act quickly if they want a first run issue.

George Dillon decided this spring that he wanted to pass on the duties of treasurer. During his tenure, George did yeoman service and I congratulate him on a job well done. Stewart Renfrew has volunteered to take up the position and we wish him every success in this new portfolio.

We have an exciting schedule for this year and I look forward to seeing you all at the September meeting. (Warren Everett) — 

OUR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of KHS will be at 7.30, Wednesday, 20 September, the Wilson Room, Kingston Public Library.

Speaker: Mrs. Carol White

Topic: "History Boring? No Way!"

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Kingston Historical Society

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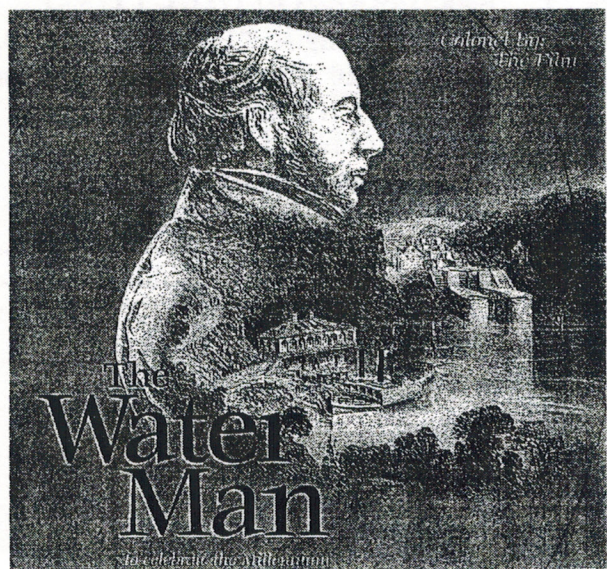
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AND ONE FROM THE EDITORS...

Here we go again! Another year of our newsletter, **Limelight**. And that's the point: it is **our** newsletter; **our** way of communicating matters of collective interest to each other. To this end, we encourage all members to forward to us for publication any notices of upcoming events, reports of activities, or squibs that may be of interest to other members. In this issue, we are pleased to include items submitted by Shirley Gibson-Langille, and Terry Hicks.



Over the past few months, the Rideau has been much in the news: its designation as a **Heritage River**; the publication of Ken Wilson's **History of the Rideau Lockstations**; and there's talk of a film -- **The Water Man**, based on the trials and tribulations of Lieut. Col. John By -- the engineer of the Rideau.

It's worth recalling that Kingston was central to this great enterprise. While so much attention is now focused on Ottawa, Merrickville, and Smiths Falls, it was Kingston and Fort Henry that served as the commercial terminus and military anchor of the system. Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that it's Kingston's Rideau-waterfront along the Cataraqui that is our only active dock-area. Look down Wellington Street and see the cranes.

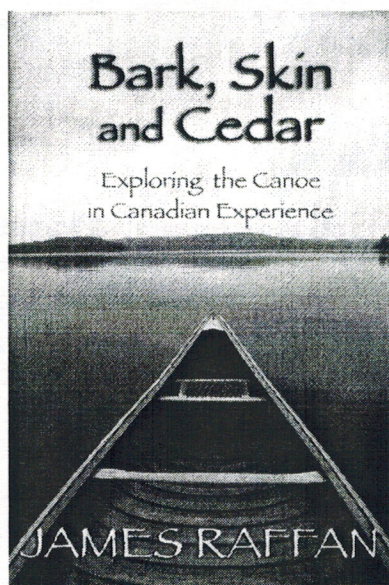
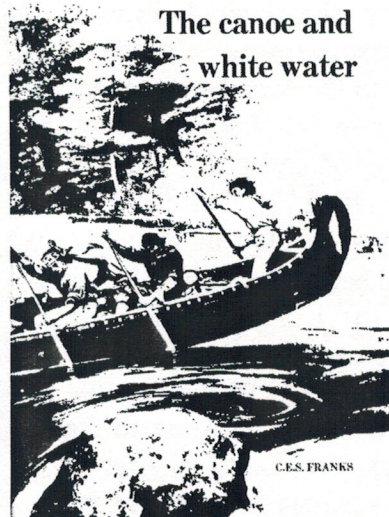
Because of this, the next few issues of **Limelight** will carry a series of essays on Canada's most recent "Heritage River" entitled, **Focus on the Rideau**.

KINGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AWARDS

During the next several weeks, the Awards Committee will be preparing its recommendations concerning KHS Awards for 2000. In keeping with normal practice, members are again asked to participate in these deliberations by nominating individuals or organizations who are worthy candidates. Nominations should be put forward using the form enclosed with this newsletter. Completed forms may be mailed to the Awards Committee c/o the Society's mail address, or passed directly to the Chairman of the committee, Dr. J.G. Pike, 150 Macdonell Street, K7L 4B8, so as to arrive not later than 31 October. It is requested that as much information as possible be presented in support of each nomination. It should be remembered that detail which may appear obvious to the nominator may not be so to members of the Awards Committee.

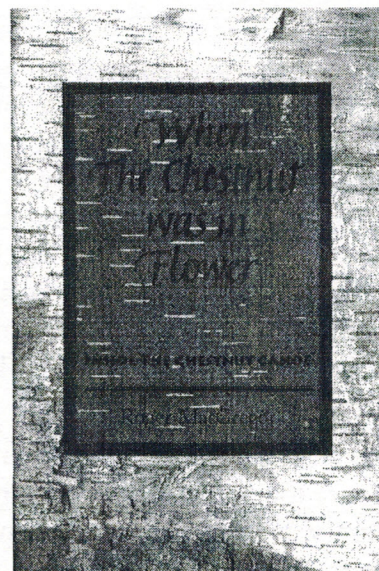
BOOK SHELF

Several observers of the local scene have commented on the number of Kingston-based writers -- and quite a few have written about canoeing. Queen's Professor C.E.S. ("Ned") Franks' **The canoe and white water** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) led the pack -- or should I say "brigade"? His contribution was a scholarly - yet readable -- account of the history of Canadian canoeing as it was transformed from an essential part of the Canadian economy into a sporting activity and national icon. Also a superb introduction to basic river and outdoor skills, it's now a collector's item.



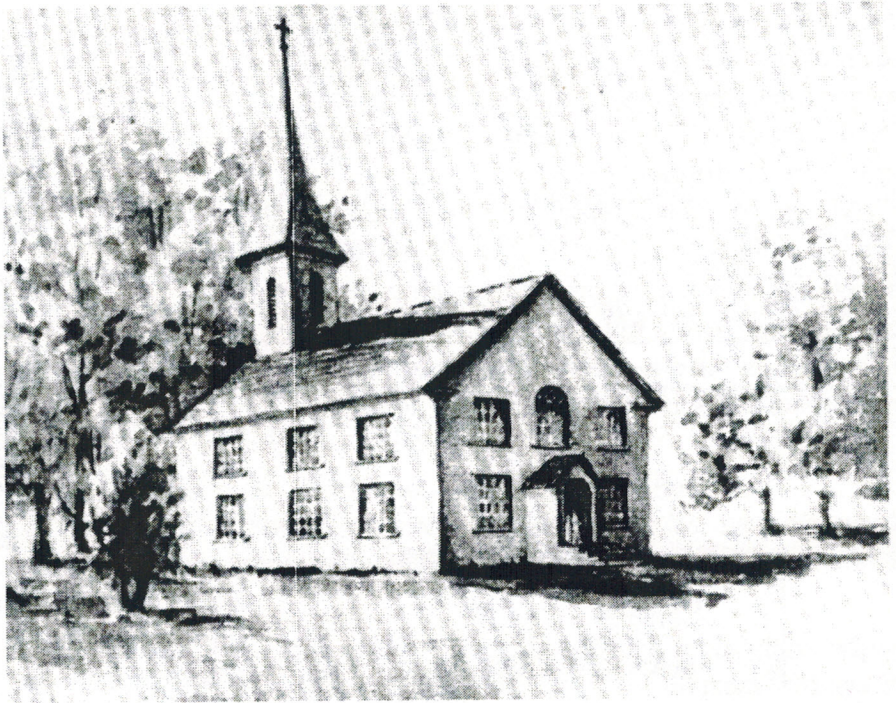
Seeley's Bay resident, Jim Raffan, is emerging as one of our prolific out-door writers with his recent biography of Bill Mason, **Fire in the Bones: Bill Mason and the Canadian Canoeing Tradition** (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1996) and his earlier **Summer North of Sixty: By Paddle and Portage Across the Barren Lands** (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1990). More recently, his **Bark, Skin, and Cedar: Exploring the Canoe in the Canadian Experience** (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1999) is promoted as "a song, a celebration, an invocation to adventure, an exploration, an assemblage of stories about canoes, written to inform and entertain anyone who might have wondered about the place of this craft in Canadian experience." (Available in most book-stores).

Roger MacGregor's, **When the Chestnut was in Flower: Inside the Chestnut Canoe**, Lansdowne: Plumsweep Press, 1999 is an entertaining account of the famous New Brunswick canvas-canoe -- the Chestnut. It's an odyssey of an idea that bounced between Rice Lake, Maine, and Fredericton. No arid business history, Ivy Lea resident and canoe aficionado, MacGregor, presents us with a charming collage of well researched facts, images, and folksy yarns. The yarns are particularly good. They tell Chestnut-connected stories that range from the rivers of New Brunswick, to the forests of Algonquin Park -- and even the beaches of Dunkirk! A fine read. (Soon to be in stores. Otherwise phone 659 3629 for free home-delivery)



KINGSTON AND SIMCOE

On the 29th August 1997, as a Vice-President of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, I was invited to the Members' Gallery of the Provincial Legislature to witness the second reading of Bill 150 designating June 19th as "United Empire Loyalists Day in Ontario." June 19th had been selected as this was the date in 1791 the British Parliament passed the Constitutional Act PROVIDING FOR the creation of Upper Canada in response to the demands of the Loyalists for a jurisdiction separate from that of the province of Quebec. The Act, of course, could not take effect until the swearing in of the Lieutenant-Governor.



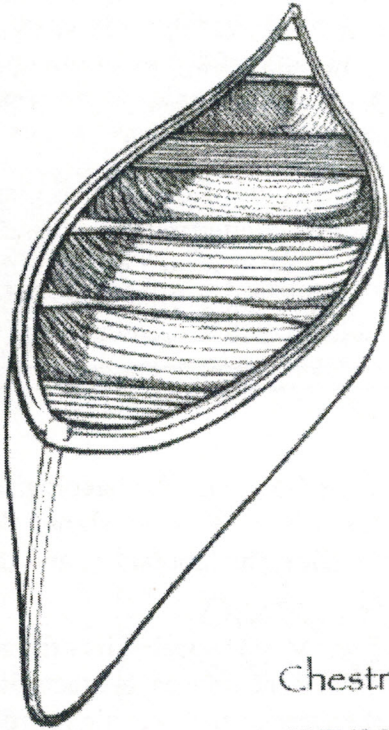
I had an hour to spare before entering the Members' Gallery so I went to the Information Room just down the main hall. On entering, I observed three walls covered with pictures accompanied by captions which chronologically portrayed the history of the Province. The FIRST picture in the line was an artist's drawing of the first legislature building at Niagara on the Lake. I enquired of a senior official why the first picture should not be the artist's drawing of Kingston's St. George's Church -- which later became St. George's Cathedral. It was there that Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe was sworn into office on the 8th July, 1792. Thus, Constitutional Government began in Ontario at that instant.

He instantly agreed with me and stated that if I could get him a photograph of the drawing, he would see that it was displayed with a suitable caption at the head of the line. With the approval of the Wardens at St. George's, a picture was sent. Thus began nearly three years of frustration. The file of correspondence is half an inch thick!

With nothing appearing to happen, I again contacted this official and got a bureaucratic "put-off." The picture evidently disappeared in somebody's file and there appeared to be no interest in it. There followed over two years of effort including a strong supporting letter from our MPP Mr. John Gerretsen and equal support from the local Progressive Conservative Constituency Association. In response to a letter to the Premier, a letter was received from the Director, Interparliamentary & Public Relations Branch referring to an earlier letter which was never received in Kingston. I have grave doubts that such a letter was even sent! In an effort to resolve the issue I again wrote to the Premier and suggested that either they say "we are not interested" or get on with doing something about it. A reply to this was again received from the Director, Interparliamentary & Public Relations Branch asking for a signature verifying that the picture, sent for the second time, was a donation to the archives -- in other words, permission to bury the initiative. There the issue stands at the moment.

It is disappointing that few in Kingston seem to realize that our Province as a constitutional entity began right here. As a result of this series of events and other issues involving plaques, I am convinced that people in Toronto prefer to ignore the fundamental role Kingston and Eastern Ontario played in the development of our province and our country. It is equally very disappointing that our legislative and bureaucratic authorities are evidently reluctant to proudly and publicly portray the constitutional beginning of our province. (The text of a talk presented to the Rotary Club of Kingston on 27 July 2000, by Mr. Terry Hicks)

CANOE ART



Chestnut Ogilvy,
canvas-covered cedar, 18 feet

"Even the old canvas from a canoe seems to retain its charm. Some people can't throw it away. I recently saw a striking painting on the wall of a canoe-fancier's home in Toronto. He said he had taken the canvas off his old Chestnut canoe but got to pondering the patterns that the planking and the staining of the years had left imprinted on the inside of the cloth. When he had removed the canvas, he cut off a good-sized section which included the bow profiles, and laid it out in his studio. He saw the vestiges of a woodland scene he had marvelled at many times over the bow of his canoe: skyline and shoreline were suggested by the lateral imprints of the planking; rocks, trees, water and cloud by the stains. His artist's brush provided the glowing tones of the sunset. The work of art which resulted must be five feet wide and nearly as many deep. Using thongs of leather he stretched the canvas to

a frame of birch saplings, the way a trapper stretches the skin of a beaver. It takes a fair piece of living room wall to accommodate the scene, but it is striking and evocative. It is a canvas to be sure." (From Roger MacGregor's **When the Chestnut Was in Flower.**)

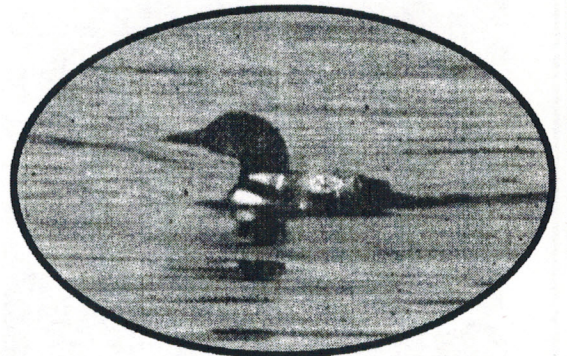


WHAT IS A2A?

The Algonquin to Adirondacks conservation initiative -- A2A -- consists of a wide range of interested parties: private land owners; provincial, state, and federal government agencies; and conservation, agricultural, and forestry organizations. Its objective is to establish a corridor for north-south wildlife movement between two of North America's oldest and largest parks: Ontario's ALGONQUIN PARK and New York's ADIRONDACK PARK.

The central premise of the initiative is "No Park Is An Island"! Both parks are home to important populations of both rare and common native species of plants and animals. But these need to move beyond park boundaries if they are to maintain healthy populations. The A2A corridor is amenable to this for several reasons:

- * The region still has much forest cover and wetlands
- * There are relatively few roads
- * The Thousand Islands act as stepping stones for wildlife
- * Residents value the natural landscape



With a focus on stewardship, cooperation, flexibility, and sustainability, A2A aims at maintaining the integrity of the landscape as a whole for all species and for generations to come. In doing so, it should also be sensitive to the region's rich heritage for native peoples and its fascinating history of settlement and evolving resource management.

For more information, contact www.cpaws-ov.org/A2A.htm, or call 613-232-7297.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

Our first speaker in the 2000-2001 KHS series is **Mrs. Carol White**, a teacher in the Grades 7 and 8 Enriched Programme at Calvin Park Public School. Her presentation is entitled, **"HISTORY BORING? NO WAY!"** Mrs. White's talk will focus on creating and stimulating an interest in history by employing strategies and techniques centred on Local Studies. Come and join us at 7.30 p.m., Wednesday, 20 September 2000, in the Kingston Public Library's Wilson Room.

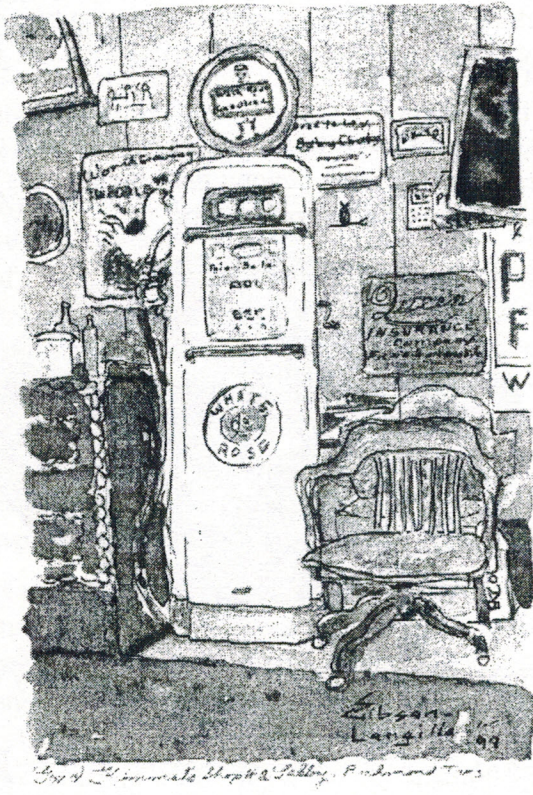
On Wednesday, 17 May, Mark Thompson, gave an enlightening talk on the restoration of the stained glass windows in St. Mary's Cathedral. The difficulties in repairing and restoring the windows elicited much discussion and questions by the approximately 75 attending members and visitors. As well we were shown some of the beautiful pieces of modern stained glass art that Mr. Thompson has produced in recent years. This was a most enjoyable and informative session for all present.

THEY DUG ARCHAEOLOGY

On 21 June, Susan Bazely, the resident archaeologist, and several members of the Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation took 8 members of the Historical Society on a tour of the Centre. We were shown the displays, the archives including the recent acquisitions from the Land Registry Office, the laboratory, and the library.

One of the highlights was the tour through the upper floors of the Morton Distillery which revealed its original walls, timbers and interior architecture. Another highlight was the handling of some of the unusual artifacts that the Cataraqui Archaeological personnel have uncovered in local digs. It is hoped that we can do this again in order to provide other members of the Society with the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of what a sister organization is doing.

SHIRLEY GIBSON-LANGILLE: AN EXHIBITION



As part of a "Celebration of History, Art, and Music," Shirley Gibson-Langille will be presenting an exhibition entitled, "Once Upon a Time in the Town of Greater Napanee." Some 120 of her paintings of scenes in Napanee and the townships of Adolphustown, North and South Fredericksburgh, and Richmond will be on display in North Fredericksburgh Hall, on County Road 8. The exhibition will run from Saturday 30 September until Thursday 5 October, 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. daily.

At 11.00 a.m. on 30 September, the festivities will be opened officially by Mayor Frank Calver. This will be followed by a presentation on local history by Ruth Wright, the appearance of the "ghost of Amelia Allison," a ghost story by Kathy Staples, historical displays, and musical entertainment from the "Moscow Piper," Henry Tigsworth, and "Old Time Fiddlers," Don Smith, Ernie Warmington, and Bill McDonald.

From 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on 1 October, there will be a car show, historical displays, and musical entertainment by the "Picket Fences."

All proceeds and a percentage of the sale of paintings will go towards establishing an art scholarship for the Napanee District Secondary School. For more details, contact Shirley Gibson-Langille (549 8360).

FOCUS ON THE RIDEAU: FIRST FRIENDS OF THE RIDEAU

The Rideau Waterway was not constructed through a wilderness. It was a well-known place of seasonal resort for the native peoples of the area. It was -- and is -- their "homeland."

At the time of the French contact with the region, the Iroquois were located along the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence axis. While they cultivated corn, beans, and squash at their village sites, they travelled along rivers tributary to the St. Lawrence for seasonal hunting and gathering in the Rideau backcountry. The Algonquins occupied the lands along the line of the Ottawa river and they too used its southern tributaries to penetrate the Rideau-Gananoque-Catarauqui system. Finally, by the early eighteenth century, the Mississauga had replaced the Iroquois peoples throughout the southern end of the Rideau Corridor and moved into the interior along the rivers tributary to Lake Ontario.



For all of these peoples, therefore, the south-easterly extension of the Canadian Shield known as the Frontenac Axis constituted a livable habitat. It was a land of rocks and forests, with a fine network of rivers, lakes, and marshes. Both the Mississauga and the Algonquins had long adapted to the seasonal regimens of this sub-boreal world. It provided the material base for their societies. The annual migratory cycle saw small groups subsisting on forest game throughout the winter: the dense mixed-deciduous forest provided deer, bear, porcupine, rabbits, and beaver. In spring, they

moved to the groves of maple for the sap-run. In early summer, they concentrated at the lake-trout and white-fish spawning grounds. In the fall, they turned to the beds of wild-rice along the interior rivers and lakes.

Their impact upon their environment was limited by low population densities and a simple technology of the bow, spear, club, and fire. The Rideau country was the stage on which their day to day life was acted out. Both the Mississauga and Algonquins were closely bound to the Rideau Corridor by functional and symbolic practices. Thus, for the Mississauga, their seasonal round reflected the natural rhythms of the ecosystem: **seegwum** was the springtime season of the rising sap; **neebin** was the abundant summer; **tuhgwuhgin** marked the fall fading of the colours; and **peboon** was the season when the world was captured by the winter freeze.

Similarly, places were often named in terms of their roles such as **Machickning**, a fishing place, and **Panituscotiyank**, a "fat fire" for rendering fish products. And individuals were also tied to place through personal names such as Buck, Beaver, Crow, or Whiteduck that reflected personal identification with animistic clan totems. In this way, the supernatural realm reinforced the bonds with the material world and so transformed "habitat" into "home."

With the construction of the Rideau Waterway, 1826-32, this original native presence was replaced by a landscape of Euro-Canadian survey, land-use, and settlement. More importantly, Colonel By's dams and embankments diverted waterways from their former courses, and created lakes that flooded forests and changed fishing grounds. The native peoples were witness to this changing world. Some were moved to reservations elsewhere. Others stayed throughout the Rideau-country. But all retain their association with this place through their living-memories and indigenous knowledge of the region.

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