

BRAIDWOOD, Gwendolyn Lazier

Intelligencer portraits from the past

'Tip' of hat to President Coolidge

For the 140th anniversary of the United Empire Loyalists' settling of the Quinte area — to be celebrated in 1924 — Belleville Mayor W.C. Mikel wanted something different.

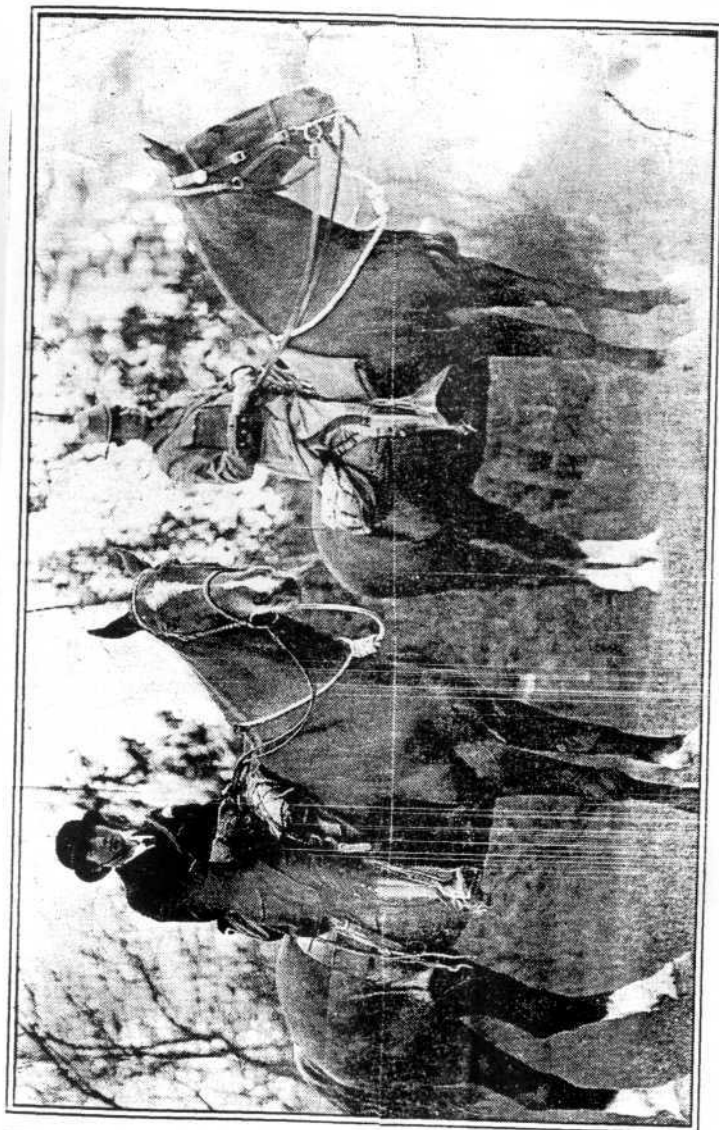
He asked for someone to ride horseback to Washington D.C. to deliver an invitation for U.S. President Calvin Coolidge to attend the festivities here.

Wellington resident Gwen (Lazier) Braidwood — she still resides there — was 18 and living in Belleville when she heard the appeal. Her sister was approached about the matter because she was an accomplished horseback rider, but Gwen Braidwood wanted to go herself. Her one obstacle was that she had never ridden a horse.

"I used to be scared to death just to go into the barn," she says. "(But) I loved travelling and I thought that would be a great way to see the country."

She talked her sister out of going, got her father's permission — "Sure she can go. She won't get any further than Shannonville anyway," — and borrowed an old army horse named Tip.

In the next 32 days she rode 737 miles, foiled an attempted robbery, was thrown from the horse and met the president of the United States. While Braidwood was on her trip to Washington, BCI student Alan Dempsey was walking to Toronto with an invitation for the city's mayor to attend the festivities. Dempsey resides in Rednersville, Prince Edward County.



Gwen (Lazier) Braidwood with one of the New York State troopers.

Intell
Remember when

Sunday Feb. 21, 1993