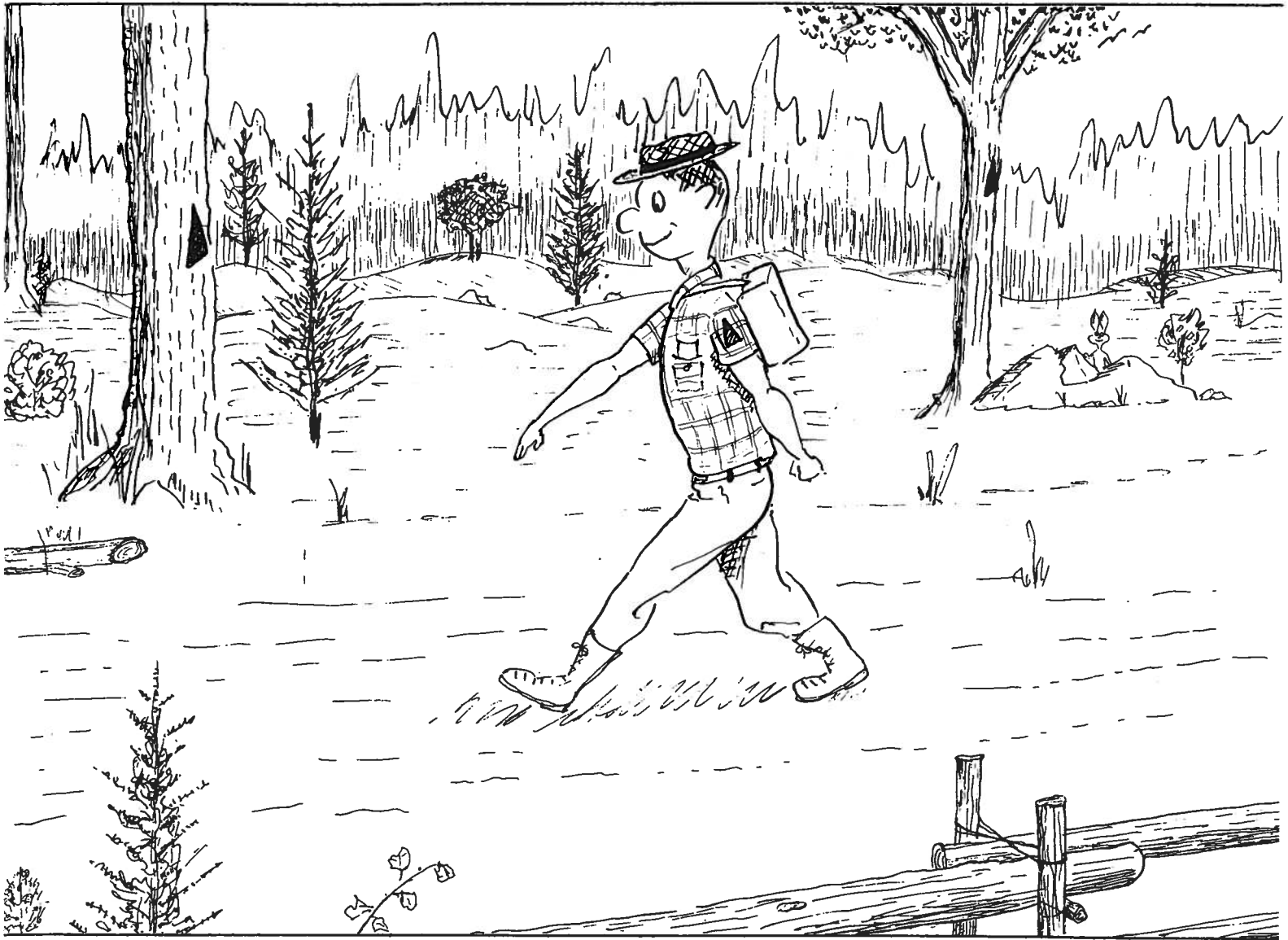


The Rideau Trail NEWSLETTER

Published by The Rideau Trail Association



Spring 1972

EXECUTIVE MEETING NOTES

Dr. Fred Cooke presided over the first meeting of this year's executive on April 8 in Kingston. Thirteen members attended from Kingston, Smiths Falls and Ottawa.

Reports were heard from committees dealing with legal affairs, publicity, design, routes and finance, and plans were discussed for this season's operation and expansion. Here are some of the highlights:

- *the legal incorporation of RTA as a charitable organization is expected to be final by the end of May.

- *the Kingston Trail Club has already embarked on a major publicity campaign to acquaint citizens in that area with the activities and objectives of RTA and to encourage recruitment of new members.

- *the routes committee plans to continue and expand last year's trail building, and will investigate possibilities for establishing campsites along the trail. These activities will require a great deal of volunteer assistance from members.

- *a committee was formed of the three area publicity representatives and the chairman of the design committee to coordinate public relations and take responsibility for publishing the quarterly newsletter.

- *work is progressing on the projected RTA guidebook, which will be provided to all members and which will amplify information already provided by our maps.

At the spring executive meeting (May 6 in Smiths Falls), the major topic of discussion was measures to deal with our lack of success in obtaining a second Opportunities for Youth grant. It was decided that general on-going maintenance will continue to be done by volunteers, and that further construction and expansion will be attempted by hiring two students to direct and coordinate volunteer labor. It was estimated that \$2,500 would be the target sum to be raised for this minimal program. Executive representatives in Kingston, Smiths Falls and Ottawa have assumed responsibility for raising portions of the total sum. All contributions will be greatly appreciated.

It was decided that an award in the form of a certificate will be given to members who have walked the 180 miles between Kingston and Ottawa in one attempt.

MERRICKVILLE

(Continued from the Winter Edition of the Newsletter)

As the Rideau Trail (red triangle) enters Merrickville from Burritt's Rapids area it passes one of the most interesting small cemeteries in Ontario. This is the "Collar Hill" cemetery in which William Merrick and his wife Sylvia are buried together with their eldest daughter, Charlotte and her husband, Elisha Collier (hence Collar).

The inscription on the plaque at the Blockhouse reads as follows:-

MERRICKVILLE BLOCKHOUSE 1832

This is one of four blockhouses which, with some twelve other "defensible buildings", were constructed along the Rideau Canal. The canal, built 1826 - 32 by Lieutenant-Colonel John By, Royal Engineers, was designed to serve as an alternative military supply route from Montreal to Kingston in the event of war. The Merrickville blockhouse was completed in 1832 to accommodate some fifty men. It was never the scene of military action, but has served as lockmaster's quarters, a church and a canal maintenance building. Restoration of this fine example of early military architecture was completed in 1965, and it is one of the two remaining blockhouses on the canal which have retained their original forms.

The Blockhouse of course was built for the defence of the Waterway during the unsettled times after the War of 1812. Many people wondered why it was necessary to have a fort to defend the Rideau at a point so far from the St. Lawrence River, but a glance at the map will show that Merrickville is the nearest point to the "frontier" after the Waterway leaves the Kingston area which was heavily fortified. At the time of the settlement of the area there was a trail known as the North Augusta Trail which ran from Maitland on the St. Lawrence to Merrickville and it was up this trail that the pioneers travelled in their ox-carts and horse-drawn vehicles. It is now a motor-road. It was the presence of this trail that led to the siting of the Blockhouse in Merrickville. A raiding force could have travelled from Maitland on horse-back in a day, cut the Waterway in two by destroying the locks and made their getaway.

There was originally a moat surrounding the Blockhouse which was fed from the canal only a few yards away and the present ramp up to the main entrance was a drawbridge. The site of the moat can still be seen and it is interesting to speculate how useful this would have been in Winter when it was frozen solid. After the Blockhouse was restored in 1965 by the Department of Transport it was taken over by the Merrickville and District Historical Society and converted into a museum. This museum is on the Trail (blue triangle) which runs through Merrickville and is well worth a visit. It is open in the afternoons from mid-June to mid-September: June and September week-ends and holidays only.

The present-day Merrickville is well equipped for the visiting hiker. The local Lions Club operate a campsite cum picnic grounds that has toilets, tables, barbecues, water and electricity at a very small cost. There is a supervised public beach and boat-landing ramp without charge and there is a marina below the bridge. For the ardent bird-watcher there is a bird sanctuary West of the village where in the Spring and Fall thousands of migrating ducks of all kinds and Canada Geese can be seen on the river. For the fisherman, the river from Merrickville to Kilmarnock is noted for bass and maskinonge and for the hunter there are ruffed grouse, woodcock, snipe, ducks and Hungarian partridge all around. The village has two hotels and two restaurants.

The countryside around Merrickville was originally settled upon and cleared by families to whom grants of land were given. These families were for the most part of United Empire Loyalist stock or of officers and men of Colonel By's Engineers who built the Rideau Canal. The fact that the land has been cleared and settled for close on two hundred years gives it a peculiar charm and while much of the farmland is poor from the farmers' point of view, it is rich in the qualities that the visitor and holiday-maker look for.

Few areas in Ontario offer the opportunities for the hiker or the trail-rider than does the country around Merrickville both North and South of the Rideau River. The many small roads, painstakingly cleared by the pioneers to give access to their homesteads are still in existence although now to a large extent grass-covered and unused. These trails bordered by cedar-log fences, carpeted by wild-flowers in Springtime and in places overgrown with hawthorn bushes and wild grape vines provide memorable excursions for the hiker, horseman or camper.

Col. Duncan Douglas

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A TIMELY WARNING

At a recent meeting of the Executive of the Rideau Trail Association, inquiries were made as to the personal liability of persons using the Rideau Trail. I was requested to look into this matter and wish to report as follows:

- 1) Everyone is responsible for injury to other persons or damage to property owned by other persons arising out of his or her own actions.
- 2) This liability follows no matter how innocent the action or accidental the result.
- 3) Any person using the Rideau Trail would similarly be personally liable for injuries to persons or damage to property resulting from their actions.
- 4) In particular, members should be aware of the existence of the Forest Fires Prevention Act, R.S.O. 1970 Chapter 179 and, in particular, the following provisions, which have been paraphrased for conciseness and clarity:
 - S.3 (2) Landowners can sue for damage caused by forest, bush or grass fires.
 - S.12 For practical purposes, during fire season (April 1 - October 31 inclusive) you can only start a fire outdoors in a portable or permanent fireplace, stove or barbecue.
 - S.20 An officer can order you to extinguish your fire at any time in the interests of forest protection.
 - S.22 If a fire gets out of control, you must report it at once to an officer.
 - S.23 (1) In times of high forest fire hazard, you can be ordered to stay out of or leave any area that has been declared to be a forest fire emergency area.
 - S.27 "No person shall smoke while walking or working in a forest or woodland during fire season."
 - S.28 "No person shall throw or drop, in or within 100 feet of a forest or woodland, (a) a lighted match, cigarette, cigar or other smoking materials; (b) live coals; or (c) hot ashes."

S.34 (1) Contravention of any provision of the Act or any neglect thereunder carries a penalty of a fine of up to \$1000 and imprisonment of up to 3 months, or both, and in addition you are liable to pay all costs and expenses of controlling and extinguishing any fire.

S.34 (3) In any prosecution under any section of the Act requiring a permit, (i.e. fire permit or forest travel permit), the onus is on you to prove that you had a permit at the time you are alleged to have committed the offence.
This is the end that bites.

If you want a complete copy of the Act and Regulations under it, you can obtain it from the Ontario Government Bookstore, either in Ottawa or Toronto.

- 5) By reason of the wide ranging and loosely knit operations of the Rideau Trail Association and in particular the fact that persons who are not members of the Rideau Trail Association will inevitably be using the Trail, it is not possible to obtain insurance on a group basis to protect the individual members of the Association and their families against the financial hazards which arise under the Forest Fires Prevention Act as well as under the ordinary civil law in regard to private persons.
- 6) Therefore, it is very strongly recommended that all members who do not presently have comprehensive personal liability insurance should obtain such insurance to protect them and the members of their family, for an adequate amount, which I suggest should not be less than \$100,000.
- 7) Personal liability insurance for the minimum limit of \$25,000 costs \$15 for a term of 3 years; for a limit of \$100,000 it costs \$22 for 3 years. The limit referred to is the limit of liability for injury or damage; in addition to this limit, the insurance company has to pay the legal fees necessary in connection with the defence of any civil action - this benefit is in some ways the most important benefit to the average individual as you can run up quite a bill for legal fees and court costs proving that you are not liable in damages in a certain case. While the company is not required by the policy to pay the legal fees for defending any charge laid under the Act, if there has been substantial damage, they will very often make some arrangement with you to pay part or all of the fees. This is something that has to be negotiated as the event arises.

Respectfully submitted

Joseph R.C. Dewhurst,
Chairman, Legal and Financial Committee.

CENTRAL RIDEAU TRAIL CLUB

The Central Rideau Trail Club came into being at a meeting held April 5th in the Smiths Falls Collegiate.

Dr. Fred Cooke, President of the Rideau Trail Association, addressed a meeting of about fifty people from the area. Dr. Cooke outlined the development of the Association, which started when a group of eleven people met in February 1971 to plan a hiking trail in Kingston, to be developed along the lines of the Bruce Trail. It seemed that the Rideau River was a good focal point, so the trail was planned in its general area. After publicising the idea there was a tremendous response from the public. In the early stages it was thought that it would take five years to develop the whole trail. Then the Opportunities for Youth programme was announced and Jim McManus of Portland submitted a brief, which was accepted by the Government, suggesting that a group of students work on a hiking trail. By September 1st when the students had to go back to university, the central backbone of the 200-mile trail had been completed.

In September 1971 the official opening ceremony of the Rideau Trail was held in the Foley Mountain Conservation area near Westport, with the Honorable Jack Davis, Minister of the Environment officiating.

Dr. Cooke then discussed the need for Trail Clubs. He said that Kingston already has a Trail Club and Ottawa has an informal group performing the same functions. He pointed out that maintenance is the important factor now, then we have to consider more than one day on the trail. In the attempt to get the trail finished too much of it was put along township roads and more suitable routes will have to be found. This will require the help of local people. It is also hoped to add more loops for one day hikers as the ones already in existence are proving to be the most popular part of the trail. Then Dr. Cooke showed some slides taken along the trail between Kingston and Westport. The audience enjoyed the colours and scenery, not to mention the commentary.

Dr. John Hollinger then resumed the Chair and asked for nominations for a slate of officers for a local Trail Club. Also suggestions for a name which would include the area towns. The Central Rideau Trail Club was agreed upon with the following executive:-

President	George Bracken, Smith Falls
Vice President	Earle Checkley, Burritts Rapids
Secretary-Treasurer	Joyce Halliday, Smiths Falls
Activities & Maintenance:	Howard Raper, Smiths Falls
	Commander Moxley, Merrickville
	Peter McMahon, Perth
	Betty & Ted Cooper, Kemptville

THE TOWN OF LAKE OPINICON: GHOST TOWN ON THE RIDEAU

Between Chaffey's Lock, and the village of Perth Road, we pass through an area marked on the maps (the old ones) as Lake Opinicon. How do we recognize this little town?

Travelling by car, along the dirt road, we can see only an old cemetery, a barn, and an unused schoolhouse, as evidence of the site. Travelling by the Rideau Trail, on foot, there is even less evidence of a town, but the knowing eye can spot an old house foundation here and there, or may find a gateway in a fence, where there seems no reason for a gateway to exist.

One old deed we know dates the land grant to which it pertains at 1837, when the royal grant from Queen Victoria deeded it to Annie Fluke.

When the settlers came, there were two means of making a livelihood from the land open to them; mining, and lumbering. Fur-trapping, of course, had also been going on for a long time, but this fluctuated according to weather and the season.

The Fluke family were interested in mining; to this day we can see old test-holes and quarries when they sought mica and other saleable commodities.

As they gradually cut off the red and white pine, they opened up the level areas, old glacial deposits, and the bottoms of ancient beaver ponds, for fields. The old pond bottoms were apt to be clay, or muck, rich and fertile, though often in need of added humus to make good farmland. The sandy glacial deposits were apt to be a much lighter soil, much less fertile, and also in need of humus. Farming was never a truly successful venture, for markets were distant, cattle required a great deal of care, and except for the help which the settlers gave one another, labour was non-existent. However, as a subsistence farming, they did very well, for needs were few, and most needs could be met by a man with his own two hands and a few tools, and a pair of horses.

There were many sawmills; two in this area were at the head of the lake, near Darling's farm, and on Steam Mill Point, at Skycroft. This steam-operated mill was gone before 1875; there is a possibility that the steam boiler at the old worked out phosphates mine, near the junction of the Old Bedford Road and the railroad may have been the actual boiler from the steam mill at Steam Mill Point.

Following the trail westward from the Old Bedford Road, we come after a bit to a big spring, the headquarters of Jerden Creek. Adjacent to the trail, just east of the spring, are the barely-seen foundations of an old building, probably a barn. On higher land, to the south, an old cellarhole marks the spot where the boardinghouse for the phosphate mine stood. A 22-room boarding house was here, to house the miners. Why did they put the house on this hill? If you could see this area when the winter snows start to melt, you would know, without asking why they chose such a high site! The whole field below is sometimes filled with water.

If you look downstream a bit, you come to a cave; a limestone one, worn away by old floodwaters. The stream stops short, just before you reach the cave - where does the water go? Look closely, and you will see a hole, down which the stream gurgles, much like the outlet pipe for a bathtub. Listen, and you can hear the sound of water falling, far below. In this limestone country, there are water-made caves everywhere, many in several levels as this one is.

This is the old Nicholls Ranch, later called the Austen Ranch; this is approximately the center of the ghost town of Lake Opinicon. As we follow the trail continuously westward, we pass old house foundations, at the edge of Lindsay Lake. Much of this rock is made of sandstone, quarried at a local quarry, over beyond Warner Lake.

What happened to the town? Time, and changing markets, careless use of the natural economic resource, the red and white pine, followed by migration to areas where a living was easier to get - these have changed Lake Opinicon from a town populated by farmers to an area where summer visitors, wildlife, and one going farm form the population. There were three economic waves: mining, lumbering, cheese-making. The final, and fourth is a boom in waterfront property, bringing in summer residents.

Back before present medical knowledge, a child from this school went to visit a grandparent, over the Christmas holidays. After returning to school, she became ill. It was diphtheria - and it swept the school and the community, doctorless, and probably snowed in in the midst of winter. There are many graves, small ones, in the cemetery, as a result. This may have been the deathblow to the town, as a populated town. Once, there were 50 children in this school. Now, there are the children of one family, only, to attend school - they must be transported to Elgin.

How different might the history of this community have been, if instead of clearing the land, each lumberman had replanted a pine for each one that was cut? A stable, sparsely populated town could have resulted, with a healthy future, a firm economic base, and a scattered but steady population.

It is useless, of course to decry "might-have-beens", but we must examine history and former land-use with the thought, "What should WE do, so that 150 years from now, those who follow us will cry, 'Bravo' at our actions?" The few spots where natural pine regeneration has taken place give a suggested course to follow: Plant! Plant trees, of assorted kinds, to rebuild watersheds and permit the complex web of life to develop. At Skycroft, we try to use this ghost-town of Lake Opinicon as a teaching-device, to lead others into an understanding and appreciation of man's task for the future - to so build a better world that pollution and erosion, hunger and want need not occur.

To this end, we support such ventures as the Rideau Trail, that leads others into a better and closer way of looking at the land. Hopefully, the guide book, now in the making, will augment the work of the various Conservation Authorities, and be a teaching tool for all who use it.

A farmer we knew, some 50 years ago, used to say, "You take care of the land, - and the land will take care of you". This land ethic is one that should be adopted today by everyone - not by the farmer alone.

Allan and Ellen Bonwill

PUBLICIZING THE TRAIL

With the help of several volunteers, the publicity committee set-up and manned a booth at the "Outdoor Living Exhibition" at the Kingston Shopping Centre, April 13-15. Photographs of people, places, and events on the Rideau Trail attracted many interested people to the booth where maps of the trail and a collage of newspaper stories about the Trail were available for browsing and stimulating conversation with the booth attendants. The star attraction of the booth was a new pamphlet designed by Publicity Chairman David Dennis. The pamphlet briefly describes the Rideau Trail, complete with map, and gives information on fees and a coupon for use in becoming a member of the Rideau Trail Association. Membership Secretary Valerie Colgan reports that more than 40 new memberships have been received as a result of the booth and pamphlets.

If anyone is interested in distributing these pamphlets at a similar function or wherever potential Rideau Trail members meet, a supply of pamphlets can be obtained by contacting Raleigh Robertson, Queen's University, Department of Biology, Kingston, phone 547-2621.



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ITEM

Your attention is drawn to a map of Eastern Ontario by the Rideau Lakes and Thousand Islands Travel Council, which includes a sketch of the Rideau Trail route. It can be obtained by writing to Box 1030, Perth.

REMINDER

1972 membership fees are due!

- are you a member in good standing?
- good hiking starts with good standing and quiet enjoyment requires a quiet conscience
- do you have 4 or 6 dollars on your conscience?
- No one can deny that this is the best recreational value in Eastern Ontario.

NEW PUBLIC IMAGE

There is now available an excellent brochure which explains the origins and objectives of the Rideau Trail Association.

Copies of this brochure can be obtained by telephoning your local representative.

Kingston	-	542-8062
Smiths Falls	-	283-4837
Ottawa	-	828-1679

Special thanks are due to David Dennis of Kingston for preparation of this brochure.

LOST AND FOUND

If you know the addresses of any of the people listed below, please let us know at Box 15, Kingston.

Richard Tuller	Mr. M. McNamee
Allan Higdon	Mr. W. Rathwell
Ellen Wickens	George Stinson

HELP!

We need your special expertise ... creative minds ... useful contacts ... strong backs ... collective enthusiasm ... to maintain last year's momentum and push the trail ahead in '72:

*Can you wield a paint brush and a hammer? Or carry a garbage bag? The routes committee would like to hear from you. Contact Ray Billingham, 1841 Illinois, in Ottawa (tel: 731-6071); Norman McLeod, 153 Morenz Crescent in Kingston (tel: 546-9440); Howard Raper, 36 Russell West in Smiths Falls (tel: 283-0371).

*Do you have useful contacts in your community? You can help in the crucial task of negotiating with landowners and local authorities. Contact your local representative on the Routes Committee.

*Can you collect or write news items, advertising or general information for the newsletter? Get in touch with David Dennis, 245 Bicknell Cresc., Kingston (tel: 389-3394); Joy Halliday, 212 Ryan Street, Smiths Falls (tel: 283-1245); Doris Crowe, 339 Mountbatten Avenue, Ottawa (tel: 733-2493).

*Does your camera take 35 mm slides to help us collect a photographic record of trail enjoyment for publicity and historical purposes? Share your resources with other members via the publicity committee (see above). We will make duplicates of your slides.

*Are you feeling helpful but housebound? We urgently need volunteers who are willing to allow their telephone numbers to be listed as sources of information for prospective members. Call Rolly Hamilton, 1210 Placid Street, Ottawa (tel: 828-3172); Anne Hutchison, Cavalry House, RMC, Kingston (tel: 456-2037); Dr. John Hollinger, Golf Club Road, Smiths Falls (tel: 283-4837).

*Have you a special talent or enthusiasm or suggestion we haven't mentioned? Share it with your local executive. We need you!

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SUMMER CONSTRUCTION OF DAY HIKING LOOPS

The Rideau Trail Association has decided to construct day hiking loops along the present trail. The idea being that hikers could start their trek at an easily accessible point and walk a complete loop returning to the starting point without covering the same area twice.

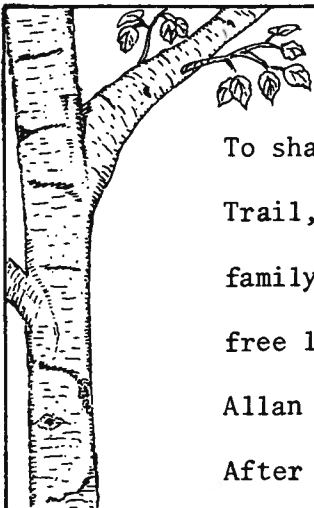
A student proposal was submitted to the government for an Opportunities For Youth Grant again this year with the intention of constructing these loops. Unfortunately a grant was not forthcoming, leaving the association with a good deal of construction work to be done.

As these loops are felt to be a necessary addition to the trail, it is hoped that the trail members will be able to spare a day or two of their time to actually help construct these loops. Throughout the summer volunteer work forces will be organized by one or two students. The actual work done by the members of these groups will include splitting up into relatively small parties and scouting over particular areas. Once the surveying has been done and the possible routes have been temporarily marked, a decision will be made as to which route the trail will actually follow and then permanent markers will be put up. This work is not difficult and it is actually very rewarding to be able to look back on the day's work and see a new section of trail completed.

As has been pointed out, the success of this plan depends upon the support of the membership. Anyone who will be able to donate a little time and effort to support this trail development plan is encouraged to get in touch with:

Robert Cook,
409 Johnson St., #1,
Kingston, Ontario.
544-4176.

Eric Grantner,
R.R. 3,
Carleton Place.
257-1498.



40 CAMPING FAMILIES WANTED

To share 2,000 acre private lakeside nature preserve, along the Rideau Trail, just west of Chaffey's Lock. \$30 per week, or \$5 per day per family. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope for information, and a free leaflet on the history of the ghost town of LAKE OPINICON.

Allan H. Bonwill, 48 Grannis St., East Haven, Conn. 06512, until June 1st.

After June 5th: Allan H. Bonwill, Skycroft, R.R. #1, Elgin, Ontario.

CAMPING, ANYONE?

Rideau Trailers continue to express great interest in the availability of camping facilities along the trail route, according to the Routes Committee Chairmen, who are undertaking a thorough investigation of the possibilities. They remind us that their committies face a rather complicated procedure before any new campsite construction can be undertaken:

First, it is necessary to investigate and pinpoint suitable locations.

Then, application must be made to local Health Units to inspect particular sites and obtain permission for construction. Approval is given only for sites which are capable of supporting toilet facilities. In the case of privately-owned land, RTA must assume responsibility for constructing, maintaining and policing both toilet facilities and garbage disposal.

And finally, having obtained permission from the local Health Unit, RTA would be able to make a decision on the construction of a campsite, based on our availability of funds, material and labor.

In the meantime, public and privately-owned campsites can be utilised. Members are asked to share their information about existing camping facilities along the trail route for publication in newsletters and eventually in the Guidebook.

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

The following groups are affiliate members of the Rideau Trail Association:

- Recreational Association of the Ottawa Civil Service (donation).
- 100th Ottawa Cub Pack.
- Loyalist Outward Bound Club - LCVI Kingston.
- Kingston District Council, Boy Scouts of Canada.
- Toronto Bruce Trail Club (donation).
- Bruce Trail Club.
- Girl Guide Company, Smiths Falls.

HIGHWAY 416

If you wish to preserve one of the few remaining natural areas in metro Ottawa, and a local section of the Rideau Trail, please complete the letter below and send it to the Chairman of Ottawa/Carleton Regional Municipality. If you object to sending a form letter then please write a personal one in similar vein.

.....

Mr. D. Coolican,
Chairman,
Regional Municipality of Ottawa/Carleton,
233 Gilmour Street,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

I wish to express concern about Proposals 1B and 2 made by the Highway 416 Study Group routing the highway through the Cedarview Road/Moodie Drive area of Nepean Township. This area, which is being excellently developed under Department of Lands and Forests supervision for the enjoyment of all metropolitan area residents, would be completely ruined by either of the above proposals.

If serious consideration is to be given to making the metro area a better environment for living, then we should not be dissecting it further with multilane highways. Of the five proposals made, the Ring Road (1A) would appear to be the most satisfactory compromise.

Yours truly,

