

RIDEAU CANAL SYSTEM

The year 1982 will mark the 150th anniversary of the Rideau Canal system. The federal Department of the Environment, Parks Canada will be celebrating the occasion in high style. A Citizen's Committee of mostly interested historical societies and festival groups has been formed from Ottawa to Kingston. The canal has been divided into three areas, northern, central and southern with each area controlled by an anniversary committee. All sectors will be united under a Coordinating Committee made up of the three area Chairmen.

The celebration plans to feature aspects of community life that are unique to the area in which it is developed, and if this uniqueness can be publicized it will attract visitors from outside. Their presence in the community generates new demand for goods and service. The money they spend is new money for the community in which it is spent and thus economic return is possible to the community but unfortunately, not for the Committee.

The committee's function is to provide a base upon which community entities can organize and conduct the celebration. It will co-ordinate events and schedules, provide information, and assistance to program sponsors, provide publicity and information to regional media outlets and maintain liaison at committee level.

HISTORY

In Kingston, on May 24, 1832, Lt. Col. John By, Royal Engineers, boarded the 80 foot steamer, 'Rideau' to undertake a final inspection of the canal he had constructed and to inaugurate the opening of the system for navigation. 1982 will mark the 150th anniversary of that auspicious occasion.

The Rideau Canal is now respected as being the nation's oldest continuously operating and best preserved canal. On several occasions through turbulent periods the fate of the system was in jeopardy. Indeed, a proposition was seriously put that the canal be abandoned, that more exigent use of funds be made. Fortunately, rational thinking prevailed, the canal was retained. Today, the values it affords all Canadians are incalculable.

Each lockstation, well maintained and hand operated, is a link in a precious chain of historical and social virtues unique on the North American continent. Many communities have close affinity with the canal; people hold it in high esteem. They want to celebrate the 150th birthday.

The values evidenced by the canal system itself are wholly complemented by the many visible entities situated alongside the 197 kilometer waterway. These include settler's houses of log, frame, stone or brick with each portraying a characteristic mode and threading in singularly impressionable form through the entire length of the corridor. Old mills are here to demonstrate the practical aspects of agriculture and industry; strikingly situated churches and subdued cemeteries reflect the conscious relationship with religion and of family cohesiveness; a host of communities and residents can identify their ancestry with the canal construction period. Continuity is a dominating characteristic of the canal and the community.

When opened for navigation in 1832, the Rideau Canal was internationally acclaimed as the engineering master piece in all North America. That was an exceptional accolade considering the poor state of this floundering colony. The great dam at Jones Falls drew special attention, as did the eight locks in flight at Bytown. They still do.

The Rideau Canal has well served Eastern Ontario. Many communities were founded in proximity to mills and communication points. Settlement principally was agrarian and villages and towns were of a market nature. They remain thus. Today, the agricultural-industrial-commercial tax base of most communities is to some responsible extent dependent upon the annual infusion of visitors.

In one of several studies undertaken by CORTS (Canada-Ontario-Rideau-Trent-Severn), The Rideau Canal corridor is acknowledged as evidencing exceptional historical, cultural and recreational resources. It has faculty of serving a diverse recreational market.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Some 70 municipalities lie within this corridor. A multiplicity of jurisdictions prevail over land and water. The resident population is about 400,000, including Ottawa's 300,000 population.

Paradoxically, the image which the canal has in Ottawa is low. Although three lockstations are contained in this section, each is subjugated by land profiles and extraneous visual distractions. Their presence is not easily recognized and consequently interest, and visitor traffic, is minimal. Few Ottawans realize that the Rideau Canal extends beyond Hogs Back; few have more than a transitory acquaintanceship with communities along the corridor. Most could name or locate one lockstation.

Beyond the immediate confines of the Rideau Canal the waterway is, for all practical considerations, unknown. Provincial tourist literature offers only casual reference to the system and communities. The significant extents of history, culture and recreation resources recognized by the province are not put to gainful use in its promotional programs.

Throughout 148 years of operation no jubilee by the canal has aroused the interest of the population to want a celebration. The 100th anniversary in 1932 passed largely unnoticed principally because of the nation-wide economic depression then prevailing. Kingston's tricentennial in 1973 focussed on earlier history. In 1976 only minor acknowledgement was given the 150th year since start of construction. Conception is not as publicly proclaimed as birth. That year, the City of Ottawa celebrated its sesquicentennial and while Col. By and the Rideau Canal was afforded some recognition, the focus essentially was on Bytown and Ottawa.

Today, some twelve months in advance of 1982, a noticeable interest in the canal's 150th anniversary is being evidenced. Municipalities, governments, tourist groups, business firms and citizens are responding in strong and positive terms. Since it is their capacities that will provide the thrust of operations, the outlook for a successful anniversary appears to be favourable.

ANNIVERSARY MAGNITUDE

Any attempt to estimate the number of individual events that will be presented in 1982, and the number of citizens who will be planning and conducting the majority of those events, should allow a large margin of error. However, cognizance of the possible size and intensity of this overall program can provide for improved rationale in planning considerations.

In recognizing that the level of interest in the anniversary now being displayed through the region is of a more responsible order than mere casual acknowledgement, and that the potential use of resources prevalent along the waterway corridor is largely untapped, the following numerical estimates are offered in conscious

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PHILIPSVILLE W. I.

The Philipsville W.I. met at the home of Mary Sutcliffe in Portland. President, Faye Jansen, opened the meeting with the Ode and Mary Stewart Collect. Roll Call was answered by giving signs of spring. Minutes were read and approved, new business was dealt with and the crewel work is to be ready for the Achievement Day to be held in Brockville on March 25th. We will be serving lunches at some auction sales in April.

Mary Sutcliffe gave a very interesting talk on the pant making course she took, and had a pair to show.

The meeting closed followed by a lunch which included a birthday cake for the Institutes birthday.

Mary Sutcliffe and Leorene Hayes were invited to the home of Diane Haskin as guests of the 4H Club. This proved to be a fun filled night.

After the girls had their meeting, we were treated to a buffet style lunch, which was prepared by the girls.

The menu was "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" The lunch consisted of two kinds of chicken dishes, salads and dressing with rolls. For dessert there was apple crisp, cream puffs, and a treat for all Black Forest Cake made by Theresa Schmocker of Switzerland. She and her family are new in this area, and live at the Barker farm.

We were served a St. Patrick's Day punch.

As an institute member, I must say that it was a nice group of girls which we sponsored.

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