



Larry W. Rittenhouse stands beside the original stone bridge his great-grand-uncle Moses F. Rittenhouse built when he donated the 90-acre parcel of land in Vineland Station for a horticultural research station. Rittenhouse would like to see a portion of the area designated as a heritage centre and memorial park dedicated to the memory, vision and generosity of his ancestor.

Benefactor recognized need for research station

A tribute in a 1906 Fruit Growers' Association for Ontario report said, "We desire to show our unbounded gratification at the splendid public spirit shown by Mr. Moses Rittenhouse of Chicago in giving a farm for experimental work in tender fruits and in the prompt action of the Ontario Department of Agriculture in providing for the equipment of the same."

Moses Franklin Rittenhouse was known in the community as a financially successful lumberman and a philanthropist who did not forget his home town.

The 10th child and the 7th son of John Rittenhouse and Elizabeth Funk, he was born Aug. 12, 1846 on a farm in Lincoln County. His father was born in Pennsylvania and came with his parents Michael Rittenhouse and Dinah Fretz to Upper Canada in 1800 with the Pennsylvania German Mennonites. The family settled in Clinton

Township where Moses attended school in the winters and worked on the family farm during the summers. (This information was compiled from various historical references by Ruth M. Smith.)

Although he received only a public school education, by his thrift and energy he became a very rich man. In 1864, at the age of 18 years, Rittenhouse left his home in Clinton and travelled to Chicago to seek his fortune in the lumber market. By 1883, he was well established in the lumber trade and had founded a highly successful lumber firm with his partner J.R. Embree. In 1871, he married Emma Stover from the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. They had three sons, Edward, Charles and Walter.

"Millionaires have founded libraries, art galleries, and educational institutions in large centers of population, but seldom have they spent money on the isolated rural school

section, giving them the advantages of city life," wrote Harvey M. Gayman in Rittenhouse School and Gardens, 1911.

"His thoughts first turned to education – something for the benefit of the young people. Realizing the many advantages his own sons enjoyed in their modern city school, which were completely lacking in the old stone school, at Vineland, he first of all purchased a good assortment of books and presented them to the school. Then began some talks with the school board, which finally led to the erection of a new school on a four-acre plot donated by Rittenhouse. The cost of the fine new brick building was shared by Rittenhouse and the school section. With four acres of ground at its disposal, Rittenhouse became one of the first schools in the province to start a gardening program," B. Coffman in, "A Tribute to Moses F. Rittenhouse".



Moses F. Rittenhouse – whose name stands for generosity and benevolence in his native County of Lincoln.

Following is a list of some of the donations made by Moses Rittenhouse to the Vineland area:

- 1886: The Rittenhouse library;
- 1890: Rittenhouse Public School;
- 1890-93: two acres of landscaped gardens at the school;
- 1904: Victoria Hall, Vineland Station;
- 1905: pumping station at the lake to provide water for

the school and hall;

- 1906: purchase of land for the establishment of the Horticultural Experiment Station. The government of Ontario was quick to accept this gift and immediately set to work to establish the Experimental Station at Vineland Station, formally called the Horticultural Research Institute of Ontario;

- 1908-12: extensive improvements to Victoria Ave. from the lake to Hwy. 8 – the muddy and rutted road was underdrained and macadamized. A concrete sidewalk was also constructed along the entire length of one side of the road and the 3.5 miles of road were planted with maple trees;

- 1912: annex building at Rittenhouse Public School;
- 1912: land for a driveway from the township road to the loading platform at the new railway station;
- 1915: Vineland Cemetery. The present Vineland Cemetery includes the orig-

inal walled Mennonite graveyard and expansion by the addition of property given by Rittenhouse. Just before his death in 1915, he completed the purchase and organization of the added land. After his funeral at Victoria Hall in 1915, he was the first person buried in the new part of the cemetery.

"It has been estimated that in cold cash, the value of Mr. Rittenhouse's gifts to the community amounted to about \$100,000 a great amount for that day.

However, benefits such as these cannot be measured in dollars and cents, and although the fine school which Rittenhouse built is now torn down...yet the man will not be forgotten. His spirit will live on in the community." B. Coffman, "A Tribute to Moses R. Rittenhouse".

Special thanks to historian Larry Rittenhouse for providing the historical information and photos for this section.