



**TOWNSHIP OF RIDEAU LAKES
Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee
AGENDA**

**Thursday, July 17, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
Municipal Office, Chantry**

	Pages
1. Call to Order	
2. Roll Call	
3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda	
4. Adoption of the Agenda	
5. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest	
6. Business Arising	
6.1 Doors Open Rideau Lakes - Update: Rosanne Lake (For Information)	2 - 3
6.2 Early History Statement - Update: Marie White (For Information)	4 - 8
7. Minutes	9 - 15
8. MHAC Action Listing - Verbal Update: Marie White	
9. New Business	
10. Correspondence/Events	
10.1 Councillor Deborah Anne Hutchings - Great West Saddle Company (For Information)	16 - 24
11. Reports from Committee Members	
12. Questions from the Public	
13. Adjournment	



JOIN US TO DISCOVER... 

DOORS OPEN RIDEAU LAKES

**AUGUST
16 AND 17,
2025**

Explore fascinating
sites and activities
throughout Rideau
Lakes - *free!*



CHAFFEY'S LOCKS COMMUNITY HALL

1661 Chaffey's Lock Road 
View a special
Chaffey's Lock photo
display; guided tours,
community stories.

EMMANUEL HERITAGE CENTRE


2767 Highway 15
Guided tours;
discover historic
Portland
memorabilia in a
beautiful venue.



FOLEY MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION

105 Foley Mountain Road 
Free admission
Saturday only! Trail
walk, explore, drop
into free Family
Forest School.

LOCKMASTER'S HOUSE MUSEUM

1724 Chaffey's Lock Road 
Self-guided tours,
dive into historic
Lock life & a special
textile exhibit!




MCKINNEY HOUSE

798 Highway 15
See a heritage
home mid-
rehabilitation!
Exterior only.



MORTON HALL


Page 2 of 24
13 Judd Street 
Peek inside this
heritage hall for
charming displays,
and a guided walk
on the portage trail
at 11 a.m. to see the
mill ruins!

NEWBORO BLOCKHOUSE

10 Blockhouse Lane
One of only four
Rideau Canal
Blockhouses! Rare
peek inside to learn
with an Indigenous
history exhibit.



NEWBORO LIBRARY BRANCH

10 Brock Street. 
One of the oldest
buildings in Rideau
Lakes, this served
as a school and jail.
Heritage green
screen here!

NEWBORO MANOR

11 New Street
One-of-a-kind
1860s Italianate
stone mansion rich
in history and
charm. Guided
grand interior
tours, Walking High
Tea, forest walk.



INTRIGUED? LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SITES:
WWW.DOORSOPENONTARIO.ON.CA/RIDEAULAKES



OLD STONE MILL
44 King Street 
Ontario's only surviving pre-1812, fully automated stone gristmill! Blacksmithing and milling demos on Saturday only; special quilt display.

OLD TOWN HALL

8 Lower Beverley Park Road  
Serving the community since 1880. Look for Maker's Market on Saturday and a heritage film showcase Sunday!



DOORS OPEN RIDEAU LAKES




**AUGUST
16 & 17, 2025**



PHILIPPSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

1407 County Rd. 8
This 1865 stone church is now a private residence. Tour to see original baptismal font!

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BIOLOGICAL STATION

280 Queen's Uni. 
Road, Chaffey's Lock
Celebrating 80 years of scientific study! Saturday morning only Register online for a special field walk.



RED BRICK SCHOOL

13 Halladay Street 
See an authentic 1900 heritage classroom and marvel at the new "Historic Rideau Canal" photo display.



REVOLVE FARMS

4 Moran Road,
Lombardy
A celebration of the season! Saturday only, explore grounds, sustainable farming, hang out with heritage chickens!



SAMUEL POOLE HOUSE
Page 3 of 24
3909 Freeland Road
Reflecting the agricultural prosperity of the 1850s, see the gardens, bank barn. Stay for a garden party! Exterior only.

ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

15 Brock St, Newboro  
Celebrating 175 years! Guided tours; stunning stained glass, windows and altar.



THE TIPPED SHIP
3 Main Street, Elgin
Explore behind the scenes in an emporium dating to 1893. Appreciate original woodwork, heritage detailing, charming dormers.

WOOD MAUSOLEUM

1229 County Road 29 - Beautiful stone mausoleum, with intricate cast-iron gates, dating to 1895. See inside - hear mysterious stories!



MAKE A WEEKEND OF IT! FIND A FULL ITINERARY WITH OTHER STOPS IN OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITIES, MAPS AND MORE AT [RIDEAULAKES.CA/DOORSOPEN](http://rideaulakes.ca/doorsopen)

Early History of Rideau Lakes

Archaeological evidence shows that Indigenous peoples have continuously lived in the Rideau Lakes area for at least 9,000 years. Indigenous artifacts have been found around all of the lakes in this area.

The Anishinaabe, who were known historically as Algonquins, lived throughout the Frontenac Arch and beyond in the Ottawa Valley. They lived in small family groups, hunting, fishing, and gathering in the forests and lakes of the region and practicing rudimentary horticulture. Their territory was acknowledged by colonial authorities and many of their descendants continue to live in the area.

REVIEW OF DRAFT TEXT FOR TOWNSHIP OF RIDEAU LAKES

A. Location of Township of Rideau Lakes

The Township of Rideau Lakes is located within the County of Leeds and Grenville. It includes the former townships of South Elmsley, South Burgess, Bastard, and North and South Crosby.

The township encompasses many large lakes of the Rideau system including: Otter Lake, Bass Lake, Lower Rideau Lake, Big Rideau Lake, Westport Sand Lake, Crosby Lake, Newboro Lake, Sand Lake, Upper and Lower Beverley Lakes, Mud Lake, Troy Lake, Whitefish Lake, and parts of Opinicon and Wolfe Lakes. The upper Rideau Lake is the summit of the Rideau system dividing the waters that flows to the Ottawa River from the waters that flow to Lake Ontario.

The Township of Rideau Lakes includes several towns and villages including: Newboro, Chaffeys Lock, Elgin, Delta, Jones Falls, Morton, Forfar, Westport, Portland, Crosby, Harlem, Chantry, and Lombardy. Smiths Falls lies just outside of the township boundary. Highway 15 runs through the middle of the Township from Smiths Falls to Morton.

See map

The geomorphology of the Rideau Lakes is dominated by the Frontenac Arch (aka Frontenac Axis), a narrow neck of Precambrian rock that joins the Algonquin Highlands feature of the Canadian Shield to the Adirondack Mountains south of the St. Lawrence River. The Frontenac Arch is a significant wildlife corridor hosting a variety of flora and fauna. It is a unique and important biological and cultural feature designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and thus is appropriately referenced in the Township's text.¹

B. Comment on the draft submitted by the Township of Rideau Lakes

B.1 Text Submitted by township of Rideau Lakes

The draft was submitted in two versions.

Version 1:

Archaeological evidence shows that Indigenous peoples have continuously lived in the Rideau Lakes area for over 9,000 years – since the last ice age melted. Artifacts have been found around all of the lakes in this area.

People of two different language groups lived here - the Algonquians and the Iroquoians. The Algonquians are the longest known inhabitants in these lands, and still reside here today. Traditionally they lived throughout the Frontenac Arch and beyond, in small

¹ The location and importance of the Frontenac Arch is well summarized in:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontenac_Arch_Biosphere_Reserve

family groups by hunting, fishing & gathering in the forests and lakes. About 1,000 years ago, Iroquoian speaking peoples arrived. They preferred rich farmland, to the east & west of the Frontenac Arch, and lived in large villages of longhouses surrounded by palisades.

Version 2:

Archaeological evidence shows that Indigenous peoples have continuously lived in the Rideau Lakes area for at least 9,000 years. Artifacts have been found around all of the lakes in this area.

People of two different language groups lived here. The Anishinaabe, who spoke Algonquian languages, lived throughout the Frontenac Arch and beyond, in small family groups by hunting, fishing & gathering in the forests and lakes. Iroquoian speaking groups preferred the farmland to the east & west of the Frontenac Arch, and lived in large villages of longhouses.

Two source references were cited in the township's draft:

Archaeological Historical Symposium: October 2-3, 1982, Rideau Ferry, Ontario

Archaeological Historical Symposium (1982 : Rideau Ferry, Ont.)

<https://archive.org/details/archaeologicalhi0000arch/page/n5/mode/2up>

Paleo-Indian and Archaic Occupations of the Rideau Lakes. G.D. Watson, 1990.

Ontario Archeology, 50th Issue. (Journal published by the Ontario Archeology Society) <https://ontarioarchaeology.org/resources/publications-2/ontarioarchaeology/ontario-archaeology-1990-1999/ontario-archaeology-0a050-1990/>

B.2. Length of Occupation in Versions 1 and 2

The first paragraph for both versions correctly identifies the length of occupation. Version 2 is preference to Version 1 as it avoids explaining the passage of time between the melting of the ice cap, the retreat of the Champlain Sea, and the availability of open land that allowed for occupation of the area.

Recommendation for Draft – Paragraph 1

Thus I would retain the 1st paragraph of version 2 with the addition of the word “Indigenous” to qualify artifacts:

Archaeological evidence shows that Indigenous peoples have continuously lived in the Rideau Lakes area for at least 9,000 years. **Indigenous** artifacts have been found around all of the lakes in this area.

B.3. identity of Indigenous Peoples in Versions 1 and 2

The second paragraph of both versions is problematic. Based on the source articles cited with these drafts, the text refers to both Algonquian and Iroquoian occupancy. This is likely due to the source documents' concentration on palaeo and archaic era occupation without addressing occupation during the later Woodland Period (3000 to 1000 BP) or the more significant evidence of the early contact and historic eras. The archaeological evidence from the early eras (palaeo, archaic and woodland) clearly indicated Indigenous occupation of the area; however, it is difficult to clearly identify and definitively delineate the geographical regions occupied by the predecessors of historic Algonquian or Iroquoian-speakers.

At the time of first contact in the early 1600s, the people who dominated the area were Algonquins. The St. Lawrence Iroquoians (aka Laurentian Iroquoians) who Cartier had met a century earlier in 1535-36 were no longer extant along the St. Lawrence or adjacent territory.²

The written historical record identifies the people as Algonquin; while the Haudenosaunee (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca) occupied land along the St. Lawrence River and . in Iroquoia in what is now New York State.

British colonial authorities made peace with the Algonquins in 1760. Significantly, they recognized Algonquin use and occupation of the Ottawa Valley as described in over 65 petitions from Algonquin leaders dating from 1772 to 1897. The acknowledged territory included what is now the Township of Rideau Lakes.

In an 1830 petition, the famous Algonquin, Chief Pierre Louis Constant Pynency (Pinesi), described his family hunting grounds as lying south of the Ottawa River to the height of the Rideau.³ His description would place his family territory in the heart of what is now the Township of Rideau Lakes.

Within a decade, Algonquin Chief Peter Shawanipinessi, who was known in the area since the early 1800s, petitioned for a secure tract of land in Bedford Township, adjacent to the present-day Township of Rideau Lakes. Shawanipinessi's family and followers had used the land around the upper Rideau system and towards the Mississippi River for generations.

Numerous Algonquin families celebrated religious events at churches in Westport and Newboro throughout the 1800s and early 1900s. Descendants of these and other Algonquin families continue to live in the area today.

² For a good summary of the scholarly debate regarding the identity and territorial occupation of these early Iroquoians see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Lawrence_Iroquoians

³ P. L. Constant Pynency to Sir George Kempt, Administrator of Government to Lower Canada, February 19, 1830. LAC RG 8 Vol. 269 pp 235-236 Reel C-2857

Recommendation for Draft – Paragraph 2

The Anishinaabe, who were known historically as Algonquins, lived throughout the Frontenac Arch and beyond in the Ottawa Valley. They lived in small family groups, hunting, fishing, and gathering in the forests and lakes of the region and practicing rudimentary horticulture. Their territory was acknowledged by colonial authorities and many of their descendants continue to live in the area.

C. Additional sources

Two examples of summaries published by other local groups:

Ken W. Watson, “Indigenous Use of the Rideau Waterway”
Rideau Trail Association, “History of the Trail Area”

The 1830 Pinesi Petition:

1830-02-19 Pynency Petition
1830-02-19 Transcript Pynency Petition (English Translation)

A good overview of Algonquin history and culture

Kirby Whiteduck, Algonquin Traditional Culture

Map of Township of Rideau Lakes



TOWNSHIP OF RIDEAU LAKES
Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee
Minutes

Thursday, June 19, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
Municipal Office, Chantry

Members Present: Dustin Bulloch, Howard French, George German, Chair, David Gwynne, Diane Haskins, Allison Smith, Sue Warren, Sabina Barrett

Members Absent: Ted Stewart, Councillor Paula Banks

Staff Present: Marie White, Economic Development and Cultural Heritage Coordinator

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Roll Call

Councillor Paula Banks and Ted Stewart send their regrets.

Public members in attendance who signed in:

- Saoirse Carroll
- Rosanne Lake

Additions/Amendments to the Agenda

The Chair called for any additions or amendments to the agenda. One was heard:

The Agenda states the meeting time as 9:00 a.m. The start time of the meeting should read 9:30 a.m.

Adoption of the Agenda**RECOMMENDATION MHAC 2025-27**

Moved by Sue Warren

Seconded by Dustin Bulloch

Be it resolved that the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC) adopt the agenda as amended.

Carried

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

The Chair called for disclosure of any pecuniary interests. None were declared.

Delegations**Bill Stevens - Powhattan Lodge Renovation (For Information)**

Former owners of Powhattan Lodge, Bill and Denise Stevens attended the meeting. Mr. Stevens presented the story of how Powhattan Lodge came into their possession, and how they carefully renovated the historic property. Located at 1 Pine Island in Newboro, the lodge was built in 1907-1908 from Hemlock logs that were harvested in the winter and transported over the ice from the Mill on Perth Road to the island. It has a two-seater outhouse and the original ice box in the kitchen. Arnold Warren (Margaret) delivered the ice.

Mr. Stevens shared that the original owner was Mr. Latham, and that his sons Hugh and Paul were contacted to help with the restoration of the property. Son Hugh Latham offered to help, and arrived by train having travelled from his home at the Benedictine Monastery in New Hampshire wearing a buck skin jacket. Hugh and Paul also have a half brother. It is thought that Latham, an architect, named the structure Powhattan Lodge after the father of Pocahontas, and that Mr. Latham may have been a descendant of Pocahontas.

During the restoration, the tongue and groove oak ceiling was repaired. A mill in Perth was able to match the original thickness of the boards. The stone masonry work was done by Reg Kumm, owner/operator of The Bay Barn antiques in Seeley's Bay.

The restored Lodge was featured in Cottage Life Magazine (April 2011 edition), and features an impressively large fireplace.

In order to keep the main lodge true to its original form, a second log cabin was built as a bath house with a shower and toilet connected to a septic.

A piece of local indigenous furniture from the Lodge, a chair referred to as "stick furniture" built in Jones Falls was brought to the meeting. The seat would have been made of wicker, now missing.

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An original letter and photos were circulated, as follows:

1. Construction of Powhattan Lodge - Bell Family
2. Three men in a skiff, one is Mr. Latham, the original owner. The skiff canoe was built in Newboro.
3. A photo of Pine Island without Pine Trees
4. Interior photo of the Lodge
5. Negatives of the photos above

MHAC members thanked Bill and Denise Stevens for the treasured documentation. It was noted that the printed material will be housed at the Rideau Lakes History Centre (archives), and that the chair should reside with the Newboro and Area Heritage Society (NAHS).

Business Arising

Doors Open Meet and Greet - Update (For Information)

Rosanne Lake presented an update, and shared the contents of the site package as information. The Agenda for the Doors Open Meet and Greet, and a series of draft posters were included in the meeting package.

MHAC members expressed their enthusiasm and gratitude for all the hard work that has gone into coordinating Doors Open Rideau Lakes. A Meet and Greet for the 18 sites takes place on June 20th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Portland Hall. There will be an information exchange and site packages will be provided in preparation for the August 16th & 17th event.

Heritage Spaces and Picnic Places - 2025 Experience Guide: Marie White (For Information)

The final version of the Picnic Guide was included in the agenda package. Staff noted that comments from the Economic Development Committee suggest that "Points of Interest" in Morton should be reviewed, as some buildings are in disrepair and may be historical notes rather than points of interest.

MHAC members suggested the following changes in 2026:

- On the page for Morton & Jones Falls, omit Judd House as a point of interest, and change storyboard "Historic Morton" font to bold.
- Please add James Fullard Trail along Opinicon Lake
- Consider the addition of the new Whitefish property operated by RWLT

Minutes

Minutes of the MHAC Meeting held May 15, 2025 were distributed to Committee as part of the Agenda package. The Chair asked for any errors or omissions. None were noted.

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RECOMMENDATION 2025-28

Moved by Howard French
Seconded by Allison Smith

Be it resolved that the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee approves and adopts the Minutes of the MHAC Meeting held on May 15, 2025.

Carried

MHAC Action Listing - Verbal Update: Marie White (For Information)

Staff provided a verbal update on MHAC projects. In particular:

- It was suggested at the Economic Development Committee meeting that MHAC consider including the addition of "Historic Settlement" Tag Bars to all Historic Settlement signs in order to differentiate them from the Village signs. For example, in Elgin, the sign for Cheney's Corners is near to the village sign, causing confusion. In the draft 2026 MHAC Budget, include approx. \$4,000 for consideration (\$200 x 17 = \$3,400 plus taxes and installation, plus some signs are two sided, such as Freeland). MHAC members would also like to add a website to these tag bars. The webpage could include historic maps of the settlements.
- Map distribution took place the week of May 20
- Guide distribution took place the weeks of June 9th and 16th
- QR code labels for Documentaries were shared with the Harbormaster for the Portland Harbour and the Newboro Harbour

MHAC members mentioned that the sign for Halladay Quarry is not facing traffic. One solution would be to order a second side.

New Business

Cemetery Research Working Group - Verbal Update (For Information)

Howard and George updated the committee on the upcoming Cemetery Meet and Greet, scheduled for Thursday, October 23 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Newboro Community Hall. A draft agenda was circulated at the meeting. MHAC members discussed the convenience of online cemetery plot maps for properties such as Forfar Cemetery.

Correspondence/Events

Letter from Newboro and Area Heritage Society (For Discussion)

MHAC received the proposal by the Newboro and Area Heritage Society (NAHS) for information purposes as per recommendation 2025-30 from the Economic Development Committee.

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Ontario Heritage Toolkit - As published May 9, 2025 (For Information)

For information, Section 6 outlines the process for amending designation by-laws.

Call for Projects 2025-2026 - GLAM Incubator - Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (For Information)

For your information, to support the work of organizations in galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, the Incubator will lend, purchase, or assist with the **acquisition of technological equipment** and software required for the project. It will also assist with project tasks such as event facilitation, graphic design, social media, research expertise, knowledge mobilization activities, project management, and other supports as necessary. The Incubator will help project leads secure external funding to sustain projects after incubation. Due August 1, 2025.

Leeds Grenville 175 Years - Request for Content (For Discussion)

John Kalivas of the United Counties of Leeds Grenville reached out regarding the 175th Anniversary of Leeds and Grenville. Rideau Lakes is invited to submit engaging stories, features, photos, and other content that highlight the rich history, vibrant communities, and unique attributes of our region.

MHAC members suggested that content submitted may include:

- Documentaries
- Storyboards
- "Did you know" sections from the Picnic Guide
- Lakes and Islands
- Photos
- Articles such as, "Must see Museums"

Reports from Committee Members

Sabina Barrett

- Ontario Barn Preservation would like to collaborate with Rideau Lakes to document Barns older than 1961. The process of identification will ideally take place from late Fall to early Spring, when the leaves have fallen.

Howard French

- Attended an excellent historical presentation by Ross Lambert at St. Mary's Church in Newboro
- Also attended local celebration on the June 1 anniversary of the United Church of Canada
- Attended event held in honour of St. Mary's 175th anniversary in Newboro
- Attended Spirit of the Drum Pow Wow in Smiths Falls

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- Suggestion to invite John Kalivas from UCLG to an upcoming MHAC meeting

George German

- Interested in the Barn Preservation project

David Gwynne

- Portland photos in progress

Diane Haskins

- Historic Rideau Canal 1900-1920 - Kingston Mills to Ottawa Photographic Display is at the Red Brick School in Elgin
- Recent donation of two beautifully restored Dowsett Boats to Portland on the Rideau Historical Society (PRHS)
- The Minister of Culture and Heritage called from Queens Park regarding the senior volunteer awards, mentioning that 21 people were selected in 2025. Diane recalls how her own volunteer journey was sparked by a call from Sue Warren's mother circa 1969 extending an invitation to get involved. Last year, the Diane and Keith Haskins Award for community service was established with the high school in Elgin, and the first ever bursary will be awarded to a deserving student on Thursday, June 26, 2025.

Allison Smith

- Submitted an article to the Ottawa Historical Society (OHS) newsletter about the 200th anniversary of the Rideau Canal, spanning 6 years from 2026 to 2032 . A film is in development about the early planning of the Canal, the consideration of other routes, a tramway, etc. to be completed in October, 2025.

Sue Warren

- The Rideau Lakes History Centre archives are very busy with researchers
- Donations have been received from the Anna Greenhorn estate, including items related to Phillippsville and Forfar
- Chaffeys Locks and Area Historical Society (CLAHS) is working on a new textile exhibit for the Doors Open event in August
- CLAHS student is actively re-cataloguing items at the Lockmaster's House Museum

Questions from the Public

None.

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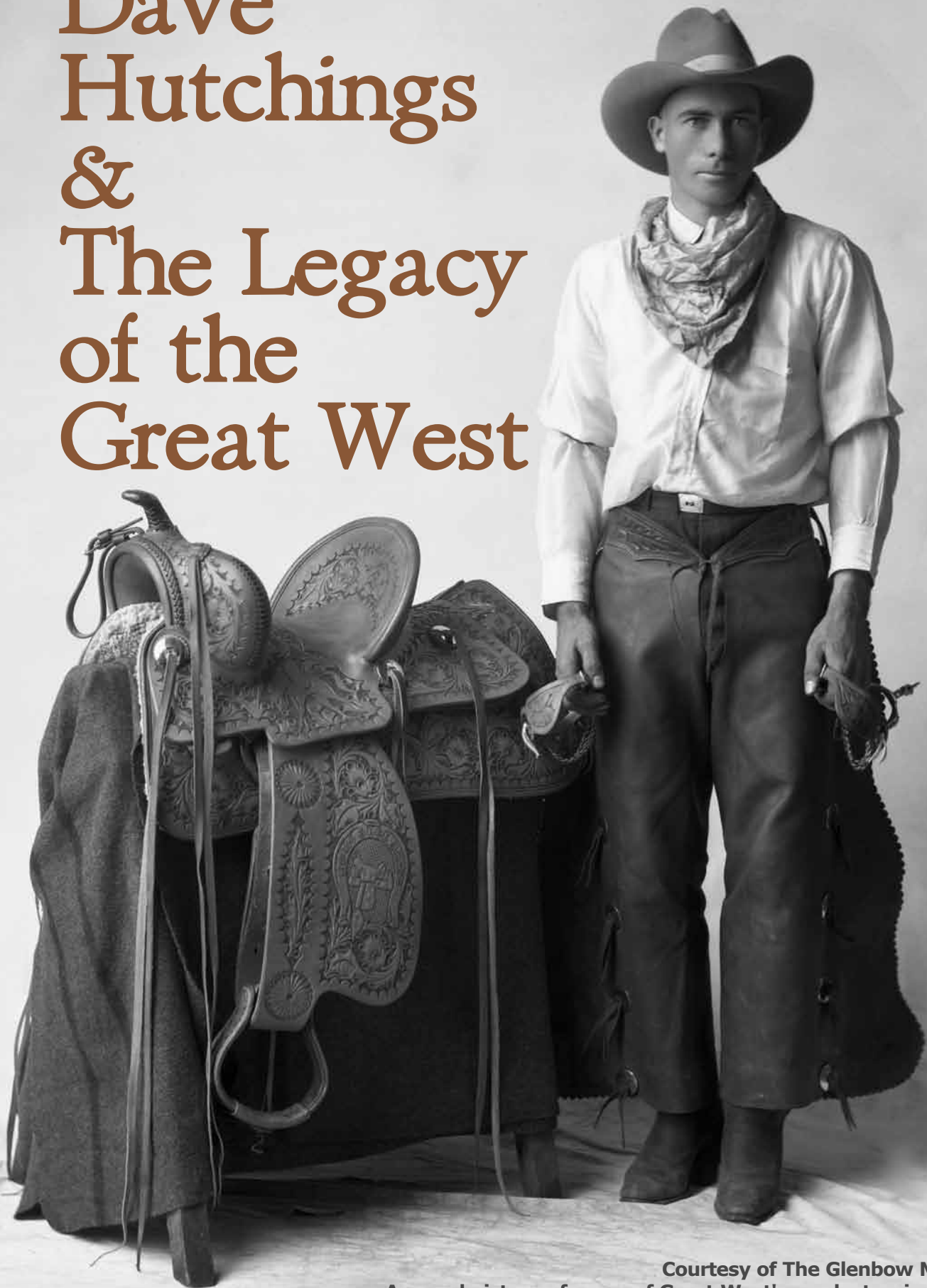
Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

George German, Chair

Marie White, Secretary

Dave Hutchings & The Legacy of the Great West



Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum
A posed picture of some of Great West's products, circa 1925.

by Nick Pernokas

Today, Colorado boot maker Dave Hutchings lives in the shadow of the Rockies, but he was born under an even larger one. Dave, a well known craftsman in his own right, is a descendant of the family that once ran "the largest saddlery concern under the British flag." Though this claim was made a century ago, it almost seems like an understatement when you begin sifting through the documentation about Great West Saddlery.

Dave's and Great West's story begins in Ontario, Canada, in the 1840's. His great grandfather, Elijah Hutchings, immigrated to eastern Canada and opened a sawmill. Soon he had changed his occupation to farmer. His two boys, Elisha Frederick and Robert John, learned the value of hard work on the farm. This lesson would serve them well as they became involved in the westward expansion of their country. Elisha would leave for the West as many young men with big dreams were doing.

The twenty-year-old Elisha reached Fort Edmonton in the autumn of 1875. The leaves had turned and the chill in the breeze hinted at the winter to come. Elisha got ready for the cold by building a shack on the riverbank. He then befriended a young Indian boy who taught him to speak Cree. In the spring, he decided to head south to Winnipeg where there was more traffic on the westward trail. He hitched a ride with a southbound freighter and earned his keep by hunting for supper and tending to the camp.

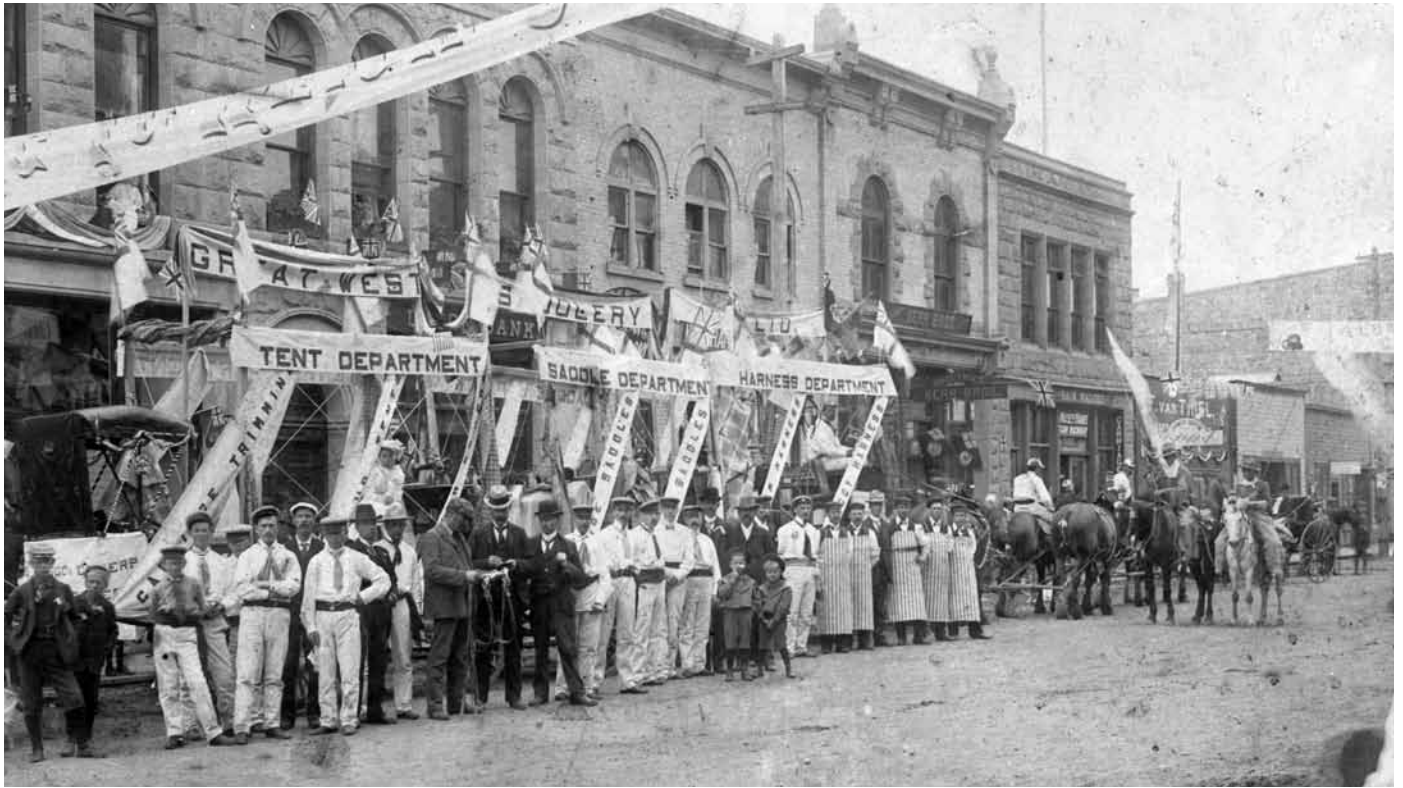
When E.F. (as he became known) arrived in Winnipeg, he noted the heavy trade between the Hudson Bay Company and the Indians at Fort Garry. Although the Company had their own interpreters, many of the smaller traders didn't. For this reason they were at a distinct disadvantage. E.F. approached several of them and offered his services as an interpreter in return for a commission on all the furs that he brought to them. At the end of the season, E.F. had \$1,200.00 in the bank.

E.F. decided to look around for something in which to invest his money. On his frequent visits to the Indian village, he had observed the Indian women sewing wagon tarps for the many wagons that were headed west. E.F. bought some canvas and the wooden hoops to stretch it on. After building one cover, E.F. realized that it was too time consuming so he headed to a local dry goods store where he found sewing machines. The owner had bought twenty of the newly designed Singers but had not been able to sell any. Consequently, he sold all of them to E.F. for \$5.00 each, half of what store owner had paid for them originally. Carrying one of the machines back to the Indian village, E.F. quickly sewed up a wagon cover. He then showed one of the women how to use the machine. Soon a crowd gathered to watch.

The woman was soon proficient with the machine and the envy of the other women. E.F. told her that he would sell the machines for \$25.00 each, and that for every one she sold, she would get \$5.00. If she sold all of them, she would get the last one. The machines sold like hotcakes and soon E.F. had more money to deposit.



A bronze sign befitting the company it represented.



Great West Saddlery Company float and staff stopped on 8th Avenue, Calgary, Alberta. Circa 1898.
Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum

A few days later, while visiting with some friends on the street, E.F. noticed a settler struggling with a wagon harness that had broken. He offered to repair it for him. It was a crude repair job, but the farmer was happy and gave E.F. a dollar for his trouble. The light went on as E.F. looked at the hundreds of sets of harness passing through Winnipeg. He dipped into his funds and purchased a side of leather. Within a year E.F. had a man working for him, and, a couple of years later, he had a shop with a machine.

In 1869, two brothers, R. J. and A. A. Stalker, had opened a saddlery in Winnipeg. They had supplied the Royal Northwest Mounted Police with some of their first saddles. As E.F. grew busier, he purchased the Stalker brother's saddlery. And with that the first link of Great Western had been forged.

In the early 1880's, E.F. was joined by his younger brother, Robert John. Robert served a leather working apprenticeship and then moved up to sales. In 1889, Robert was sent to Calgary to establish a branch of E.F. Hutchins saddlery there.

In 1883, George Murdoch, a cabinet maker from New Brunswick, Canada, had opened the first saddle shop in the frontier town of Calgary. He had been clever enough to arrive before the railroad had and had built a shack in a prime location on the Elbow River. In 1884, Murdoch became the first mayor of Calgary. By 1888, Murdoch's company was housed in a twenty-five by seventy foot, three-story brick building. A journalist of the time said that Murdoch "has the most extensive harness, and saddlery establishment in Calgary, and is unsurpassed by any in the Northwest. They also make as good and as cheap a saddle as can be made in Montana."

This acclaim probably brought the saddlery to the attention of the Hutchings brothers. Fortunately for them, Murdoch was enjoying his burgeoning political career and was ready to sell out to them. Shortly after the purchase of the Calgary shop, Robert partnered with saddle maker W.J. Riley and bought his older brother out. The company name of the Calgary shop became Hutchings and Riley. E.F. continued to operate his business out of Winnipeg.



An old Great West Saddle. They were called utilitarian. The old Hutchings and Riley name stamp, precursor to Great West. Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum

For the next decade, the only real competition in Calgary for Hutchings and Riley was Riley's old partner, Carson. Rechristened the Carson and Shore Saddlery, the two firms would divvy up a large portion of the profits from the coming wave of business. In August of 1896, gold was discovered in the Klondike region of the Northwest Territories. Though only lasting a few years, thousands of people passed through Calgary on their way north. In reality, most of them spent more on the journey than what they made, but they spent it in Calgary. Goods of all sorts were needed to outfit prospectors, many of whom had no experience in the harsh conditions that they would face. By 1899, the gold rush had petered out, leaving the Hutchings brothers in a good position and able to help their respec-



The Great West Saddlery name stamp. Note the location as Northwest Territories.

▼ **Another old Great West saddle.**



tive communities as they grew into more permanent cities. Robert, for example, helped to found Western Canada College. He served in numerous civic and trade organizations. He had seven children, several of whom would help in the business.

At the turn of the century, Carson and Shore, Hutchings and Riley, and E.F. Hutchings merged to become Great West Saddlery with headquar-



These boots are on display in the Buffalo Bill Museum on Lookout Mountain in Colorado. They were made by Dave Hutchings, grandson of R.J.Hutchings. Above Right: Dave Hutchings, well known custom boot maker, teacher, and the man who made Buffalo Bill's last boots.



**Great West Saddlery employees inside the shop, Calgary, Alberta. circa 1900.
Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum**



Great West employees inside Calgary shop, circa 1900. Courtesy of The Glenbow Museum

ters in Winnipeg. Their logo became a horseshoe that was stamped on their leather goods. Great West began to buy up saddle shops in other areas that weren't doing well and reshaped them into Great West franchises. Robert became the vice-president, and his boys, raised in the business, became natural candidates for the managers. One of them was George, Dave Hutching's father. That's Dave Hutching our present day boot maker. In Manitoba, Great West had branches in Winnipeg, Portage La Prairie, Boissevain, McGregor, and Selkirk. In the Northwest Territories, they were in Calgary, Edmonton, Strathcona, and Prince Albert.

Great Western erected a five-story building of brick and sandstone that would become a landmark in Calgary for years to come. On the Canadian & Pacific Railroad line in back of the 9th St. headquarters in Calgary, Great West shipped their products all over Canada. They also received three carloads of leather a week from Ontario tanneries. A carload of sisal, manila rope, and binder twine arrived every week.

Almost every kind of equine equipment was made on the fifth floor, even military harness. Around 1916, Great West was stuck with thousands of sets of unclaimed Russian artillery harness because of the Russian Revolution. On the fourth floor, fifty saddles were turned out a week. They ranged from cowboy saddles to "English-Western" ones bound for Australia. The older saddle makers had apprenticed with the company's British trained experts. One of the prominent leather carvers and saddle makers to have worked there was Ed Lupson. Six hundred horse collars were produced a week in another building a block away. A nearby barn was filled with rye straw to stuff the collars with.

After World War I, Great West was the largest wholesale distributor in the West, and it was the first Canadian company to issue a catalog.

In 1922, a devastating fire in the saddlery building caused the heavy machinery on the top floor to drop down into the third floor.

“It's an old, old friendship, which is what it boils down to.”



The chaps by Great West were actually made as a rodeo trophy. Below is a close up of the chap pocket shows that they were an award at the 1924 Calgary Stampede.



In 1929, Robert Hutchings sold his interest for two million dollars and retired. He passed away in 1937. As late as 1940, Great West's catalog boasted of their exports of Horseshoe Brand products to horseman in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. It also emphasized the quality of the Horseshoe Brand, the quality of the materials used, and the uniformity of the finished products.

In the late 1950's, Great West sold to some Eastern interests. In 1959, Great West closed its doors for good. The last saddle maker to work in the Calgary shop was Bill Bryant. On the last day of business, Bill was putting the final touches on the last Great West saddle and his long career.

The saddle was going to be in a window display "back East" and would have a placard attached to it which indicated that it was being the last saddle made. Bill thoughtfully looked at it as he touched up the oil and said, "I think they could have let the body rest in peace. . . ." A poem was tacked to the wall of the shop, an ode to the saddle makers who had worked there. Handwritten by an employee from long ago, the poem wasn't getting to make the trip.

Around 1930, already looking towards the future, Robert J. Hutchings was in the oil business in Alberta. He sent his son, George, down to Montana, to start leasing land. George started leasing land north of Cutbank and became a wildcat driller. That was the end of George's connection with the leather business until his son, Dave, was born in 1940.

His ancestors must be smiling.

If you'd like to talk to Dave Hutchings, give him a call at 303-289-6726.

[Editor's Note: If you're wondering why you haven't heard from our Southwest Correspondent, **Nick Pernokas**, lately, it may be because he's been deep in the piney woods of East Texas on

a movie set of all things. That Nick! Seems that Nick was given a small part in the new gothic Western film, *The Merchant*. The film is scheduled for release in May of 2012. So if you like Westerns, check it out. A word of warning, though. Nick says, "This isn't your grandpa's Western."]

“All you
can do
is keep
going.”

The Hutchings lived on an isolated ranch near Cutbank without much to do. When Dave was ten, his dad taught him how to make boots and do leatherwork. As Dave grew older, he got tired of ranch work and enlisted in the Marines. He planned on a career in the service, but injuries in Vietnam ended those dreams. After his discharge, Dave looked for a quiet place to live and ended up in Iredale, Texas, in 1970. He built a house and barn on a hundred acres and opened a boot shop in nearby Hico. He stayed busy retailing Ben Miller Boots and Potts Longhorn saddle "seconds" that he retooled. His boot and saddle work boomed, but still he hadn't found what he was looking for. Two and a half years later he moved to Big Spring, and then to Snyder. Eventually, he made it as far north as Colorado. Today Dave lives in Thornton, Colorado, but builds boots in a shop in Parker. The shop, J B Custom Leather, is owned by Jim Brainard, a former student of Dave's. Jim actually worked for Dave during high school. Later he bought Dave out.

Dave laughs, "Thirty-five years later he comes to me and says I never really taught him to make boots. So we teamed up, and now he's made twenty-three pairs. "Jim also does a lot of saddle repair and the two men help each other out."It's an old, old friendship, which is what it boils down to."

Dave has done well in the boot business. He made Buffalo Bill's "last" pair of boots. Of course, Cody was dead at the time, but they were made on his measurements for the museum at Lookout Mountain, Colorado, where Cody is buried. Dave is on the board of directors and also the judging committee for the Boot Competition at the Roundup in Wichita Falls. He has also judged at the Sheridan show. He has taught boot making at his shop for thirty years and has made custom boots, and a lot of other leatherwork, for fifty years.

His philosophy is, "All you can do is keep going. The boot work has actually been good for my arthritis."



This leather pitcher was made for R.J. Hutchings by his employees. Originally it had cups to match. They were all lined with pitch. It sat on his desk for years.



Quotable Quotes

Robert J. Hutchings was a shrewd business man like his brother. Much of the advice that he gave his son George is still relevant today. The following gems are all taken from the weekly correspondence that R.J. Hutchings sent to his son as George took over The Scott Saddlery Co. in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, in 1924.

"Success, easily won, is not as a rule good for any young man, but a success for which you have had to fight a long and patient battle, means when accomplished that splendid character, as well most of the qualities that make men great have been acquired."

"I would resolve to add to my friends daily. I would be decent and kindly to all. The newsboy of today may be in a position of influence tomorrow."

"I would plan to do a promiscuous amount of advertising. You must not hide your light under a bushel. One must be a pusher to get anything done these days."

"I would clean up all those past due accounts, regardless of the consequences."

"You must often work while the other fellow plays."

"Know what your annual overhead is, divide it by three hundred and you will know what your daily overhead is for every working day."

"For repairs, you should charge for your man's time, and when he is using his machine, another 50 percent of his wage per hour. In addition, you should make a profit of 100 percent on all the small things (materials) charged to the job. You may have to discriminate on this if you have a very big job."

"Be punctual in all of your engagements."

"When a man becomes satisfied, he stops progressing."

"Emphasize the high quality of your leather and where it comes from."

"I always back the STICKER, because you can't beat him."

"Every effort you make towards making friends, increasing your sphere of influence, and knowledge of people are all contributions towards your success."

"Success is only achieved by those who are willing to pay the price in industry, in perseverance, in enterprise, in integrity, and often, in making sacrifices."

"Select friends of the right type."

"This is a long epistle. Read it at least three times and get it under your skin."

