

**Merrickville
and
District**

Merrickville District

a driving tour



Published jointly by:
Parks Canada and The Merrickville and District
Historical Society

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Typical Entrance 1825-1835

The Merrickville area is steeped in history. It probably has more old stone houses per square mile than you are likely to see anywhere else in Canada. Its countryside is pleasing to the eye, yet it has supported the activities of European man longer than most areas west of the Ottawa River. To help you see some of the finely crafted homes, and to help you get a feeling for the history they represent, the Merrickville and District Historical

Society, in cooperation with the Rideau Canal, has produced this heritage driving tour. Take a few hours from your vacationing schedule to travel along highways and country roads that are seldom busy; discover quaint villages that time seems to have overlooked.

Remember, this is rural Ontario, so watch out for tractors and other farm machinery that will be sharing the road with you. Railway crossings may not be equipped with

guards, so caution is advised. You'll probably want to drive a little slower anyway, as there is much to see and all of it worth watching for.

You can do the tour in 2-3 hours (it's about 30 miles long) and this includes ample time to stop and explore on your own the backstreets of the villages you encounter.

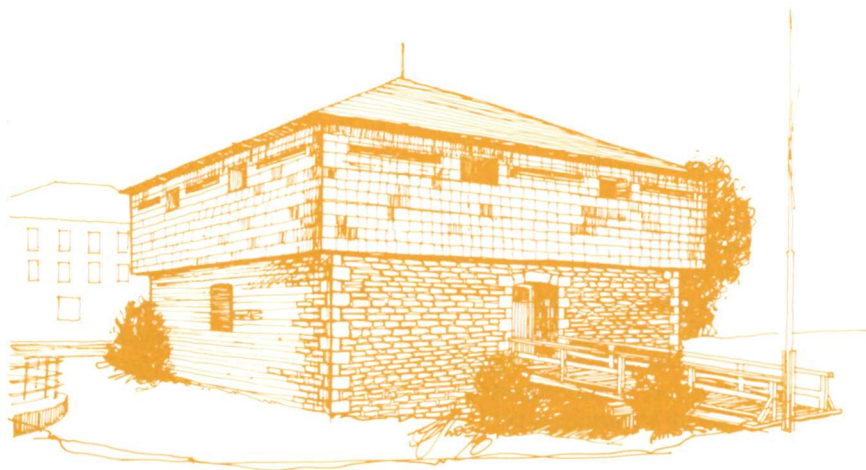
Special attractions mentioned in the booklet are keyed by number to the map provided.

The driving tour begins at the Blockhouse (1), one of the oldest landmarks in the village of Merrickville. Many of the villages you will encounter on your drive take their name from an early settler, often a loyalist refugee from the American

Revolution. Merrickville is no exception; it grew up around the saw and grist mills which William Merrick built on the Rideau River near the point where Highway 43 now crosses.

As you leave the Blockhouse east along Hwy 43, note on your right the Jakes Block (2) — huge, solid and symbolic of the town at its commercial height in the 1860's. The Rideau Canal, part of which can be seen on your left (3), helped change this milling site into an important industrial centre.

Continuing along Hwy 43 to the village limits, large brick residences come into view, built by the town's leading citizens in the late 19th century.



Merrickville Blockhouse



Jakes Block



Rideau Canal Merrickville Locks



Clowes Overflow Dam looking north

Signs of Victorian prosperity were not always a part of the landscape. The scenery changes when you bear left as you leave the village and travel along River Road (County Road 23). From here to the community of Burritt's Rapids,

5 miles away, you wind your way through countryside that was settled almost 200 years ago, when Ontario was still a British colony named Upper Canada. Before this, the area was truly a frontier. The land was forested and wild, and man



Upper Nicholson's Lock

seldom ventured beyond the rivers and lakes which were the only highways into the interior.

Yet the land did not long remain empty. The fertile clay belt that parallels the river was soon claimed by British soldiers and civilian refugees who received grants of land as reward for loyalty to the British crown during the revolt of the Americans in 1776. Men like Robert Nicholson, after whom the lockstation on your left is named (4), helped change the face of the land from unbroken forest to the well-kept farms and rolling fields you now see.

None of the houses now standing date from the earliest days of settlement. Most of the stone houses were built for the early settlers at least 40 years later, between 1830 and 1860, by English, Irish and Scottish immigrants who arrived in the area to work on the Rideau Canal.



Spillway Farm

At first glance, these houses look much the same. They differ in detailing, however, especially around the doorways, and this can provide a stylistic clue to the date of the building. If the transom above the door (which in those pre-electricity days let light into the central hall) is semi-elliptical or fan-shaped (see illustrations) the house probably dates from 1825 to 1835, when this style was popular in Canada. A rec-



Miner Farm



Typical Log House

tangular transom usually indicates a later date, probably after 1835. The earliest transoms were semi-circular, and while there are no examples on the River Road, keep a look out for a very fine example on the other side of the canal.

Most of these fine stone houses were preceded by log houses, probably like the one found near the sharp S-curve in the road (5).

To reach the village of Burritts Rapids, cross the canal over a hand-operated steel swing bridge (6). Once across, note on the right-hand side the 2 storey white frame bridgmaster's house (7), the last surviving example still in use on the Canal. In the days when bridgemen and lockmen were on call all hours of the day and night, it made sense to live next to your place of employment. This structure, now used

only as an office, is typical of turn-of-the-century canal architecture.

Proceeding up Grenville St., you enter the commercial heart of a once thriving milling centre. Be sure to stop and read the plaque beside the Community Hall describing the founding of the Village. Buildings like the old inn (8) with the balcony extending half way across the front are now residences. Many predate 1850, and a brief side trip into the back streets will reveal other early structures — an 1855 Methodist Church (now a residence) and pleasing examples of domestic architecture.

The village itself takes its name from Stephen Burritt, frequently called the first settler on the Rideau. He fought in the American



Christ Church

Revolution on the British side, lost his property, and eventually took up residence on the Rideau River. The Burritt farm, the family home, lies 100 metres to the east of the intersection of main street and County Road No. 2. Along with other early settlers, Burritt is buried in the cemetery of Christ Church (9).

Christ Church, built in 1831, was designed by Arthur McClean, an Irish master builder. To help pay for construction, pews were sold to members of the congregation. Prices ranged from 16 shillings in the rear (about 1 weeks' wage for the average working man in 1830) to £25 near the front, with a small section (3rd row from the back, left hand side) marked "free".

Upon leaving the Church, follow County Road 2 towards Merrickville. Three miles up the road is the turn-off to Andrewsville (10) founded by Rufus Andrews after

the construction of the Rideau Canal, and once a thriving community with mills, a cheese factory, a store, a tavern and a post office. On the left, a half mile further, is the Chester-McCabe house (11), built in 1830 by John Chester and typical of the early 2 storey stone houses along the Rideau. Note the doorway, with its semi-circular transom. About 1½ miles past Merrickville, along Highway 43, turn right over a set of railway tracks. This is the C.P. Montreal to Toronto Mainline, so **proceed with caution.**

Immediately past the restored stone house (12), turn left and follow the scenic drive that was once the main north shore road linking Smiths Falls and Merrickville. Along it you will notice abandoned farms and farm houses. This is your first real contact with the Smiths Falls Limestone Plain,



Grenville St. Burritt's Rapids



Rideau Canal Bridgemaster's House

which stands out in sharp contrast to the small pockets of fertile soil along the river. The infertility of this large tract of shallow soil over limestone made farming difficult, and the area was unable to attract and keep settlers. Such large deposits of limestone near the surface did have some advantages,

however, and the unique architectural heritage of the Rideau Corridor owes much to the ready availability of stone. The landscape has a primitive beauty all of its own, and some of the views of the surrounding countryside are unsurpassed in the area.

Before rejoining Highway 43, the railway tracks must be recrossed.

Again, caution is advised.

The journey continues west along highway 43 for 1.2 miles till a large bend in the highway is met. Slow down and turn left onto the Kilmarnock Road. Follow this road over the wooden swing bridge that spans the lock, a replica of the swing bridge first used on the Rideau Canal in 1864. These bridges, of which there are five on the Canal, are completely rebuilt



Burritt Farm



Kilmarnock Lock

every 12-15 years, but the basic design has remained essentially the same for well over 100 years.

Commanding all approaches to the lockstation is the stone defensible lockmaster's house (13), one of 11 such surviving structures on the canal. Built following the Rebellions of 1837, these single storey fortified houses had thick stone walls, loop holes for muskets and tinned roofs. They were meant to serve as rallying points for local militia and British troops should the expected American attack occur, and as accommodation for the lock staff in times of peace. The example at Kilmarnock is unique in that it is the only surviving defensible lockmaster's house to have a second storey added in stone.

The road from the lockstation winds towards the village of Easton's Corners. Wolford Chapel (14), originally a Methodist Church constructed in 1822 and renovated

in 1860 and 1967, is one of the oldest buildings in this area. The Methodists and Anglicans were the predominant religious groups, although churches of all denomina-



Wolford Chapel

tions were built along the Rideau to serve the needs of the pioneer community.

Across the road is Wolford Chapel School (15). Built in 1862, it is one of the few surviving one room school houses in the area. It is now a private residence.

Heading in a southwest direction, across a low level concrete bridge that spans Irish Creek (once considered as an alternative route for the Rideau Canal), one arrives at the outskirts of Easton's Corners.

The two storey red brick house (16), now a nursing home, once belonged to Samuel Star Easton, descendent of Joseph Easton, after whom the village is named. Bearing the date 1860, the house retains its large rear wing with the original arched entranceway to the carriage house. Although Easton's Corners has no direct access to the Rideau Canal, the village prospered during the last half of the 19th century by serving the needs of area residents. A brief sidetrip into the village is well worth the time, if only to see



Wolford Chapel School

the twin carriage works (17). The first of these was built about 1870 by a Mr. Watt, (whose name can still be seen on the face of the building); the other a few years later to house the expanding trade. Two churches (18, 19) and a school house (20), all dating from the 1870's are also worth looking for.

The school house is typical of the 2 room type that was built in rural areas in the 1870's across the province. It was common to construct schools in the open, away from the



Samuel Star Easton House



Twin Carriage Works



Easton's Corners

dust and noise of the streets, facing south with a dead wall to the north and windows on the east and west. As one educator wrote in 1869, "the light will then fall upon the pupil's right hand in the forenoon, and generally pass around, till in the afternoon it rests upon his left hand."

Once back on the highway, notice the farm house on your left (21). Alternating layers of red and yellow brick (all the lengthwise brick is red; the rest is yellow) is a distinctive feature of this area of Eastern Ontario. This is again seen in an impressive, two storey house built

by Alexander McCrea in 1830 (22). Much of the yellow brick used in the area was made at Wickware's Brickyard, located east of the McCrea house.

On the last leg of the journey, from Easton's Corners to Merrickville, the landscape is characterized by clumps of cedar, and areas of poorly drained soil. Red brick farm houses, typical of rural Ontario, are plentiful, as are clapboard and aluminum-sided houses. Some of these may in fact be log underneath. An off-centred door is often a reliable clue, and sometimes one wall will expose the original build-



School House



McCrea House



Aaron Merrick House

ing material.

Off to the left, on a side road about 3 miles from Easton's Corners is yet another of the two room school houses (23) dating from the 1870's. This too has been converted into a private residence, but the characteristic shape and southerly orientation tell of its former function.

The red roof of the Aaron Merrick House (24), glimpsed through the trees, heralds your return to Merrickville. Turn left onto County Road No. 15 which will take you through the commercial heart of the town to the Blockhouse, where your journey began.



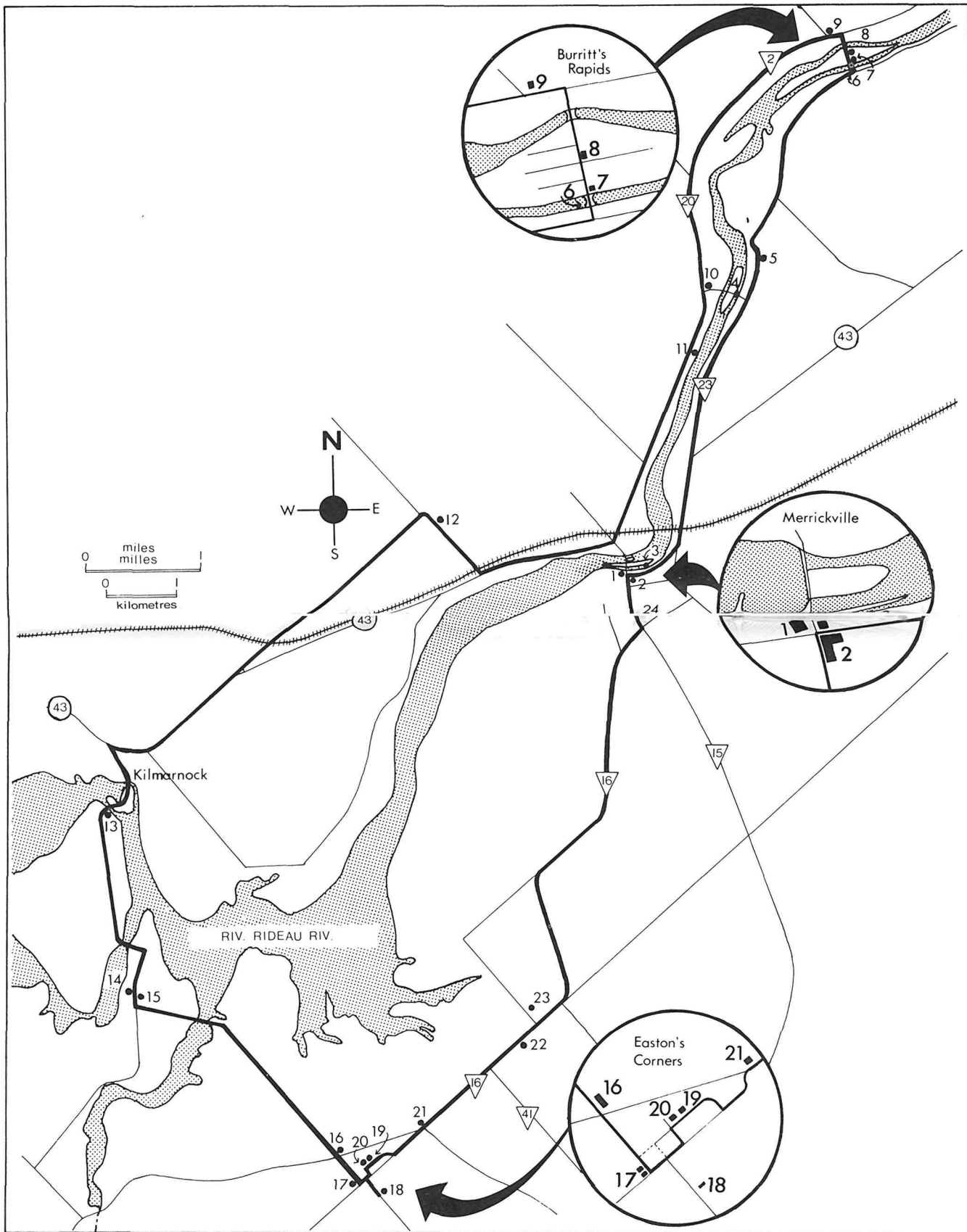
Fan-shaped Transom



Rectangular Transom



Semi-Circular Transom



Merrickville Village

a walking tour



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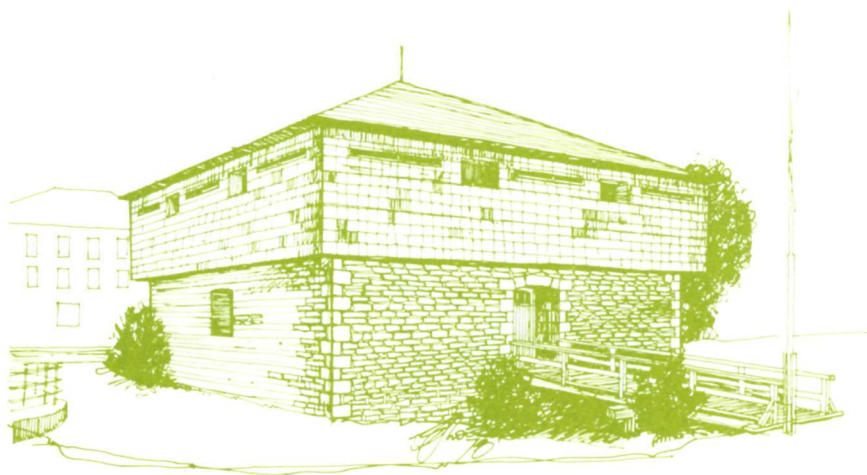
Author: Wm. Henry

Artist: Graham Thomas

The Town of Merrickville, incorporated in 1860, has a rich 19th century architectural heritage. Your walk will take you past some of the attractive historic buildings which make up this heritage. While following the tour along busy St. Lawrence Street and a few of the quiet back streets be sure to enjoy the charming “streetscapes” as well as the fine individual structures which make them up.

Industrial activity which would later become a focus for the town first came to the site with William Merrick in the early 1790’s. Thirty-five years later the Rideau Canal was built and this settlement of about 50 people found itself straddling a major transportation artery. Expansion occurred rapidly and by mid-century the population had

risen to seven hundred. The Merrick family, primarily the founder’s sons, played a prominent role in the development of the town during the 19th century. In the 1860’s Merrickville had a population of 1200 and one of the largest industrial complexes on the canal. Following the selection in 1886 of nearby Smiths Falls as the C.P.R.’s eastern divisional point, Merrickville’s industries began to feel the strain of competition. The resultant decline of industrial and other activity during the twentieth century prevented the modernization of this essentially nineteenth century Rideau Valley town. Thus, Merrickville’s unique architectural legacy has survived the ravages of modernization and exists to the benefit and enjoyment of all.



Merrickville Blockhouse

1. **Blockhouse, 1832**

The Merrickville blockhouse is the largest of four such military structures constructed at strategic points along the Rideau Canal. The basement and first storey walls are of rough coursed limestone, three feet thick. The upper story is hewn timber. The building was designed to be capable of serving as a barracks for 50 men, defending the lock-station from attack, and providing safe storage for arms and ammunition. During peacetime the structure was used as a residence by the Lockmaster of the station.

2. **Jakes Block, c.1862 (S.E. corner of St. Lawrence & Main)**

This commercial and residential building dominates downtown Merrickville. Construction was started in the early 1860's by E.H. Whitmarsh but was not completed until later in the 19th century when the building was owned by Samuel Jakes. It was the last stone commercial block to be constructed in Merrickville and housed the largest department store in the area.

The back and sides of this L-shaped structure are composed of rubble stone. The front is of stone cut to give a rich and bold texture divided by a grid of horizontal and vertical bands.

Mr. Jakes lived adjacent to this building in what is now the Merrick



Jakes Block



Stephen Merrick House



Jakes Block — rear courtyard



City Hotel



John Mills House

Hotel.

3. Stephen Merrick House, 1845-1850

This dwelling was built, at least in part, by Samuel Langford about mid-century or shortly before. The lot it sits on was owned by Stephen Merrick, another of the founder's sons, until he sold it to Langford in 1850. Presumably, Langford lived in the house until 1855 when he sold it back to Stephen Merrick. Merrick owned the building until his death in 1859.

The front of the house is constructed of cut stone (ashlar) beautifully finished and fitted. Features such as the use of the straight line, the columns and pilasters, the triangular pediment, and the rectan-

gular transom over the door all combine to make this building a very tasteful and pleasing example of the Classical Revival.

4. City Hotel, 1856

This building, now the Grenville Hotel, is representative of the substantial hotels built about the mid 19th century reflecting the commercial prosperity of the period. Prior to that time inns or hotels of the area had closely resembled residence houses in both size and shape. During the Hotel's most prosperous period (1856-1884) it was owned and operated by James Armstrong.

The present yellow brick two and a half storey structure represents at least two stages of construction.



S.W. Corner of St. John & Drummond.

The southern portion with its five bay façade was originally built about 1856 with an end gabled roof. Later, about the turn of the century, the northern portion was added and the roofline was changed to the present mansard variation.

5. The Mill's House, c.1860 (S. side of Brock west of St. Lawrence)

The western, or front portion of this house was constructed as a furniture store by John Mills, a local cabinet manufacturer. The eastern or back half was added in 1885 when the structure was converted to a residence. At that time the furniture store moved to a building on St. Lawrence Street, and the factory, which has been behind the house moved to the in-

dustrial complex on the canal.

An interesting feature of the building is the parapetted end gables designed to help prevent the spread of roof fires.

6. S.W. Corner of St. John & Drummond

This brick house is built on an L-shaped plan, a style which became popular in the area after 1880. The veranda is a typical feature of such buildings. This particular example is a pleasant compromise between the severely plain brick house and those that are very heavily decorated. Its trim and steeply pitched gables are typical of the Picturesque style of construction.

7. Tyndall House, c.1855 (N. side



Tyndall House



John Johnston House

of Lewis, west of St. Lawrence)

This dwelling has been popularly linked with George Merrick, (1832-1885) a grandson of the town's founder. From approximately the date of construction of the building until the end of the 19th century the land title was held by the Tyndall family.

The front wall of the structure is composed of coursed rubble while the other three are uncoursed. Much of the detailing on the building is modelled after that found on the Aaron Merrick house (no. 11). Both buildings possess Adamesque style doorways, of which there are only three in the town. These are characterized by the elliptically

curved window (transom) over the door.



Burchill House



McEntyer House

8. The John Johnston House,
c.1855

This house was built for John Johnston, a former sergeant in the Royal Sappers and Miners. This group of soldier-artificers played a prominent role in the construction of the Rideau Canal, 1827-1831. Johnston was the lockmaster at Merrickville from 1837 until he died in 1869 when he was succeeded by his son Mathew who served as lockmaster until 1907.

The door in the front gable of this house is an interesting design feature. Often termed “suicide doors”, they were installed to allow access to the balcony on top of a porch which could be added later.



Knox Presbyterian Church

9. Burchill House, c.1851 (N.W.)

corner of Colborne and St. Lawrence)

This building, one of Merrickville's earliest brick houses, was built for John Burchill, a land surveyor. The use of alternating red and yellow bricks makes this house unique in town; however, this style of brick work is considered to be characteristic of the Merrickville area.

10. McEntyer House, c.1854 (S.E. corner of Colborne & St. Lawrence)

Daniel McEntyer, a shoe maker, purchased this lot and house from Aaron Mirick, c.1860. The classical styling embodied in the rectangular window (transom) over the door combined with the picturesque front gable are common features on

houses of this period throughout Ontario. During the 1890's the interior and windows were renovated and a portion of the house was used as a Millinery shop.

11. Knox Presbyterian Church, 1861

This structure has been in continuous use by a Presbyterian congregation since it was built. For this reason it is the earliest surviving church in town.

The tower of this building with its spire lend a curiously medieval look to the overall appearance. This is in contrast with the tall, slender late Gothic windows. The reason for using a contrasting brick at the top of the tower remains a mystery.



Aaron Merrick House

12. **Aaron Merrick House**, c.1845
(St. Lawrence, south end)

Aaron Merrick, a son of the founder of Merrickville, had this house built for himself on land willed to him by his father. Aaron was a prominent figure in Wolford township and became the reeve of the village council when Merrickville was incorporated in 1860.

The house as it appears today is changed somewhat in appearance from the original. The two side porches, the attic dormers, and the entrance porch were added in the 1920's. However, many aspects of this house, including its location on the outskirts of town, still reflect the Regency style.

13. **A Langford House**, c.1890

Samuel Langford, a carpenter / builder lived in Merrickville during the last half of the 19th century. He was one of the first trustees of the Merrickville Mechanics Institute when it was formed in 1857. The appearance of this attractive frame house remains almost unchanged from the day he built it. Previously

(c.1863) he had constructed another house further north on Elgin Street as a wedding gift for his daughter.

This 1890's house is a well maintained example of the conservative Ontario Gothic style.

14. **The John Petapiece Houses**, c.1900

Both of these houses were constructed by John Petapiece. He lived in the one on the south side of the street for a time before selling it to the present owners. They are both splendidly preserved examples of turn of the century frame houses. One is an enlarged version of the L-shaped plan while the other is in the style of the Queen Anne revival. These elegant dwellings have counterparts constructed in brick, a few of which can be seen in town.

15. **Duke House**, c.1855

The log walls of this structure are hidden behind wooden shiplap siding. The symmetrical plan with a central hall is typical of dwellings of this size and construction. A



A Langford House



A John Petapiece House



A John Pettapiece House



Duke House



Percival House

map of 1861 indicates that this building was one of the two shoe shops in town.

16. **Percival House**

Towards the end of the 19th century a few large brick houses, of which this is one, were constructed in Merrickville. A symbol of Victorian values, solidarity of the family, and strength of the empire this rambling irregular structure is built in a style termed Richardsonian Romanesque.

The dwelling was constructed for Roger C. Percival, founder of the Percival Plow and Stove Co. The agricultural machines and stove manufactured by this firm enjoyed

a very high reputation in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Across Hwy 43 is the plaque designating the town as an historic site.

17. **The Industrial Area**

Merrickville's industrial development started in 1793 when William Merrick, in partnership with two others, chose the falls in the Rideau River at this spot as a mill site. Their industrial developments were confined to the north shore until the 1830's at which time mills were first erected on the island.

Pioneer industries were designed to serve the immediate needs of the settlers and to this end Merrick-

ville's first industries were saw milling, grist milling, and a carding mill. These capabilities were expanded throughout the 19th century adding among others shingle mills, iron foundries, and woollen mills.

All of the major industrial buildings present in this area, save the power station built in 1915, date from the 19th century. Some were built in the 1830's, a few about mid-century, and still others a little later. All have been modified during the 20th century but the fine craftsmanship of the 19th century stonemason is still strikingly evident.

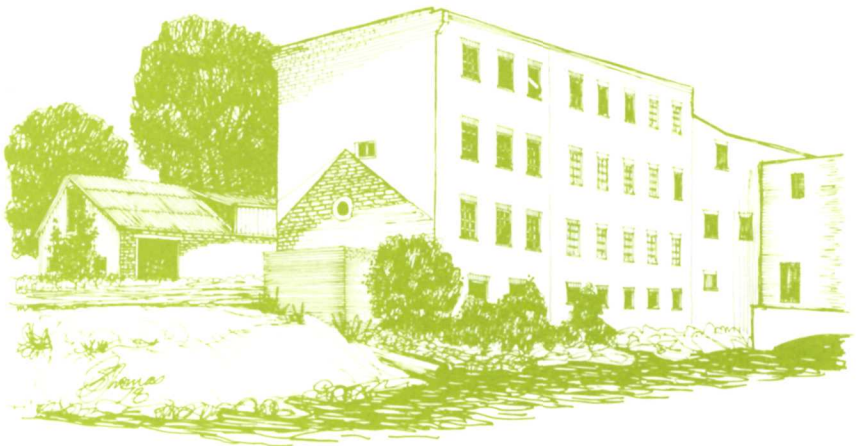
18. The Merrick Tavern, c.1830

This building which is now a residence was originally a tavern and hotel operated by the two brothers Aaron and Terrance H. Merrick,



Alloy Foundry

sons of the founder of Merrickville. It is one of the older surviving buildings in town. The building is a neat, compact structure with the entrance door set off-centre in the front wall. Since most houses of this period have centered doors one is left to speculate if this asymmetric arrangement is connected with the building's function as a tavern.



Watchorn Woollen Mill



Electrical Power Station

19. William Merrick House, c.1821

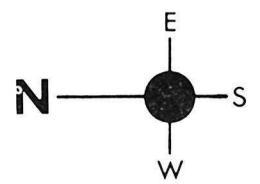
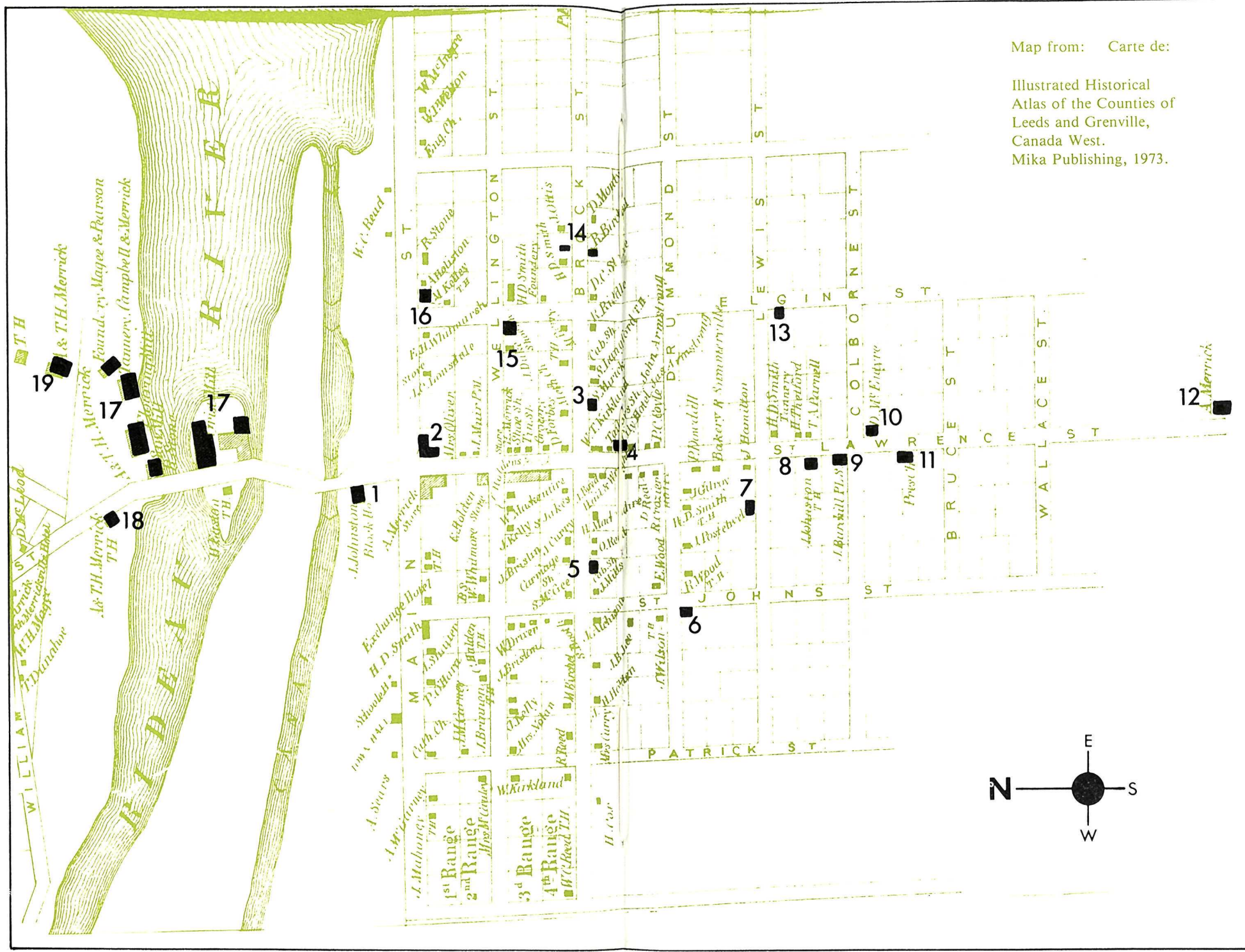
This is the third and final house that William Merrick, the founder of the town, constructed for himself and his family. His previous (pre-1821) dwelling still stands a short distance to the north of the third house. William, a Loyalist, arrived at the future site of Merrickville in the early 1790's and very quickly became the local "industrial magnate". He died in 1844 and is entombed in the Collar Hill Cemetary located at the east end of Drummond Street.

William's third house must have been the achievement of a dream. It embodies several typically Georgian features which someone of his background would have found comfortably familiar. These are, however, hidden by the results of extensive alterations undertaken by the Pearson family in the 1890's. The rubble walls of the structure are concealed by a smooth coating of

stucco. It is not presently known if this type of finish is original or is the result of the above alterations.

Map from: Carte de:

Illustrated Historical
Atlas of the Counties of
Leeds and Grenville,
Canada West.
Mika Publishing, 1973.



Merrickville Lockstation

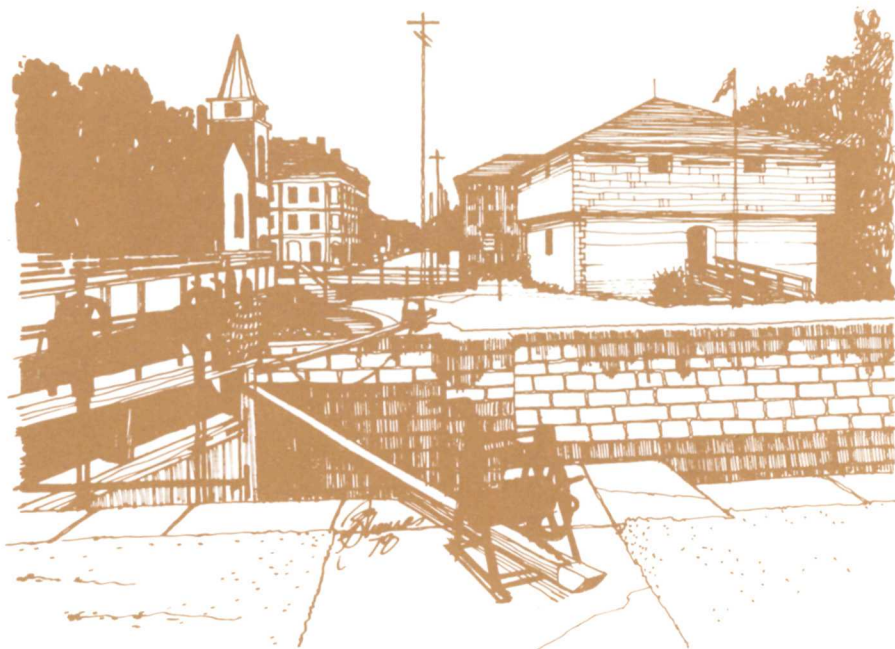
a walking tour



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Merrickville Blockhouse and Upper Lock

The Merrickville Blockhouse (no. 1) has an imposing presence which is a reflection of the vulnerability of the Rideau Canal at Merrickville to American attack. At this point the International Border is only thirty miles away along the Brockville road, a short distance in the days of deteriorating Anglo-American relations which followed the War of 1812.

As with all blockhouses the building is designed to withstand assaults by groups of men armed

with muskets. The basement provided safe storage for the weapons and equipment of the militia which used the structure as a mustering post. During peaceful times the station lockmaster used this building as a residence.

Immediately in front of the blockhouse is the uppermost lock (no. 2) of the flight of three at this station. These locks and the artificial channel connecting them to the river were constructed "in the dry", and then flooded.

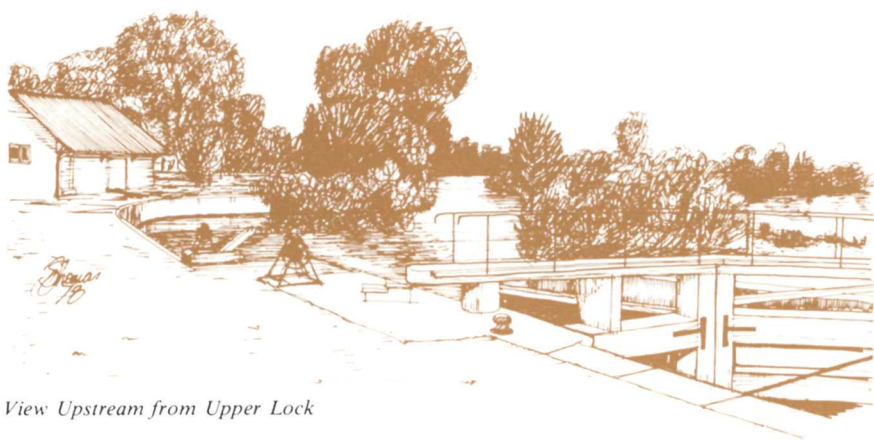


Upper Lock from Blockhouse Entrance

Turning westward one can walk along the bank of the artificial cut (no. 3) towards the Depot (no. 4). The exact date of construction of this building is unknown but sometime in the 1870's seems most likely. Originally it was used as a warehouse for goods awaiting shipment on the canal. As such it is a strong reminder of the importance to local industry and commercial interests of the transport services offered by the Rideau Canal. Raw materials could be brought in and finished articles shipped out rela-

tively inexpensively allowing them to be competitively priced.

Further westward one comes to the end of the artificial channel. The concrete abutments (no. 5) constructed here permit the placing of stoplogs in the opening, thus allowing the cut and locks to be drained for repairs. Stretching north into the river are the remains of an embankment (no. 6) constructed in 1831 under the supervision of the Royal Engineers. The gap between this embankment and the far shore was originally blocked by a wooden



View Upstream from Upper Lock

dam. Replaced once in 1841, the dam at this location lasted until 1915 when the present dam (no. 11) was built. Together the dam and embankment raised the water level sufficiently to drown out rapids upstream and flood the artificial channel and locks. Water not needed for

lockages was passed through the dam's waste weirs and flowed downstream to power the mills of the industrial complex (no. 10).

That portion of the lockstation located east of the Blockhouse can be viewed by taking the steps which lead down from the east side of the



Depot

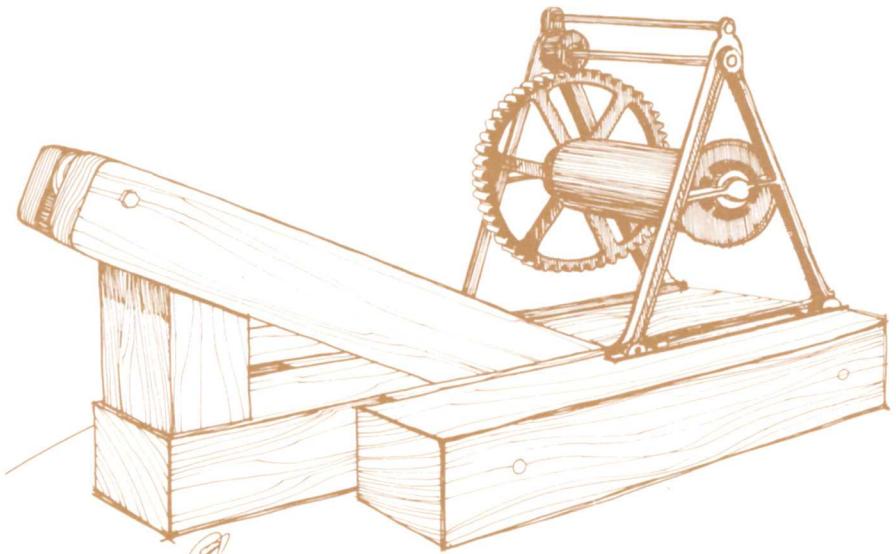
roadway.

Looking back one can see the most recent in a series of moveable bridges (no. 7) built at this point, all but the very first of which were swing bridges. While frustrating to some, the interruption of travel occasioned by the swinging of the bridge can be a gentle reminder of the more leisurely pace of travel in the past.

ingenuity.

Just south of the middle lock is the new lock office. Built in 1977 this structure houses the canal operating personnel while they are on duty. The exterior of the building has been finished in a "traditional" manner so as to help maintain the historic flavour of the lock-station.

Looking northward across the



Stop-log Winch Thomas 70

Proceeding along the grass bordered basins (no. 8) and locks (no. 9) one cannot help but be impressed by the achievement they represent. Constructed in 1831, years before the age of power tools, the masonry is a tribute to human craftsmanship, musclepower, and

river one obtains a view of the industrial complex (no. 10). The first industrial buildings on the site, a saw mill and grist mill, were constructed of wood and located on the north shore of the river. These, along with several other early structures, have long since vanished.



Blockhouse and Upper Lock

However, those buildings which still survive can help us to imagine the intense activity seen here in the 1870's. At that time this was one of the largest industrial centres in the

Rideau corridor. All manner of objects both useful and ornamental were manufactured here — iron castings, stoves, ploughs, blankets, furniture, shingles, broom handles,



Lockmaster's Office



Industrial Complex

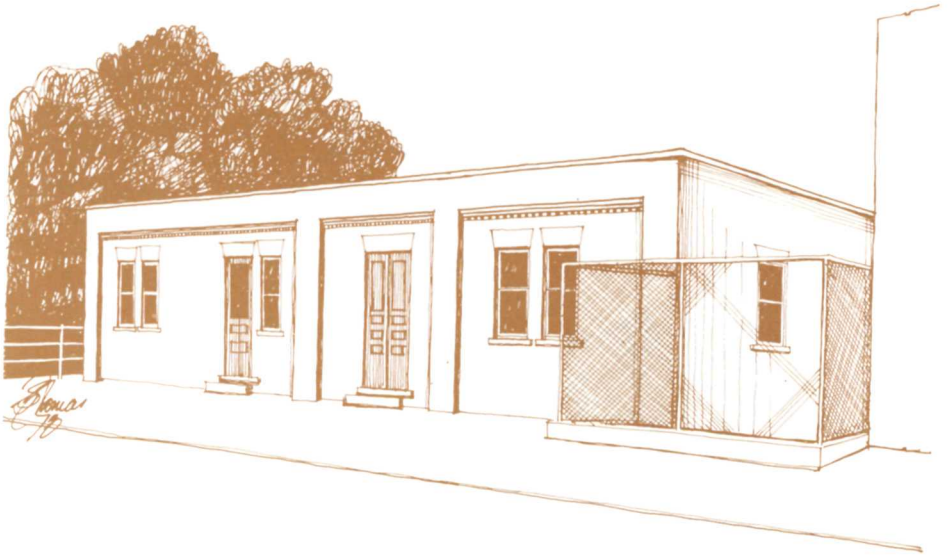
and axes to name a few. The excellent transport system embodied by the Rideau Canal allowed such goods to be widely exported.

By returning to the road and walking north a closer view can be obtained of the buildings of the industrial complex and of the modern day water control structures. These latter works located to the west of the road were constructed in 1914-15. The dam (no. 11) is constructed of reinforced concrete in almost the same spot as that occupied by Wm. Merrick's dam of the 1790's. It incorporates two waste weirs and two 8' penstock openings. These latter openings supply water to the red brick electrical power house (no. 12). This was built in 1915 in conjunction with the dam by the Rideau Power Co. It symbolizes the attempts of the local industrialists to bring their 19th century water-driven mills into a new age. The

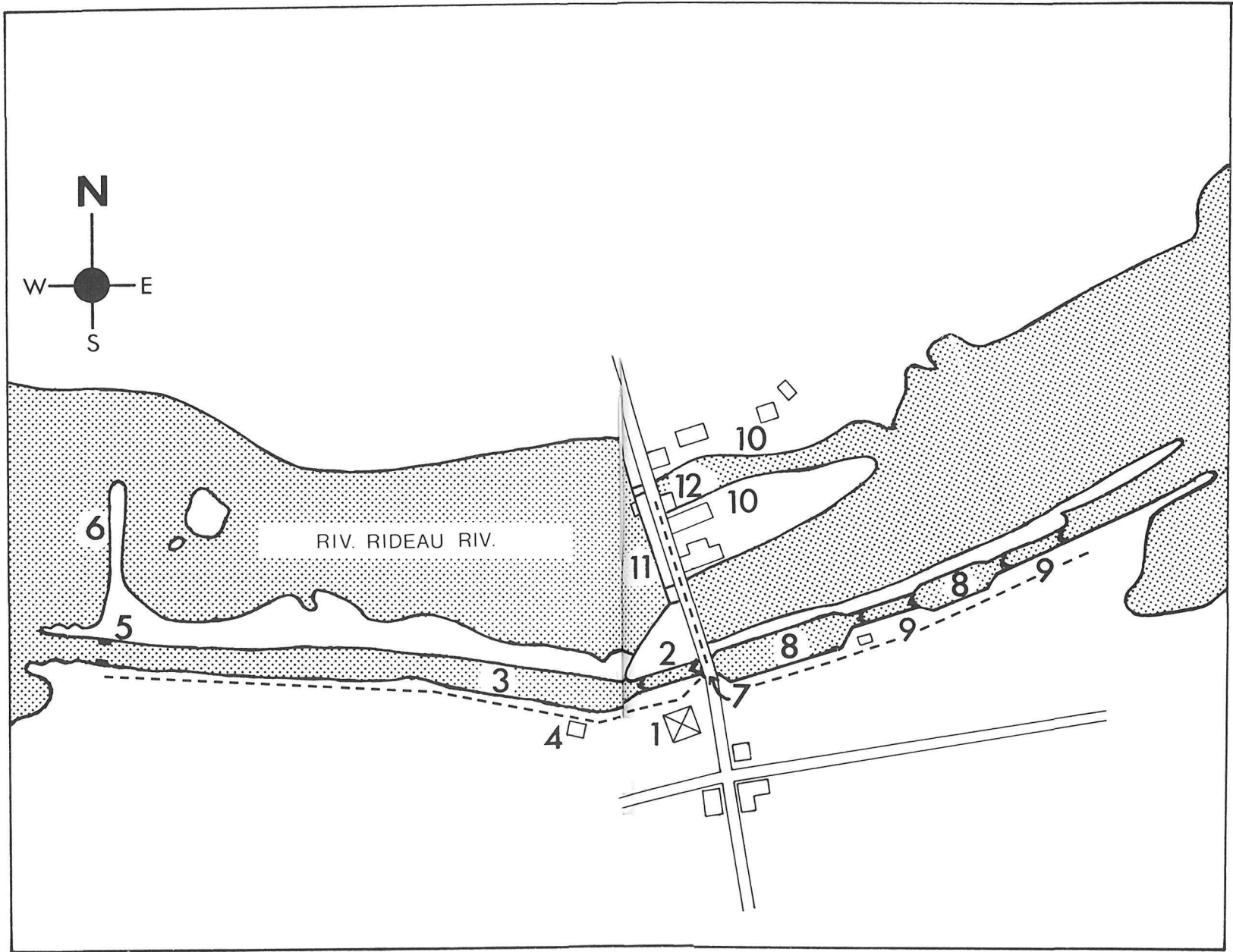
power house has been operated since 1958 by Ontario Hydro.

The above mentioned Merrick dam has gained some notoriety owing to the actions of its owner. In order to affect repairs to his mills Mr. Merrick curtailed the flow of water past Merrickville in the late summer of 1831. This caused the postponement of the opening of that section of the canal between Burritt's Rapids and Bytown until the next spring. This occurrence led to full control of the system's water flow being given to the Superintending Engineer, Rideau Canal.

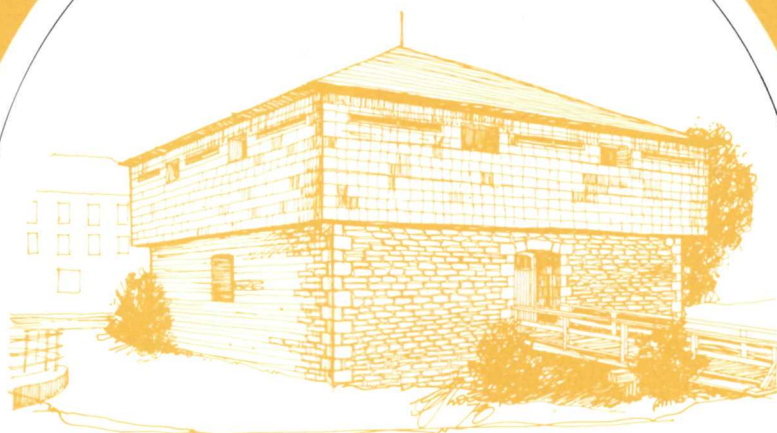
This completes the walking tour of the lockstation. You may care to continue your exploration of the area using the walking tour of the town and the driving tour of the surrounding countryside.



Electrical Power House



The Blockhouse Museum



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Artist: Graham Thomas



The Rideau Canal was constructed by the British Government between 1826 and 1832 to provide an alternate supply route to Upper Canada in the event of another war with the United States.

The Merrickville Blockhouse was one of four erected to protect Canal lockstations. Lt. Col. John By, Royal Engineers, planned on building more of these structures but Government economics prevailed. Original estimates allowed £300 for a lockmaster's house, but By decided to increase this to £800 and build the blockhouse as the increase was "trifling in comparison with the advantages to be gained."

The "flourishing state" of Merrickville and its strategic location

on the North Augusta Trail from Brockville and the St. Lawrence led to the siting of the Blockhouse at this point on the canal.

The expected war never came but the Blockhouse was manned by British troops during times of crisis well into the 1860's. This complicated lockmasters' lives considerably as Lockmaster John Johnston informed Resident Engineer and Canal Superintendent J.D. Slater Esq. in a letter of Jan. 1, 1862.

Merrickville 1st January 1862
Sir:

I most respectfully beg leave to state, It having been prevalently reported that the Block House at this station will be required for the serv-

ice of the Army of Occupation very soon, in consequence of which, I am emboldened to request instructions, relative to my leaving the Block House, and what amount of Lodging money, I may be allowed annually, further more I have to remark in the years of 1837-8 I was ordered to leave the above mentioned house on the application of a Senior Officer in command of the British Troops and hire quarters in the Village of Mirrickville. I was restricted respecting rent Viz. from 18 to 24 annually, not to exceed 24 without Orders from The Respective Officers of Royal Ordnance at Montreal.

J.D. Slater Esqr.
Rest. Engr. & Supt. R.C.
Ottawa City

I am Sir
your very humble & obt. Servant,
John Johnston Lockmaster
1/1/62

The Blockhouse was originally designed to house up to 50 soldiers supplied with arms and ammunition. Later, the upstairs was divided into five rooms to house the lockmaster and his family. The room with the fireplace was the kitchen and some of the old plaster can still be seen on the walls and even some wallpaper in the other rooms. The ground floor was used at times for religious services before churches were erected in the village.

Sergeant John Johnston of the

Royal Sappers and Miners was the first lockmaster to live in the Blockhouse with his family. His bible and other effects are on display inside. At the turn of the century the lockmaster was given a housing allowance and moved out of the building. It was used as a general meeting place for the village and later as an office and storehouse for lockstation staff. The staircase and most of the upper floor were removed at this time.

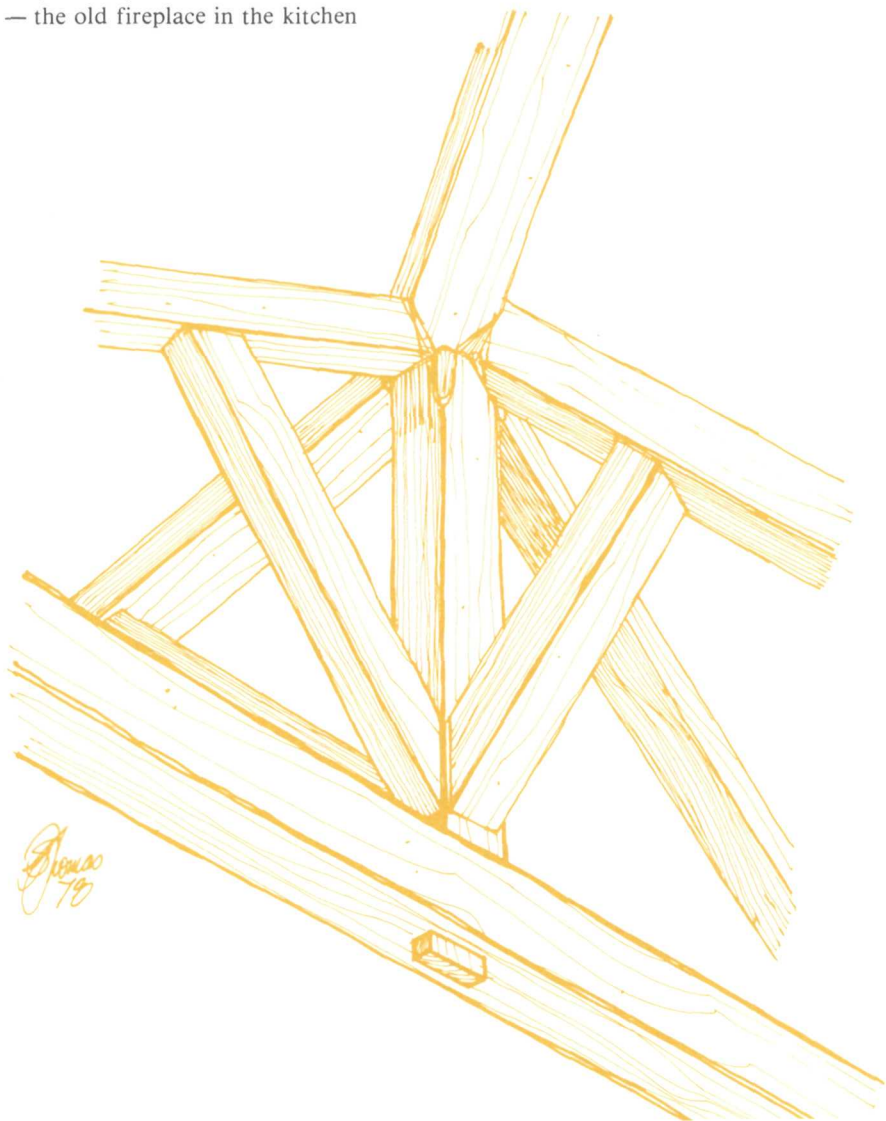
Between 1962 and 1965 the Federal Government restored the building to its original state and leased it to the Village of Merrickville. Village Council, through the Merrickville Museum Board, has an agreement with the Merrickville and District Historical Society who actually operate the museum. The federal government, through Parks Canada, continues to be responsible for major maintenance of the building.

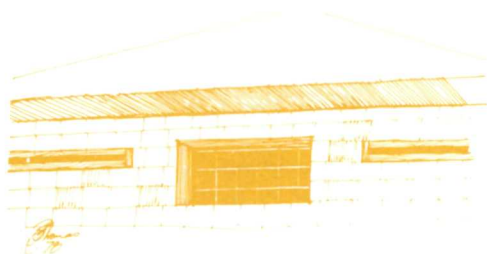


The following points are worth noting about the Blockhouse:

- the thickness of the stone walls (3½ feet)
- the old fireplace in the kitchen

- the magnificent hand-hewn beams in the roof, all of which are held together by wooden pins





- the huge pillars on the outer walls of the second floor hewn out of solid tree-trunks
- the powder magazine in the basement
- the rifle slits in the walls upstairs and also in the floors of the firing platforms
- the knee braces supporting the outer walls upstairs

Upstream from the Blockhouse is an Annex to the Museum. This depot was built about 1870 to serve as storage for goods while awaiting transhipment on the Canal. The building was later purchased by the Merrickville Lions Club and, after many years of use, the Club donated it to the Historical Society.



This part of Ontario was originally settled by United Empire Loyalists. The military, domestic and agricultural artifacts displayed in this museum come mainly from the descendants of these early settlers.



**APPLICATION FOR
MEMBERSHIP**

The Society welcomes new members. To join and support our activities fill out and send this application form to:

Membership Secretary,
Merrickville and District Historical
Society,
Merrickville, Ontario.
K0G 1N0

I/We, apply for membership in the
Merrickville and District Historical
Society.

Single — \$ 3.00

Single — \$ 3.00

Family — \$ 5.00

Life — \$25.00

(Please print name and address)

Date

